

The Army in Military Competition

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Preface

This CSA Paper defines and describes the role of the Army in military competition. It provides commanders in the field with the conceptual tools to provide purpose for their units and to explain to our Joint and multinational partners what the U.S. Army can do in competition. It enables the Army to focus our efforts on the full range of capabilities that allows those commanders to win in competition. Most importantly, learning to win in competition helps to ensure that great power competition does not become great power conflict.

I want all readers to understand that military competition is an “infinite game.” In that context, leaders must understand and act in context and adjust their methods to the situation. Leaders must also understand that in today’s interconnected world that an action in one region will reverberate globally—with our adversaries and partners alike.

I also want readers to study Appendix A in detail. It provides a list of the tactical, operational, and strategic outcomes that commanders at all echelons should seek to achieve. These tables make clear how much the U.S. Army contributes within military competition. In this, the Army supports the Joint Force, the U.S. government, and allies and partners through our presence and posture, engagement with allies and partners, intelligence and understanding, and multi-domain warfighting capability as part of combined and joint operations.

We can define winning in competition in many ways: deterring conflict, upholding our interests, remaining the security partner of choice, keeping allies and partners free from coercion and subversion, and discouraging adversaries from malign actions because they know that these acts will not succeed. What we must remember is a win today is an opening for new competition activities tomorrow.

Our Army plays a critical role in military competition. Our ongoing transformation of the Army and continued initiatives with allies and partners will build incredible strength that assures our partners and deters our adversaries that maintain enduring advantage in competition.

People First! Winning Matters! Army Strong!



James C. McConville
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Executive Summary

Definition of Military Competition

Military competition encompasses the range of activities and operations employed to achieve political objectives and to deny adversaries the ability to achieve objectives prejudicial to the United States. Armed conflict is one element of what is termed the *competition continuum* in joint doctrine. The focus of this publication is the set of activities that occur outside of armed conflict. These might be taken to directly achieve objectives without fighting or they might be part of preparations for armed conflict meant to both deter adversaries and to ensure the Joint Force begins a conflict on the most favorable terms. In all instances, the Joint Force competes as part of a national strategy that integrates all instruments of power to accomplish U.S. objectives. The Army contributes to military competition by building and employing land force capability and capacity to support a broad range of policy choices.

- Military activities during competition support other instruments of national power as part of a coordinated strategic approach to achieve policy aims.
- Military activities during competition can be either defensive or offensive; lethal or non-lethal; unilateral or multilateral; employ conventional, irregular, and special operations forces from each of the military services in multiple domains.
- Military activities during competition preserve and expand friendly (U.S., allies, and partners) advantages while limiting or eroding adversary options, imposing costs, and increasing adversary doubts. They can establish deterrence and set the conditions for military success when deterrence fails.
- Services contribute to military competition by resourcing capabilities and presence, as well as by fostering and maintaining relationships that yield access and influence. Combatant Commands compete through the employment of forces in engagement, exercises, security cooperation, and other activities to achieve desired outcomes in competition and create favorable conditions in case of crisis and armed conflict.

The Three Dynamics of Military Competition: Narrative, Direct, and Indirect Competition

The scope, scale, and complexity of great power competition requires it to be broken into manageable subordinate parts. This paper describes three basic dynamics of competition distinguished by their differing objectives, methods, and scope. Some capabilities and activities will be more effective or relevant to one dynamic than the others depending on considerations such as thresholds of acceptable risk or the intensity of the competition. The three dynamics of competition are a tool to help force developers, planners, and commanders to work through this complexity as they generate and employ Army forces in competition. The three dynamics provide a means to understand what kinds of capabilities are most useful within a specific context, as well as how success or failure in those individual cases aggregate into the overarching

great power competition. It is not sufficient to focus on just one of the three dynamics of competition while ignoring the others. All play a role.

The first dynamic is **narrative competition**, which is reflected in the rise and fall of a country's **reputation** based on general perceptions of its strength, reliability, and resolve (see figure E1). Narrative competition is on-going, open-ended, and larger than any single

event or issue. It is the connection linking multiple subordinate instances of competition over specific issues into the larger whole. Narrative competition is enduring and cumulative; the reputation of the United States accumulates over time. A reputation for strength and reliability is a significant competitive benefit that might cause adversaries to seek less ambitious objectives or, in some instances, to choose not to compete at all and seek cooperation instead. Similarly, a strong reputation can encourage allies and partners to compete on a specific issue with more confidence. Despite this power, narrative competition only goes so far. The United States could be preeminent in global reputation, yet still be unable to effectively compete for a specific issue because it has not built the relationships, lacks presence, or simply does not have capabilities relevant to the situation.

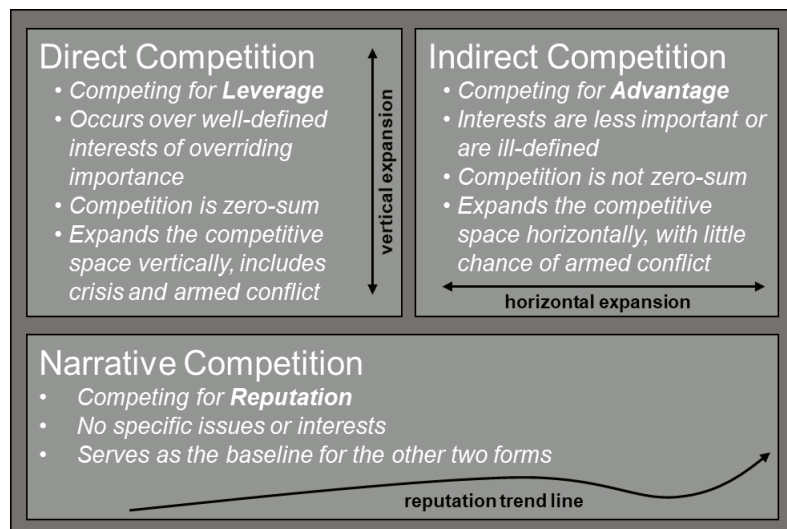


Figure E1 The Three Dynamics of Competition

The Army contributes to narrative competition by being a lethal, competent, credible force and being recognized as such by key audiences among allies and partners as well as by adversaries.

Direct competition occurs when competition occurs over a well-defined interest of such overriding importance to the United States as to make armed conflict a plausible means of achieving or preserving the desired ends. Put simply, it is an issue worth fighting over. It should be noted that though the issue is important enough to justify war, direct competition typically takes place at levels of intensity far below crisis much less armed conflict. Thus, direct competition encompasses the full range of competitive activities from the lowest intensity competition below armed conflict through general state conflict. This gives policymakers a wide array of tools to employ according to how intensely they want to pursue the objective and how much risk they are willing to accept. In direct competition, the objective is to create **leverage** for the United States and to deny it to the adversary.

The Army contributes to direct competition by enabling Joint Force escalation superiority in relation to adversaries across the full competitive space from low-intensity routine military competitive actions up through conventional-nuclear integration to gain leverage on an issue or to deny it to an adversary.

Indirect competition occurs when the interests of the United States are not so important, are less defined, or are not inherently in tension with the adversary. Because armed conflict is not part of the available tools for great power competition, some activities that are highly effective in direct competition are less important or even irrelevant in indirect competition. In indirect competition the objective is to gain *advantage* (or deny it to the adversary). This objective is in contrast to the more forceful concept of *leverage* in direct competition. Though the importance of the interests at stake is not as high as in indirect competition, this does not mean that the United States will not compete for these interests. Policymakers will often choose to engage in indirect competition, but when they do, they will have fundamentally different cost-benefit and risk calculations than in direct competition. The implication of this for military competition is that the Joint Force needs to expand the competitive space horizontally by creating more low and medium risk and cost options for policymakers to choose from.

The Army contributes to indirect competition by offering a range of credible (low- and moderate-intensity and risk) options for policymakers to gain advantage or deny it to an adversary, primarily by shaping adversarial behavior to better align with US interests.

Viewing Competition from Both Sides: Actions that Advance and Actions that Impede

Competition must also be viewed from both friendly and adversary perspectives. Naturally, Army forces seek to advance U.S. interests or to create additional operational or tactical opportunities for Joint Force commanders. But during competition, actions might be taken primarily because they impede the adversary's pursuit of their interests or degrade their tools or methods. Imposing costs might be an end in itself.

Advance actions encompass activities and investments designed to increase U.S. reputation, leverage, or advantage. In narrative competition, advance actions generate, expand, improve, or protect the reputation of the United States. In direct competition, a successful advance action might posture new forces — like an armored brigade combat team — into a strategically relevant area, thereby gaining leverage for the U.S. and altering the adversary's risk calculus. In indirect competition, a successful advance action—such as signing a comprehensive foreign military sales agreement with a third country—can increase U.S. advantage.

Impede actions degrade adversary reputation, leverage, or advantage. In narrative competition, impede actions seek to diminish the adversary's reputation, such as by highlighting human rights abuses, lawlessness, or corruption in the adversary's country. In direct competition, a successful impede action undermines the adversary's leverage, such as posturing missile

defense assets forward to negate the effect of an adversary's long-range missiles. In indirect competition, a successful impede action—such as demonstrating the inferiority of adversary arms and equipment—can serve to degrade the adversary's advantage.

Competition in Action

In application, the three dynamics of competition do not occur in isolation but come together as part of the larger national competition. Instances of direct and indirect competition have immediate effects on those specific issues, but are also noted elsewhere by allies, partners, and adversaries alike and so have varied effects on narrative competition. In practice, a single capability or activity will often yield benefits in direct, indirect, and narrative competition and have aspects that both advance and impede. For instance, a well-crafted multinational exercise can achieve multiple objectives in all dynamics of competition. But it also means that there can be a mix of positive and negative outcomes. It is possible to take actions that provide immediate leverage or advantage but in a way that detracts from long-term reputation. A single-minded devotion to “quick wins” can cause significant loss over time.

Competition Requires Investment

The multi-faceted nature of competition means the topic must be viewed with greater fidelity and nuance. Ranking first in reputation is important but does not necessarily ensure that the United States has leverage when an adversary tries to coerce an ally. That requires investments so that military capabilities can be brought to bear at the speed and scale required to alter adversary decision-making. Similarly, being postured to deny a *fait accompli* does not necessarily translate into the ability to gain advantage with a partner that accepts assistance from multiple great powers. Success in both direct and indirect competition requires specific investments in areas like strategic readiness, calibrated force posture, access, and influence. It will always be necessary to prioritize when, where, and for what the Army contributes to national competition. In an era of limited resources, the Army must maximize capabilities, activities, and investments that contribute to the multiple dynamics of competition (narrative, direct, and indirect) and that have tactical, operational, and strategic benefits.

The Army in Competition

The Army contributes to competition in multiple ways. It contributes to competition over the most important national interests by providing policymakers with leverage against adversaries across the competitive space from low intensity competition through crisis and armed conflict. The Army contributes to competition for less important interests by providing policymakers with a wide range of low- and medium-cost and risk options that can be tailored to the situation. Finally, simply being a world-class force and demonstrating that quality through successful operations conducted in a manner consistent with institutional values fosters a positive reputation for the U.S. Army. Reliable, principled strength attracts allies and partners, who see

value in forging a relationship. This general national and collective strength causes adversaries to either compete with less ambitious aims or to forego competition altogether. Appendix A lists specific capabilities, activities, and investments that the Army can make to achieve objectives within the dynamics of direct, indirect, and narrative competition. These examples are provided to spur thinking and discussion for commanders, planners, and force developers. Primarily, the Army competes by assuring our allies and partners, and deterring our adversaries from malign action. These principal contributions are depicted in Figure E2.

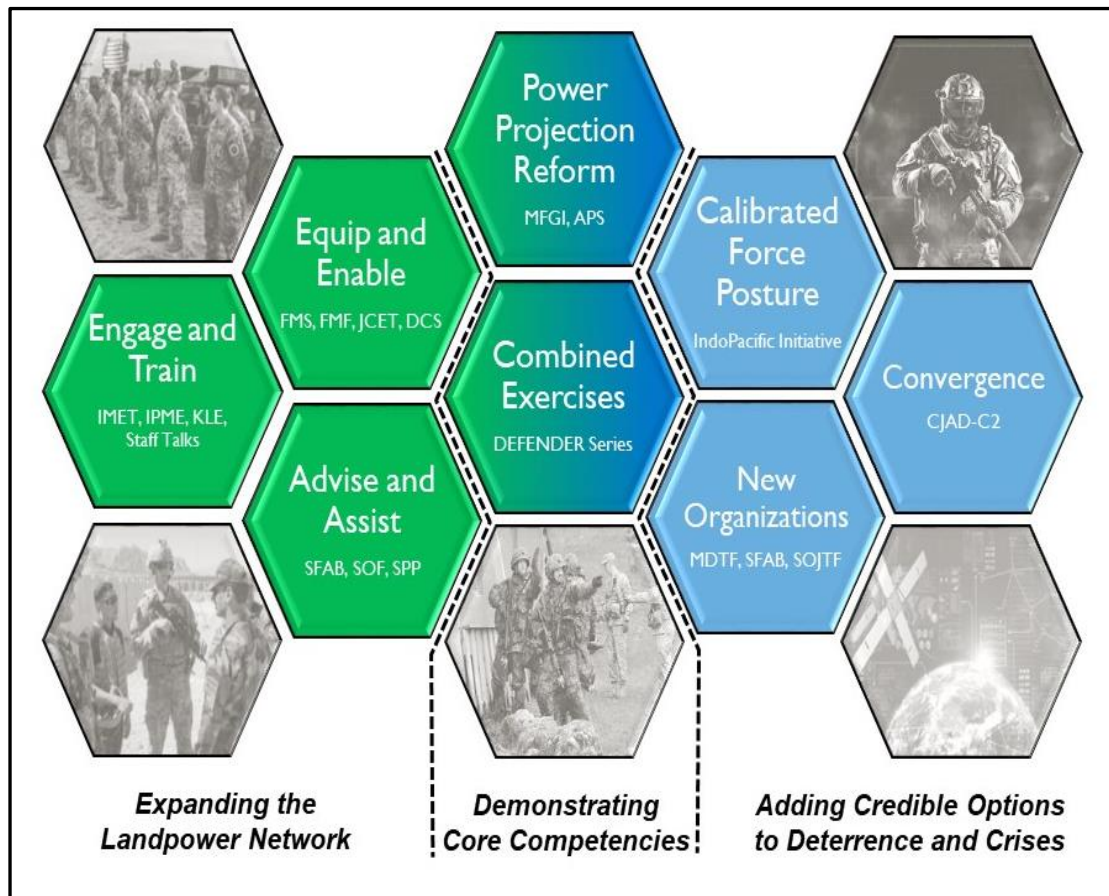


Figure E2 Principal Army Contributions to Competition

Chapter I. An Overview of Competition

1. Context.

The 2018 *National Defense Strategy* focused the Department of Defense on great power competition. There is a lack of consensus, however, regarding how that broad concept is translated to action.¹ Soldiers engaged in partnership activities, exercises, and other forms of forward presence indicate they sometimes have difficulty in describing the precise mechanism by which their actions translate to successful competition at the national level. Similarly, those working in the institutional Army require a guide to help determine which capabilities, activities, and investments best achieve the desired tactical, operational, and strategic effects. This paper addresses these gaps by providing a framework for understanding the multiple facets of competition and a detailed description of the Army capabilities and activities that can be employed as well as the tactical, operational, and strategic outcomes they can achieve.

The conceptual framework is described in the main body of this paper. The framework ensures that the right capabilities and methods are applied in any given instance of competition. This matching is necessary because competition is not a monolithic activity conducted in the same fashion everywhere and in all contexts. Like war, military competition is multi-faceted with many possible manifestations, each requiring a different approach. Just as a commander requires different force mixtures and approaches for counterinsurgency and general state-on-state conflict, so too competition has several different manifestations, each with a distinct dynamic. For the sake of simplicity, this paper groups what is actually a spectrum of possibilities into three basic dynamics of competition distinguished by their differing objectives, methods, and scope. Some capabilities and activities will be more effective or relevant to one dynamic than the others depending on considerations such as thresholds of acceptable risk or the intensity of the competition.

The detailed description of the capabilities, activities, and outcomes of military competition is provided in Appendix A. These are arranged according to the dynamics of competition and also in relation to whether they primary focus is on achieving U.S. interests or impeding or imposing costs on the adversary.

Finally, Appendix B provides a selection of resources, many of them available on-line, for those who want to go deeper into the various elements of competition.

2. The Army Definition of Military Competition.

Military competition encompasses the range of activities and operations employed to achieve political objectives and to deny adversaries the ability to achieve objectives prejudicial to the United States. Armed conflict is one element of what is termed the *competition continuum*

¹ For instance, see Michael J. Mazarr, et al., *Understanding the Emerging Era of International Competition: Theoretical and Historical Perspectives*, Santa Monica, CA; (RAND, 2018), 2; Ali Wyne, “Is Great Power Competition a Strategy,” interview by John Amble, *MWI Podcast*, 24 June 2020.

in joint doctrine.² The focus of this publication is the set of activities that occur outside of armed conflict. These might be taken to directly achieve objectives without fighting or they might be part of preparations for armed conflict meant to both deter adversaries and to ensure the Joint Force begins a conflict on the most favorable terms. In all instances, the Joint Force competes as part of a national strategy that integrates all instruments of power to accomplish U.S. objectives. The Army contributes to military competition by building and employing land force capability and capacity to support a broad range of policy choices.

- Military activities during competition support other instruments of national power as part of a coordinated strategic approach to achieve policy aims.
- Military activities during competition can be either defensive or offensive; lethal or non-lethal; unilateral or multilateral; employ conventional, irregular, and special operations forces from each of the military services in multiple domains.
- Military activities during competition preserve and expand friendly (U.S., allies, and partners) advantages while limiting or eroding adversary options, imposing costs, and increasing adversary doubts. They can establish deterrence and set the conditions for military success when deterrence fails.
- Services contribute to military competition by resourcing capabilities and presence, as well as by fostering and maintaining relationships that yield access and influence. Combatant Commands compete through the employment of forces in engagement, exercises, security cooperation, and other activities to achieve desired outcomes in competition and create favorable conditions in case of crisis and armed conflict.

3. The Three Dynamics of Military Competition.

The scope, scale, and complexity of great power competition requires it to be broken into manageable subordinate parts. For instance, during the overall competition of the Cold War between the United States and Soviet Union there were discrete smaller issues, such as Communist presence in the western hemisphere or for influence with newly independent countries following decolonization. Actions that were effective in the context of the Cuban Missile Crisis would not have been appropriate or relevant in trying to have an African country align with the United States rather than the Soviet Bloc. Different capabilities and activities were required for each instance. Though these instances had different competitive dynamics, they

² Joint Staff, *Competition Continuum*, Joint Doctrine Note 1-19 (2019). One factor causing confusion is that that in common usage *competition* can have one of three different meanings. All three have persisted because each is a valid use.

1) National competition with the possibility of using all the instruments of power (diplomatic, information, military, and economic) and all methods to include armed conflict to achieve policy aims. In joint doctrine, this is the *competition continuum*. In this paper, it will also be referred to as *great power competition*.

2) Competitive activities specifically outside of armed conflict, typically with the intention of staying below the threshold of armed conflict. In joint doctrine, this is *competition below armed conflict* (a subset of the competition continuum).

3) Competition as the period outside of armed conflict. This is the meaning found in the Army Operating Concept, *The US Army in Multi-Domain Operations, 2028* and in this document unless indicated otherwise. This period includes both activities meant to prepare for armed conflict and competition below armed conflict.

were not isolated. Success or failure in one specific case would alter the overall global competition, which would then cascade back to create a better or worse relative position for other subordinate instances of competition as well.

The three dynamics of competition are a tool to help force developers, planners, and commanders to work through this complexity as they generate and employ Army forces in competition. The three dynamics provide a means to understand what kinds of capabilities are most useful within a specific context, as well as how success or failure in those individual cases aggregates into the overarching great power competition. It is not sufficient to focus on just one of the three dynamics of competition while ignoring the others. All play a role.

The first dynamic is **narrative competition**, which is reflected in the rise and fall of a country's **reputation** based on general perceptions of its strength, reliability, and resolve (see figure 1). Narrative competition is on-going, open-ended, and larger than any single event or issue. It is the connection linking multiple subordinate instances of competition over specific issues into the larger whole. Narrative competition is enduring and cumulative; the reputation of the United States accumulates over time. A reputation for strength and reliability is a significant competitive benefit that might cause adversaries to seek less ambitious objectives or, in some instances, to choose not to compete at all and seek cooperation instead. Similarly, a strong reputation can encourage allies and partners to compete on a specific issue with more confidence.

The Army contributes to narrative competition by being a lethal, competent, credible force and being recognized as such by key audiences among allies and partners as well as by adversaries.

Despite this power, narrative competition only goes so far. The United States could be preeminent in global reputation, yet still be unable to effectively compete for a specific issue because it has not built the relationships, lacks presence, or simply does not have capabilities relevant to the situation. For instance, if an adversary attempts to coerce a U.S. ally through the threat of invasion, reputation matters much less than the ability to project force. A more typical example would be a country that seeks to build its military capacity in some area. If the United States has a superior reputation, the country seeking assistance might first turn to the United States. But if the United States does not have the ability or capacity to provide the

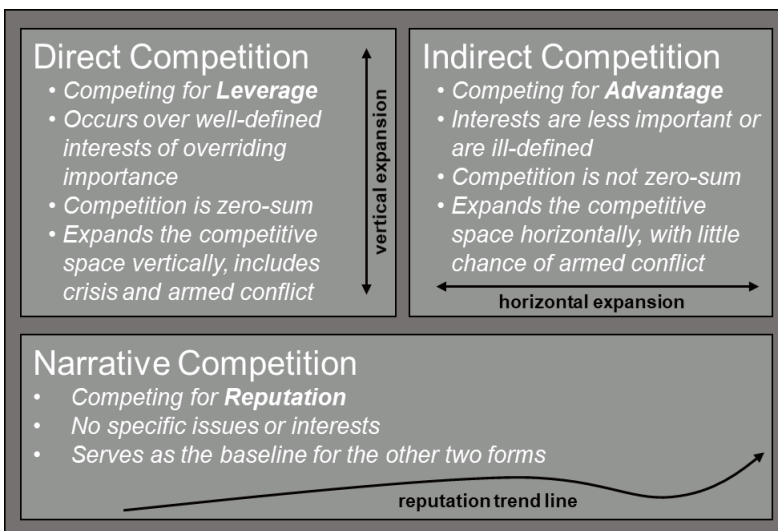


Figure 1 The Three Dynamics of Competition

requested help, the prospective partner might turn to an adversary instead. In short, the Army must make investments in capabilities, presence, and force structure to be able to compete effectively in specific cases.

Which forms of presence, activity, and capability are relevant will vary with the situation. For the sake of simplicity, this CSA Paper breaks specific instances of competition into two categories differentiated by the importance of the interest at stake, though in practice the value of interests falls along a spectrum of importance. Further complicating matters, policymakers might deliberately be ambiguous about the value of an interest, the value can change rapidly with events, and different actors (adversaries, allies, and partners) are all likely to assign a different value to the same issue. It is important, therefore, to remember that in practice there are often many complicating factors in determining the value of a specific issue.

The simplified two-part distinction has value, however, because it highlights how the dynamic of military competition in any given situation is largely driven by the extent to which the threat of armed force can be applied. For instance, if a hostile state is threatening the sovereignty of a neighboring U.S. ally, then the ability of the Joint Force to respond with armored forces, air wings, and carrier strike groups sets the conditions for competition. But if the competition is for influence in a country geographically distant from both the United States and the adversary—for instance, a country in Africa—that is under no direct threat the nature of the competition is completely different. Military force is not being used to coerce, and so the ability to respond does not assure. If the country seemed ready to align with the adversary by getting training or equipment, the United States placing an amphibious readiness group off the shore would have no bearing on the decision. It would simply be irrelevant. In terms of joint doctrine, the distinction is one between instances when the full competition continuum (the combination of cooperation, competition below armed conflict, **and** armed conflict) is available to achieve policy objectives and those in which **only** cooperation and competition below armed conflict are available.

Direct competition occurs when competition occurs over a well-defined interest of such overriding importance to the United States as to make armed conflict a plausible means of achieving or preserving the desired ends. Put simply, it is an issue worth fighting over. It should be noted that though the issue is important enough to justify war, direct competition typically takes place at levels of intensity far below crisis much less armed conflict. Thus, direct competition encompasses the full range of competitive activities from the lowest intensity competition below armed conflict through general state conflict (see Figure 2 for illustrative examples). This gives policymakers a wide array of tools to employ according to how intensely they want to pursue the objective and how much risk they are willing to accept. In direct competition, the objective is to create **leverage** for the United States and to deny it to the adversary.³

³ Leverage is the ability to achieve policy objectives through the employment of cooperation, competition below armed conflict, and the threat or employment of armed conflict. This differs from the definition of *leverage* in the context of planning as defined in JP 5-0, *Planning*: “a relative advantage in combat power and/or other

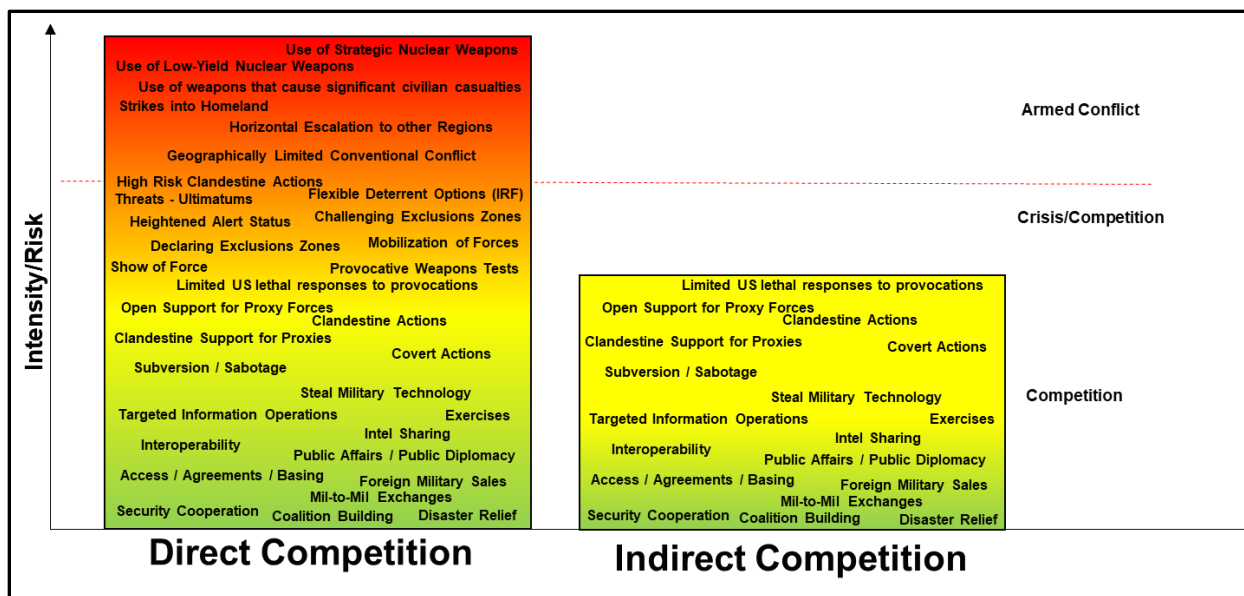


Figure 2 Illustrative Examples of Direct and Indirect Competition

In direct competition, the Joint Force creates leverage through the ability to effectively project military forces and conduct relevant operations across the full vertical range of intensity and risk while countering or denying the adversary's ability to do the same. Any gap in this range of available options creates a potential vulnerability that an adversary can exploit. If Army forces are oriented solely on armed conflict, the adversary will be able to achieve significant strategic objectives through successes in competition below the level of armed conflict. Yet at the same time, if Army forces cannot be projected to where they are required and then fight effectively as part of joint all-domain operations, the adversary has the opportunity to escalate to crisis and achieve objectives through coercion by employing the threat of armed conflict. Therefore, in direct competition the Joint Force expands the competitive space for policymakers vertically by having viable options across the entire range of competitive intensity and risk.

The Army contributes to direct competition by enabling Joint Force escalation superiority in relation to adversaries across the full competitive space from low-intensity routine military competitive actions up through conventional-nuclear integration to gain leverage on an issue or to deny it to an adversary.

Indirect competition occurs when the interests of the United States are not so important, are less defined, or are not inherently in tension with the adversary. Because armed conflict is not part of the available tools for great power competition, some activities that are highly effective in direct competition are less important or even irrelevant in indirect competition (see Figure 2). In

circumstances against the enemy or adversary across any variable within or impacting the operational environment sufficient to exploit that advantage.”

indirect competition the objective is to gain **advantage** (or deny it to the adversary). This objective is in contrast to the more forceful concept of *leverage* in direct competition.⁴

Though the importance of the interests at stake is not as high as in indirect competition, this does not mean that the United States will not compete for these interests. Policymakers will often choose to engage in indirect competition, but when they do, they will have fundamentally different cost-benefit and risk calculations than in direct competition. The implication of this for military competition is that the Joint Force needs to expand the competitive space horizontally by creating more low and medium risk and cost options for policymakers to choose from.

The Army contributes to indirect competition by offering a range of credible (low- and moderate-intensity and risk) options for policymakers to gain advantage or deny it to an adversary, primarily by shaping adversarial behavior to better align with US interests.

Just as direct competition does not always occur near the threshold of armed conflict, indirect competition is not inherently less active or non-violent. U.S. support to the *mujahedeen* in Afghanistan is an example of indirect competition at its upper limits of intensity. The U.S. decision to supply Stinger missiles increased the intensity of competition to achieve more ambitious strategic objectives. Nonetheless, it was an instance of indirect competition because there were limits to how high the cost and risk the United States would tolerate for that interest. Afghanistan was an opportunity to impose costs, not a cause for war. The United States would not have sent large conventional forces to evict the Soviet Union from Afghanistan.

4. Actions that Advance; Actions that Impede.

Military competition must be viewed from the perspectives of both the United States and that of the adversary. Advance actions are meant to achieve strategic interests or gain an operational or tactical edge. Impede actions are meant to limit and hinder the adversary. Often, a single activity will both advance and impede. But as will be discussed below, there are some instances when an action might fall solely into one category or the other.

Advance actions encompass activities and investments designed to increase U.S. reputation, leverage, or advantage. In narrative competition, advance actions generate, expand, improve, or protect the reputation of the United States. In direct competition, a successful advance action might posture new forces — like an armored brigade combat team — into a strategically relevant area, thereby gaining leverage for the U.S. and altering the adversary's risk calculus. In indirect competition, a successful advance action—such as signing a comprehensive foreign military sales agreement with a third country—can increase U.S. advantage.

Impede actions degrade adversary reputation, leverage, or advantage. In narrative competition, impede actions seek to diminish the adversary's reputation, such as by highlighting human rights abuses, lawlessness, or corruption in the adversary's country. In direct competition,

⁴ Advantage is the ability to achieve policy objectives through the employment of cooperation and competition below armed conflict.

a successful impede action undermines the adversary's leverage, such as posturing missile defense assets forward to negate the effect of an adversary's long-range missiles. In indirect competition, a successful impede action—such as demonstrating the inferiority of adversary arms and equipment—can serve to degrade the adversary's advantage.

5. Implications for the Army.

It should not be overlooked that the Army makes a significant contribution to great power competition by simply being the best land force in the world, operating according to its values, and succeeding whenever and wherever it is employed. Winning (or being prepared to win) influences allies and partners as well as adversaries, though obviously in different fashions.

Yet general excellence only goes so far. Success in both direct and indirect competition requires specific investments in areas like strategic readiness, calibrated force posture, access, and influence. The United States might have an enormous advantage in the battle of narratives yet still be unable to effectively compete with China in the western Pacific or with Russia in the Baltic region, and thus fail to achieve strategic objectives. Furthermore, the ability to compete in high-stakes regions does not necessarily carry over to the ability to compete effectively in Africa or South America. **It will always be necessary to prioritize when, where, and for what the Army contributes to national competition. In an era of limited resources, the Army must maximize capabilities, activities, and investments that contribute to the multiple dynamics of competition (narrative, direct, and indirect) and that have tactical, operational, and strategic benefits.**

Chapter II. The Army in Narrative Competition: Building and Portraying Strength

1. Narrative Competition Today.

Narrative competition is the on-going, open-ended effort to build **reputation**, the aggregate of perceptions of strength, reliability, and resolve outside of the context of a specific issue or in relation to a specific adversary. If the United States is succeeding in narrative competition, that success positively influences interactions with all actors. Allies and partners are more inclined to cooperate with the United States. Adversaries are less likely to challenge U.S. interests. In this way, narrative competition is the start point for the other forms of competition.

2. The Audiences of Narrative Competition.

Narrative competition is a combination of what the Army is and does and how those capabilities and actions are perceived. For instance, the U.S. Army possesses many capabilities that are the best of any army in the world. But they contribute to narrative competition only to the extent that they are recognized and have meaning to a specific audience. To further complicate matters, U.S. actions and messages will be perceived by multiple audiences simultaneously, not just the target audience. For simplicity, this paper will break audiences within each foreign country—ally, partner, neutral, or adversary—into three broad categories based on their knowledge of and interest in military and security issues.

The first audience in any country is the general populace. In the Information Age, the average individual throughout most of the world is deluged by a constant stream of information from news, pop culture, and personal networks. A majority will have at least some knowledge of and opinion about the United States built up over a lifetime. For most people, domestic political, economic, social, and cultural issues are far more important than the military aspects of international relations. To the extent that this audience is aware of military capabilities and operations, it is highly impressionistic. Perceptions of the U.S. Joint Force are likely derived as much from Hollywood or the local memory of past wars and operations than any factual assessment of military capabilities. Therefore, it is difficult for the military to significantly sway a large portion of the populace because they consume so much information from so many sources and are not particularly interested in security issues.

A country's civilian policymakers are a far narrower audience with much greater access and awareness of military capabilities and activities. For example, civilian policymakers are more likely to be aware of and understand the significance of events that would be largely overlooked by the general population, such as Status of Forces Agreements, an increase in foreign military sales, or expanded intelligence sharing. Policymakers also have a better understanding of the net strategic balance in a region. It is important to note, however, that policymakers are still more likely to place more emphasis on domestic political, economic, social, and cultural issues than international security concerns. Therefore, civilian policymakers'

concerns are weighted more toward trade agreements or the impact of decisions on their domestic political standing than military issues like interoperability or exercises.

The final audience is a country's national security community. This group, which includes the armed forces, intelligence services, and other security forces, employs professional expertise and intelligence assets in developing their perception. Accordingly, they draw from a wide range of sources. National security communities track military developments elsewhere as well. If the United States (or China or Russia) is successful in operations outside of their region or adds value to a comparable ally or partner elsewhere, those actions still have a reputational effect. Similarly, if the U.S. Army fields an important capability, such as a new long-range fires system, the national security community will note that development and try to assess its implication for their country. When dealing directly with the United States, the national security community is sensitive to relatively minor changes in capability or activity that directly impact their regional balance. Because they have specialized knowledge and some independent means of gathering information, the national security community is likely to have the closest alignment between perception and underlying reality.

3. The Dynamic of Narrative Competition.

The focus of this paper is on Army contributions to competition. In narrative competition, Army forces are important to national security communities and, to a lesser extent, civilian policymakers. With allies and partners, this occurs largely through maintaining high standards and being a partner of choice for military education, exercises, capacity building, and equipment sales. A powerful, modern U.S. Army enjoys a psychological edge over opponents that extends from the common soldier up through policymakers. But in narrative competition, the U.S. Army also benefits from national strengths outside of the military or governmental sphere. For many people around the world, their perception of the United States is driven by a flood of information: news, pop culture, social media, and personal experiences. To the extent that these impressions are positive, it creates a favorable environment for U.S. Army forces.

As the Cold War example in the previous demonstrated, narrative competition is the start point for specific instances of direct and indirect competition. A strong reputation creates favorable conditions for competition for a specific issue. Success or failure in those instances then feeds back into narrative competition. Winning matters, and a streak of continual successes in activities from humanitarian assistance to combat operations makes a powerful statement. It is also important to conduct operations properly. Unethical methods or success at the expense of an ally or partner might result in a short-term win that damages long-term reputation.

It might not be immediately apparent why narrative competition is treated separately from the capabilities and activities discussed in the following two chapters. Some readers would argue that every action has a narrative component. This is not always true. The Army does develop capabilities that offer options to policymakers but that are kept secret and so have no narrative component. Conversely, deception and misinformation can increase a country's reputation far beyond what its actual capabilities deserve. Direct and indirect competition deal with the ability to take action in a given situation, which are a function of factors like posture,

readiness, interoperability, and capacity. Narrative competition deals with the perceptions of those factors among various audiences.

The need to account for the many different audiences is the other reason to examine narrative competition separately. A single action in direct or indirect competition will alter the immediate operational environment, hopefully improving the position of the United States and the Joint Force. But it will also have many different reputational effects elsewhere; indeed, wherever an audience perceives the action it will have some reputational effect. For instance, a Joint Force action in the Middle East that is widely reported will have disparate effects on general public opinion depending on whether the local population receives its information from Reuters, Russia Today, or the Korean Central News Agency of North Korea. At the same time, the policymakers and national security communities of those respective countries might draw very different conclusions about U.S. strength and resolve. The two critical take-aways are that perception is not always aligned with the underlying reality and that a single action can have multiple differing effects among different audiences.

4. Army Contributions to Narrative Competition.

- **Being a lethal, competent, credible force**
- **Winning when employed in armed conflict and competition**
- **Building a record of adding value to allies and partners in cooperation**
- **Acting in accord with national values and international law**
- **Active messaging and demonstration of all of the above**

5. Outcomes of Successful Narrative Competition.

Influence friends. (Strategic, operational) Security communities advocate with their policymakers that their country should seek deeper ties with the United States due to the benefits of partnership with the U.S. Army.

Create opportunities. (Strategic) Foreign policymakers and populations see benefits in partnership and are open to ties with the United States.

National legacy. (Strategic, operational, and tactical) A general high regard for the United States among foreign populations creates favorable conditions for “competition among the people.”

Reputational deterrence. (Strategic) The perception of U.S. strength is a cognitive deterrent for adversaries as they consider whether and at what intensity to compete with the United States.

Reputational overmatch. (Tactical) The reputation of the U.S. Army as a world-class force provides a general mental advantage over adversaries at the unit- and soldier-level.

Chapter III. The Army in Direct Competition: Competition, Crisis, and Deterrence

1. Direct Competition Today.

Direct competition occurs when a well-defined interest of overriding importance to the United States is in direct tension with an adversary. The defense of the homeland from efforts by adversaries to subvert, coerce, or cause significant damage to the United States is the clearest case of direct competition. Direct competition also applies to those cases where the United States has pledged through treaties or other means to defend the sovereignty of an ally. In some instances, it might be difficult to assess the precise level of commitment because policy might be purposefully ambiguous, not set, or subject to change. Policy is often fluid and messy. The simple test to gauge whether the dynamic of direct competition applies to a specific case is whether an adversary that wanted to pursue its aims as aggressively as possible would have to account for the possibility of armed conflict in its risk calculations. Examples of such interests are China and Taiwan, Russia and NATO members that it considers within its historic sphere of influence, and Iran and its neighbors in the Arabian Gulf.

2. The Dynamics of Direct Competition.

Figure 4 depicts just some of the actions that the United States or an adversary might take to achieve its objectives in direct competition. In comparison to indirect competition, direct competition has a larger competitive space that encompasses armed conflict and crisis as well as less intense forms of competition. Army forces create leverage for policymakers by providing options across the entire vertical spectrum of that competitive space.

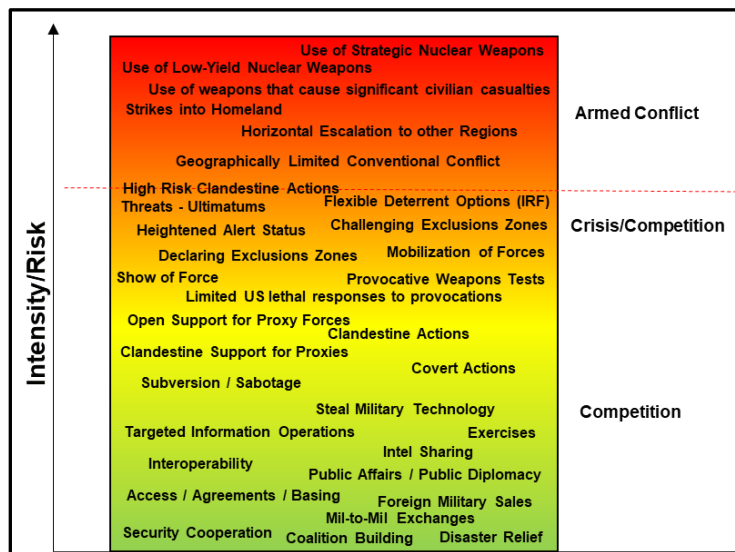


Figure 4 The Competitive Space in Direct Competition

A gap in capability anywhere along the spectrum can be exploited by an adversary. If the capability gap is at a lower level of intensity because the Joint Force lacks relevant capabilities or perhaps lacks legal authorities to act, then an adversary has a better chance of achieving its objectives through competition below armed conflict. On the other hand, if the capability gap is at the higher levels of intensity because the Joint Force is out of position and is at military disadvantage in that geographic area, then an adversary can exploit the resulting leverage through crisis brinkmanship and coercion with the threat of armed conflict. Adversaries are less likely to attempt a so-called *fait accompli* conflict if they face an adversary with the will and ability to expand the conflict to other regions, protract

the conflict, of that can resort to more destructive means. The need to have a full vertical range of military choice continues beyond the threshold of armed conflict because in armed conflict policymakers still have to make choices about escalation and risk. Within armed conflict, the lowest level of intensity occurs within localized conflicts limited in terms of duration, geographic extent, and methods to be employed.

The take-away for force developers and military strategists is that in direct competition the Army expands the competitive space vertically by ensuring the Joint Force commander and policymakers have options at all levels of intensity. The Joint Force should also develop counters to the adversary's options to deny it leverage.

The concept of leverage leads to a more nuanced concept of deterrence than that of the Cold War, when the possibility of potentially catastrophic escalation caused a common view of deterrence as a single pass/fail proposition focused on the transition to armed conflict. In great power competition, the notion of deterrence must be expanded to encompass the entire competitive space. Deterrence in competition is not just about preventing armed conflict, although that remains an important element, but also about deterring the adversary from increasing the intensity of competition to achieve more ambitious objectives. This makes deterrence exceptionally difficult to assess, because success or failure is measured in relative degrees of intensity rather than a clear shift from one mode to another. Put differently, the Joint Force might be successfully deterring an adversary from escalating to a much higher intensity of competition by blocking off options, but friendly policymakers might conclude that the United States was doing poorly because the adversary was continuing competition at a much lower form of intensity. Even when deterrence does fail, the enduring nature of great power competition allows for it to be reestablished by exacting costs on the adversary. Much like placing a hand on a stove, future competitive actions can be deterred by demonstrating to the adversary that a specific action was counterproductive or had a cost disproportionate to its gain.

When seeking to exact costs, it is important to recognize the comparative advantage of the United States in relation to adversaries like Russia or China. To the extent that open democratic systems and values put the United States at a disadvantage in what is sometimes called political warfare, those same characteristics make the United States a more attractive partner. If the adversary employs competition below armed conflict by means such as harassing fishermen in disputed zones or conducting disinformation campaigns, the best response for the Joint Force might not be to attempt to respond symmetrically with some similar form of aggression. An adversary's aggressive actions create the possibility of an asymmetric response, in which the threatened ally or partner is eager for deeper cooperation with the United States.

3. Army Contributions to Direct Competition.

The Army contributes to direct competition by enabling Joint Force escalation advantage across the competitive space with lethal, competent forces that are in position to take credible action at the speed of strategic relevance under conditions of both competition and crisis. These forces must also be effectively integrated with the interagency, allies, and partners. Direct competition is specific to a time, place, and issue. The implication of this is that even if the Joint

Force has overwhelming superiority overall, only those capabilities that can be brought to bear in the relevant area (and so effect friendly and adversary decision-making) matter.

- **The ability to conduct sustained multi-domain operations at the scale and tempo of great power conflict in conjunction with multinational and joint partners.**
- **Strategic readiness to project power into the relevant area at speed and scale to alter the adversary's decision calculations and deny it the leverage of threatening a *fait accompli* attack.**
- **The resilience to withstand adversary all-domain operations to deprive them of any possibility of easy victory by exploiting U.S. vulnerabilities.**
- **The ability to target adversary vulnerabilities and sensitivities to provide policymakers with leverage in a crisis.**

4. Outcomes of Successful Direct Competition.

Achieve U.S. objectives by “winning the crisis.” (Strategic) The collective military capacity and capability of the United States and its allies and partners provides sufficient leverage that a crisis with an adversary is resolved on conditions favorable to the United States.

Create favorable conditions in case of armed conflict. (Operational, Tactical) Actions taken in periods of competition and crisis set conditions so that if deterrence fails the United States and its allies are partners begin conflict under favorable conditions.

Reduce adversary leverage so that they are less likely to employ coercion through crisis brinkmanship to achieve its objectives. (Strategic) By undermining the mechanisms by which an adversary might be able to credibly threaten armed conflict, it is less likely to attempt coercion through crisis brinkmanship.

Assure and enable allies and partners so they are less vulnerable to coercion through crisis brinkmanship. (Strategic) The United States takes action to improve its ability to conduct large-scale combat operations and also improves the ability of allies and partners to do the same so that they are less prone to coercion. Also, because the adversary has less leverage to apply against them, allies and partners are more likely to compete aggressively on their own behalf.

Chapter IV. The Army in Indirect Competition: From Cooperation to Deterrence

1. Indirect Competition Today.

Indirect competition occurs in relation to interests that are either less vital or more ill-defined than with direct competition so that armed conflict is not a plausible means of achieving objectives. This encompasses a wide range of circumstances. The most common of these are the many instances where the United States and an adversary both have sustained relations or presence. This is one of the significant differences between current great power competition and the Cold War. Today, even some of the United States' closest, most long-standing allies have significant relations with adversaries. Debates within the governments of even some of our closest allies as to whether to privilege security and ties with the United States or economics and China in relation to information technology infrastructure are examples of how indirect competition occurs virtually everywhere. In many instances, the interests of the United States and the adversary might not necessarily be in tension, allowing each to pursue its interests with the partner or ally in parallel. Indirect competition becomes more acute in conditions of disorder, such as the civil wars in Syria, Yemen, or Libya. In those instances, the unsettled conditions create the possibility for external parties—global or regional powers—to gain advantage through means such as the use of proxies, support to local forces, or even small-scale combat operations.

2. The Dynamics of Indirect Competition.

Figure 5 depicts some of the illustrative actions that the United States or an adversary might take in indirect competition. The difference between it and direct competition is that in indirect competition the use or threat of armed conflict is a not plausible means to achieve policy aims. Therefore, indirect competition occurs wholly within the range of low- and medium-intensity and risk actions. The Army best provides advantage in indirect competition by providing a range of appropriate options for policymakers to achieve national aims.

When indirect competition occurs where the interests of the United States and the adversary are ill-defined, this provides all sides with the flexibility to determine whether they want to compete, cooperate, or avoid significant involvement. For instance, in cases of disorder or civil war, there might not be a natural side to support. States

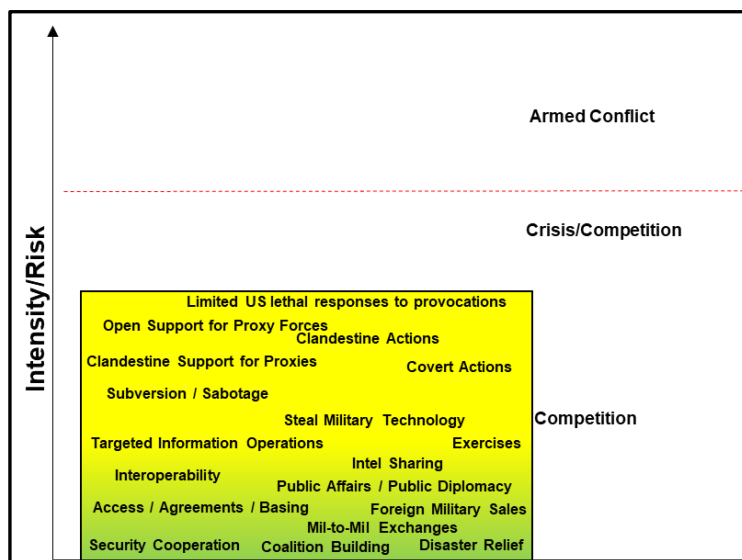


Figure 5 Competitive Space in Indirect Competition

might seek to compete through support to proxies, as is currently happening in Libya. Yet in other cases, countries that are otherwise adversarial can choose to cooperate by common support to an existing government or jointly mediating power-sharing compromises. As permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, the United States, China, and Russia often agree on such issues.

One particularly useful role for the Joint Force in indirect competition is to set conditions for such cooperation on terms favorable to the United States. This can occur when an adversary is wavering between competition and cooperation. If the Joint Force provides a wide array of low- and mid-cost options that collectively create a high likelihood of success and only poor choices for the adversary, their policymakers might conclude that they cannot compete successfully and choose to cooperate instead.

The take-away for force developers and military strategists is that in indirect competition the Army expands the competitive space horizontally by offering multiple low- and middle-cost options to Joint Force commanders and policymakers. It is also useful to have counters to the adversary's options, thereby reducing their choices.

Even though by definition there is possibility of war in indirect competition, the principle of deterrence still applies. If the Joint Force has secured a position of advantage through the right mixture of capabilities, presence, access, and influence, an adversary might choose a less intense form of competition or not attempt to compete at all. Additionally, in those instances when the adversary does choose to compete, if it is unsuccessful it might decide not to compete in similar situations in the future.

3. Army Contributions to Indirect Competition.

The Army contributes to indirect competition by enabling escalation advantage in cooperation and competition below armed conflict through offering a range of suitable (low- to moderate-risk) capabilities to provide US policymakers with multiple options for winning advantage relative to adversaries.

- **A wide-range of low- and mid-cost capabilities to achieve U.S. strategic objectives and shape the operational environment.**
- **Sustainable presence, regional expertise, and intelligence that builds understanding of the environment and the adversary.**
- **Routine engagement that fosters strong relationships with allies and partners and bolsters regional security structures.**
- **The ability to build capacity and support allies and partners to achieve their institutional, strategic, and operational objectives and to resist subversion.**
- **By providing superior value to allies and partners, Army forces help limit an adversary's influence, degrades its ability to subvert other states, and imposes costs for aggression by causing allies and partners to deepen cooperation with the United States.**

4. Outcomes of Successful Indirect Competition.

Achieve U.S. objectives in competition. (Strategic) Competitive actions directly achieve U.S. objectives through competition below armed conflict.

Create favorable conditions for future actions in competition. (Operational, Tactical) Competitive actions improve the overall operational or tactical environment, making conditions more favorable for future operations.

Create favorable conditions for other elements of U.S. government. (Operational) Competitive actions are able to create favorable conditions for other elements of the U.S. government through means such as improving overall security, creating relations that can be used for access and influence, or developing habits of bilateral or multilateral cooperation.

Alter gain, cost, and risk calculations of other actors so that competition occurs on terms more favorable to the U.S. (Strategic) Competitive actions alter the environment in a way that adversaries conclude that they are less likely to achieve their overall objectives at acceptable cost and risk due to their methods being less effective or an improvement in the capabilities of the United States and its allies and partners. This same dynamic can occur at lower levels in relation to specific adversary operational and tactical approaches, which can be diminished so that the adversary no longer considers them useful. Conversely, similar factors can cause allies and partners to be ready to compete more aggressively because they have effective counters to adversary subversion.

Enable and harden allies and partners against subversion. (Operational, Tactical) Competitive actions that diminish the adversary's ability to conduct subversion below armed conflict or to improve the resilience of allies and partners.

Impose costs on adversary. (Strategic, Operational, Tactical) Competitive actions to impose costs on the adversary at all levels from the use of individual capabilities or methods to the overall attempt to achieve its objectives through competition.

Reduce the effectiveness of the adversary's means of competition. (Operational, Tactical) Competitive actions that diminish the adversary's capabilities, methods, and approaches.

Chapter V: Competition in Action

In application, the three dynamics of competition do not occur in isolation but come together as part of the larger national competition. A single activity will often yield benefits in direct, indirect, and narrative competition. This is a good thing, particularly when resources are tight. For instance, a well-crafted multinational exercise can achieve multiple objectives in all dynamics of competition. The two illustrative cases in this chapter—inspired by recent operations—provide examples of the interrelationships among the dynamics of competition in action.

1. Hurricane Response in the Western Hemisphere.

A series of hurricanes in close succession swept through the Caribbean, causing widespread destruction and significant loss of life from both the storms and the loss of critical services afterward. Because the scope of disruption was so wide, the typical response of shifting assets from one area to another that is possible in the aftermath of a single storm was not possible. Regional transportation, power, and health systems were in disarray.

One byproduct of disasters like this are to set the stage for indirect competition. Countries remember which partners provided timely, useful assistance in times of need and which did not. In this case, both the United States and a great power adversary contributed aid. However, the adversary, because it had limited physical resources in the area, was largely limited to providing money and small teams of medical personnel. These were useful and appreciated by the affected countries, but in the initial stages of the response money was unable to buy immediate relief because economic systems had broken down and the medical teams did not have equipment or transportation to the areas where they were needed most. The United States, by contrast, with bases in the area, working relationships with partner security forces, civilian ministries, and non-governmental aid organizations; expeditionary engineering and medical teams along with air and sea transportation to move them to the hardest hit areas was able to provide timely, useful assistance.

This case illustrates several aspects of indirect competition. Because the interests of the rival powers are not in tension, there is scope for both to contribute and even to cooperate. The great power adversary did make meaningful contributions, so both it and the United States gained influence that can be later translated into advantage to advance their respective interests. Though both gained in absolute terms, however, there was a relative difference due to the magnitude and nature of the assistance provided by the United States.

It is important to note that the open-ended nature of indirect competition is not limited to disaster relief. In a multi-polar world, the United States and great power adversaries will often have simultaneous presence. In any given country, both great powers will be conducting military-to-military exchanges, providing technical assistance, hosting students for military education and training, building security force capacity, selling equipment, or procuring goods and services from the local populace. In those instances, actions will typically be centered on

advancing friendly interests rather than hindering those of the adversary. The partner is happy to send students to the war colleges of both great powers or to buy equipment from both. It requires considerable investment to win enough advantage to with a partner to completely exclude the adversary through displacement. That requires providing for all of the partner's needs—an exceptionally high bar.

The hurricane response also contributes to narrative competition because the actions in the Caribbean are noted around the world though the impact of this will vary by country. Nonetheless, the essential point is that actions in response to one event do not stay confined to that issue but reverberate worldwide. Sometimes these reactions will be mixed. In cases where the United States is assisting security forces dealing with internal or regional instability, the actions might improve the United States' reputation with some neighboring states but hurt it with others. For instance, if the United States assists a partner fighting an insurgency, it might actually lose reputation with some audiences that are sympathetic to the insurgents due to ideological, cultural, or other ties. Similarly, even responsible security assistance that contributes to stability and so is a "win" in indirect competition can be a "loss" in narrative competition if the United States' actions are misrepresented as biased against a certain group or in violation of human rights.

2. Large Multinational Exercises in the Pacific.

A large, distributed exercise, such as the recent DEFENDER PACIFIC, combining physical and virtual environments across several echelons achieves multiple effects in military competition.

An exercise on the scale of DEFENDER improves U.S. leverage for direct competition in several ways. In the Pacific, the interests of the United States, allies, and partners are in tension on multiple issues with several adversaries. An exercise that improves theater-wide command and control and the ability to deploy in ways that would be useful in multiple contingencies, the exercise simultaneously improves the ability to compete against China, Russia, and other adversarial states. The demonstrated ability to project power can alter adversary calculations in multiple potential scenarios. Of course, not all elements of a large exercise will have theater-wide effects. Actions such as conducting site surveys of potential operating sites, improving interoperability with a specific ally, or testing adversary reactions to certain tactics or procedures might help gain leverage in relation to just a single adversary or issue. Regardless of the scope, whether theater-wide or limited to a small area, large exercises expand the competitive space for U.S. policymakers (and constrict it for adversaries) by eliminating weaknesses that the adversary can exploit by coercing allies and partners with crisis brinkmanship.

As noted in Chapter III, direct competition does not occur only at crisis levels of intensity. Large exercises can also improve the ability to compete at lower levels of intensity within direct competition. Adversaries like North Korea routinely subject U.S. allies to less overt forms of competition meant to alter their behavior, such as information operations, cyberattacks, and subversive activities. These efforts can be lessened in two ways. First, the United States can

limit the effectiveness of these actions through measures like intelligence sharing, technical assistance in defending networks, and helping to build resilience, so that adversary actions are simply less effective. Second, addressing gaps at the higher levels of intensity can have a positive trickle-down effect on competition at lower levels of intensity. In the past, North Korea has resorted to violent brinkmanship resulting in the deaths of allied civilians and military personnel. To the extent that the United States and allies have no effective responses, the threat of escalation provides North Korea with leverage that weighs on friendly policymakers. The military can improve this situation by working with allies to create an array of tailored options for response at various levels of competitive intensity. Having options in case competition escalates provides policymakers with the confidence to be more assertive in reacting to provocations.

Large exercises can also improve indirect competition. Though China has been aggressive in using all of the instruments of national power to advance its interests, for the foreseeable future only some U.S. allies and partners in the region are subject to overt coercion through the direct threat of armed conflict. For the remainder, because they are not subject to an existential military threat, the big tools of U.S. military power that would protect them from a *fait accompli* attack or invasion of some territory have no assurance value. That does not mean there is no military competition in these instances, only that it is more nuanced. Multinational exercises contribute to great power competition by providing value to allies and partners through mechanisms like providing the opportunity for exchange and liaison officers to serve in operational-level headquarters, sharing sensitive intelligence, and providing logistical support to their force elements. When at some later time the policymakers of an ally or partner are balancing competing interests between the United States and China, the advantage provided by military competition is one element that can tip the balance in favor of U.S. interests.

Finally, large-scale exercises also contribute to narrative competition. In the region, these demonstrate U.S. strength and resolve in a way that is apparent to the general public and civilian policymakers, who are likely to overlook significant but less dramatic instances of military engagement. Certainly, they influence the perceptions of adversaries within the region, but they are also watched by adversaries elsewhere. For instance, demonstrations of the Joint Force's ability to integrate all domains at strategic distances shapes perceptions of U.S. strength in Iran, even if the actual exercise is far distant. The same is true for allies and partners outside of the region as well.

Chapter VI: Conclusion

The Army contributes to competition in multiple ways. In cases where the most important national interests are at stake, Army forces add by providing policymakers with leverage against adversaries across the competitive space from low intensity competition through crisis and armed conflict. Possessing capabilities to operate successfully at each of these levels of intensity expands the competitive space vertically, allowing the United States to compete at whatever intensity and through whatever means are required to best advance national interests. This also has the potential to deter adversaries from escalation.

When competition occurs over less important interests in which the threat of armed conflict is not plausible, the U.S. Army contributes by providing a wide range of low- and medium-cost and risk options. This horizontal expansion of the competitive space allows policymakers to tailor actions to the specific situation. In these instances, military competition also is often more about effective cooperation with allies and partners—providing value to them and enabling them to effectively take actions—as it is about meeting every adversary provocation with some similar response.

Finally, simply being a world-class force and demonstrating that quality through successful operations conducted in a manner consistent with institutional values fosters a positive reputation for the U.S. Army. Reliable, principled strength attracts allies and partners, who see value in forging a relationship. This general national and collective strength causes adversaries to either compete with less ambitious aims or to forego competition altogether. The Army can multiply the effect of being a lethal, competent, credible force through engagement with allies and partners, information operations, and other influence activities targeted at adversaries and regional audiences. In this communication, the effort should be focused on audiences who value national security issues and are likely to have their behavior influenced by the information provided.

The dynamics of competition framework is a conceptual aid for commanders and staffs meant to enhance understanding and improve communication by assigning terms to complex real-world interactions. It is important to note that in application, most cases of competition will not neatly match the archetypes of direct or indirect competition. In reality, national interests are ranked on a shifting spectrum of importance, and multiple issues are entangled in every policy decision. Reputation is also far more complex than a single perception uniformly held across a large group. Nonetheless, this framework is useful to the extent that it reminds commanders to always keep operations within the context of the policy objective at stake and to understand what uses or threats of the employment of force are relevant to a specific situation. How Army forces compete must be tailored to the situation.

Appendix A provides specific capabilities, activities, and investments that can be employed according to circumstances. Primarily, the Army competes by assuring our allies and partners, and deterring our adversaries from malign action. These principal contributions are depicted in Figure 6.

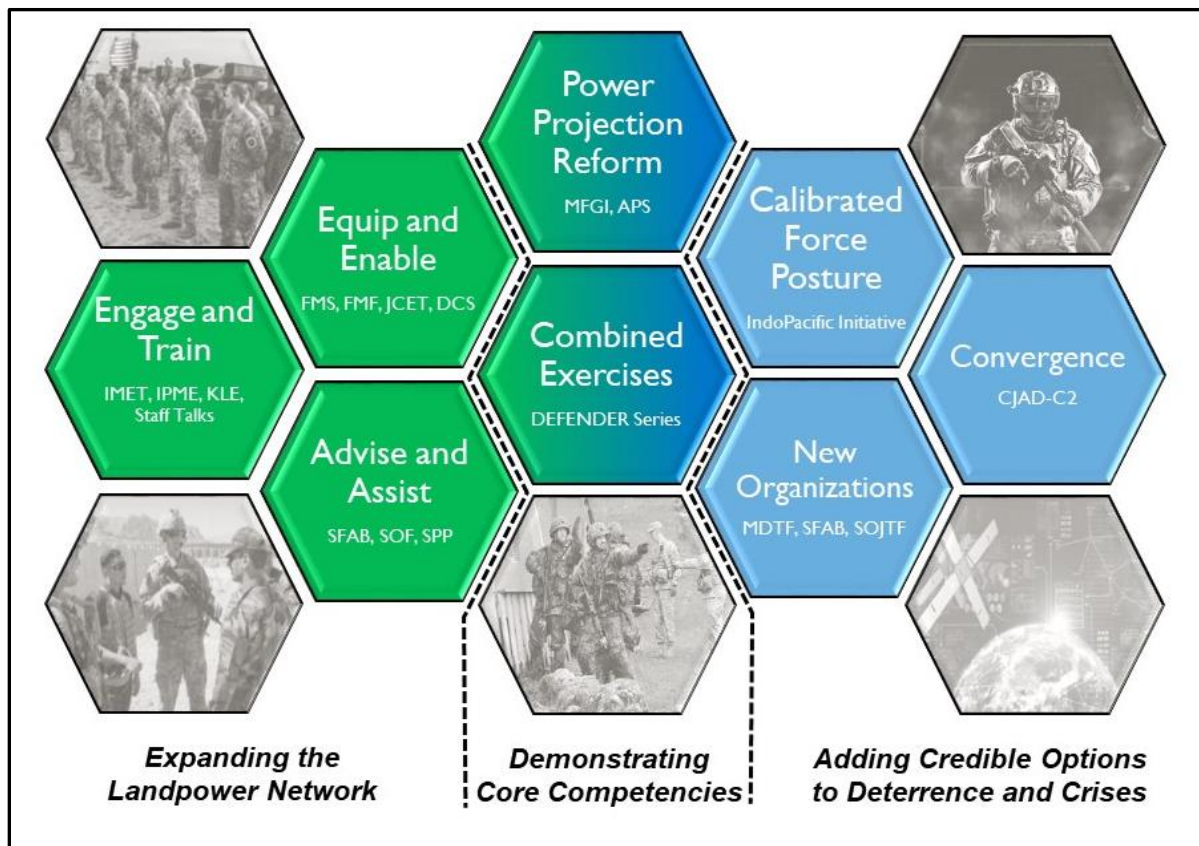


Figure 6 Principal Army Contributions to Competition

The multi-faceted nature of competition has many implications, though the most important is the need to view competition with greater fidelity and nuance. Ranking first in reputation is important but does not necessarily ensure that the United States has leverage when an adversary tries to coerce an ally. That requires investments so that military capabilities can be brought to bear at the speed and scale required to alter adversary decision-making. Similarly, being postured to deny a *fait accompli* does not necessarily translate into the ability to gain advantage with a partner that accepts assistance from multiple great powers. To compete successfully for any given interest requires prior investment. In an environment of constrained resources, the Army must anticipate which issues policymakers will prioritize, and ensure that the relevant capabilities are ready when needed.

Appendix A:

Army Activities and Effects in Military Competition

This appendix lists examples of Army capabilities and activities that contribute to the Joint Force in military competition. These capabilities and activities are arranged according to the framework of direct, indirect, and narrative competition, and aligned against desired outcomes at the tactical, operational, and strategic levels. Capabilities, activities, and their outcomes are further delineated between *advance* and *impede* actions, wherein *advance* encompasses efforts to increase U.S. leverage, advantage, or reputation, and *impede* describes efforts to mitigate or decrease adversaries' leverage, advantage, or reputation.

In reviewing these tables, readers should focus first on the capabilities and activities listed in **red bold type**. Within each box, these are the overarching capability or activity. Their major sub-elements are denoted with **black bold type**. These sub-elements often have their own subordinate parts, which are listed within the parentheses. For instance, on chart 1, **understanding of partner and ally motivations and capabilities** is the product of **sustainable presence, routine engagement, and FAOs and other regional experts**. **Sustainable presence** in turn is the product of theater commands, country teams, SOJTFs, CATFs, SFABs, forward-based forces, U.S. liaisons to allies and partners.

The **red bold type** capabilities and activities have their own outcomes but can also be subordinate elements of later capabilities and activities as well. Continuing the example in the previous paragraph, *understanding of partner and ally motivations and capabilities* achieves two outcomes in indirect competition: *create favorable conditions for future actions in competition* and *create favorable conditions for other elements of the U.S. government*. But it is also a subordinate element of *provide value to allies and partners through capacity building* (listed on the bottom of chart 1).

Readers should note that the capabilities found in the first few entries of entries of charts 1, 2, and 3 are instances of this nesting effect. These foundational capabilities and activities appear repeatedly throughout all of the charts; they are the building blocks of Army and Joint Force great power competition:

- Presence and posture
- Engagement with allies and partners
- Intelligence and understanding
- Multi-domain warfighting capability as part of combined and joint forces

1. Indirect Competition: Army Capabilities and Activities to Advance (1 of 2)

Capabilities and Activities <i>The Army gains advantage by...</i>	Relevant Outcomes	Possible Outcomes
Sustainable presence (Theater commands, country teams, SOJTF, CATFs, SFABs, forward-based forces, U.S. liaisons to allies and partners), routine engagement (State Partnership Program, staff talks, counterpart visits, exchange programs, multilateral land force conferences, U.S. personnel to foreign PME), and FAOs and other regional experts build understanding of partner and ally motivations and capabilities to enhance operations and U.S. decision-making.	2, 3	1. Achieve U.S. objectives in competition. (Strategic) 2. Create favorable conditions for future actions in competition. (Operational, Tactical) 3. Create favorable conditions for other elements of the U.S. government. (Operational) 4. Alter the gain, cost, and risk calculations of other actors so that competition occurs on terms more favorable to the U.S. (Strategic) 5. Enable and harden allies and partners against subversion. (Operational, Tactical) 6. Impose costs on an adversary. (Strategic, Operational, Tactical) 7. Reduce the effectiveness of an adversary's means of competition. (Operational, Tactical)
Sustainable presence (Theater commands, country teams, SOJTF, CATFs, SFABs, forward-based forces, U.S. liaisons to allies and partners), intelligence , and operational preparation of the environment build understanding of the operational environment to enhance operations and decision-making.	2, 3	
Routine engagement (State Partnership Program, staff talks, counterpart visits, exchange programs, multilateral land force conferences, U.S. personnel to foreign PME), combined exercises , FAOs and other regional experts , and long-term institutional capacity building (foreign military sales and financing, technical assistance) build military-to-military relationships .	2, 3	
Understanding and relationships enable the U.S. to provide value to allies and partners through capacity building (SFABs, SOJTFs, international PME, technical assistance, foreign military sales and financing, training), enablers (ISR, counter-finance and counter-threat, logistics, transportation), and operational support (SOF, SFABs, and conventional forces in advise and assist; combined planning and C2 for all-domain convergence in competition below armed conflict) by helping them achieve their institutional, strategic, and operational objectives.	2, 3, 4, 5, 7	

Key:

Black bold denotes sub-components

Red bold denotes the end capability or activity

1. Indirect Competition: Army Capabilities and Activities to Advance (2 of 2)

Capabilities and Activities <i>The Army gains advantage by...</i>	Relevant Outcomes	Possible Outcomes
Understanding, relationships, rapid power projection (theater armies, transportation, logistics, unit readiness including reserve components, and non-lethal APS stocks), civil-military operations (CATFs, logistics, medical, transportation, engineering), and interagency cooperation (liaison and fusion cells, interagency and combined planning, direct support to other gov't agencies and NGOs, authorities) provide value to allies and partners by assisting them during times of crisis, disaster, and humanitarian need and to reduce the causes of disorder through better security, governance, and quality of life.	2, 3, 5, 7	1. Achieve U.S. objectives in competition. (Strategic) 2. Create favorable conditions for future actions in competition. (Operational, Tactical) 3. Create favorable conditions for other elements of the U.S. government. (Operational) 4. Alter the gain, cost, and risk calculations of other actors so that competition occurs on terms more favorable to the U.S. (Strategic) 5. Enable and harden allies and partners against subversion. (Operational, Tactical) 6. Impose costs on an adversary. (Strategic, Operational, Tactical) 7. Reduce the effectiveness of an adversary's means of competition. (Operational, Tactical)
Understanding, relationships, interagency coordination, and having provided value to allies and partners enables the creation and maintenance of regional security structures that support international norms.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7	
Relationships and having provided value to them leads allies and partners to support U.S. competitive actions against an adversary through access, basing, overflight, intelligence, support, and operational participation.	2, 4, 6	
Understanding, intelligence, command (authorities, ability to converge capabilities), and low-to mid-cost capabilities (SOJTF and other SOF, ISR, cyber, information operations, clandestine and proxy networks) allow competitive actions against the adversary and its proxies to achieve U.S. objectives or set conditions for follow-on actions.	1, 2, 4, 6, 7	

Key:

Black bold denotes sub-components

Red bold denotes the end capability or activity

2. Indirect Competition: Army Capabilities and Activities to Impede

Capabilities and Activities <i>The Army denies adversaries advantage by...</i>	Relevant Outcomes	Possible Outcomes
Sustainable presence (Theater commands, country teams, SOJTF, CATFs, SFABs, forward-based forces, U.S. liaisons to allies and partners), intelligence , and intelligence sharing with allies and partners (military-to-military relationships, having provided value to allies and partners, alliance and other cooperative structures) enables understanding of the adversary to enhance operations and U.S. decision-making.	2	1. Achieve U.S. objectives in competition. (Strategic) 2. Create favorable conditions for future actions in competition. (Operational, Tactical) 3. Create favorable conditions for other elements of the U.S. government. (Operational) 4. Alter the gain, cost, and risk calculations of other actors so that competition occurs on terms more favorable to the U.S. (Strategic) 5. Enable and harden allies and partners against subversion. (Operational, Tactical) 6. Impose costs on an adversary. (Strategic, Operational, Tactical) 7. Reduce the effectiveness of an adversary's means of competition. (Operational, Tactical)
"Out-cooperate" with superior value to allies and partners (see chart #1) to limit, diminish, or displace adversary access, presence, and influence.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7	
Help allies and partners resist and withstand subversion through capacity building (SFABs, CJSTOFs, international PME, technical assistance, foreign military sales and financing, training), enablers (ISR, counter-finance and counter-threat, logistics, transportation), operational support (SOF, SFABs, and conventional forces in advise and assist, counterinsurgency, and foreign internal defense; cyber defense; unmasking adversary actions), civil-military operations (CATFs, logistics, medical, transportation, engineering), and interagency cooperation (liaison and fusion cells, interagency and combined planning, direct support to other gov't agencies and NGOs, authorities).	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7	
Understanding, intelligence, allies and partners ready to assist (relationships, having provided value), interagency capability, protection (planning, physical security, resilience, cyber defense), and operational capability (access, basing, overflight, authorities, liaisons with allies, partners, and interagency; SOF and other quick response forces) to respond quickly to reduce vulnerability to adversary actions below armed conflict against U.S. government personnel and citizens, government or private infrastructure, and other interests.	2, 4, 6, 7	
Adjust activities in response to adversary provocations to deepen cooperation with allies and partners.	1, 6, 7	

Key:

Black bold denotes sub-components

Red bold denotes the end capability or activity

3. Direct Competition: Army Capabilities and Activities to Advance (1 of 2)

Capabilities and Activities <i>The Army gains leverage by...</i>	Relevant Outcomes	Possible Outcomes
The capabilities, activities, and outcomes listed in chart 1, "Indirect Competition: Advance" also apply in Direct Competition.	2, 3, 4	1. Achieve U.S. objectives by "winning the crisis." (Strategic) 2. Create favorable conditions in case of armed conflict. (Operational, Tactical) 3. Reduce an adversary's leverage so that it is less likely to employ coercion through crisis brinkmanship to achieve its objectives. (Strategic) 4. Assure and enable allies and partners so they are less vulnerable to coercion through crisis brinkmanship. (Strategic)
Headquarters able to converge U.S., ally, and partner capabilities from all domains; the ability to defeat adversary A2/AD; modernized, survivable ISR; modernized and ready combined arms formations; SOJTFs and other SOF integrated at appropriate echelon; Army and Joint cyber capabilities; Army and Joint space capabilities; protection against adversary all-domain attacks throughout the depth of the close and support areas; resilient sustainment; resilient and protected communications and data networks; military deception under appropriate authorities integrated into operations; combined information operations, and realistic training and exercises build the capability and capacity to conduct combined joint all-domain operations at the scale and tempo of conflict against a near-peer adversary.	2, 4	
Understanding (chart 1), routine engagement (chart 1), theater armies, alliance structures and other command agreements, forward-based forces, SOJTFs, SFABs, and a combined joint all-domain operations framework for allies and partners to "plug into" enables building the capability and capacity of allies and partners to conduct combined joint-all domain operations through foreign military sales and financing, technical assistance visits, standards setting to promote interoperability, combined exercises to build interoperability, CTC-like training support to allies and partners.	2, 3, 4	
Understand the adversary (chart 2), intelligence, combined joint all-domain operations, information operations, cyber capabilities, and the ability to unmask adversary actions and capabilities enable the ability to target adversary weaknesses and sensitivities.	1, 2, 3, 4	

Key:

Black bold denotes sub-components

Red bold denotes the end capability or activity

3. Direct Competition: Army Capabilities and Activities to Advance (2 of 2)

Capabilities and Activities <i>The Army gains leverage by...</i>	Relevant Outcomes	Possible Outcomes
Understand the environment, allies, partners, and the adversary (charts 1 & 2); intelligence; combined joint all-domain operations; rapid power projection capability (planning, preparation of deployment infrastructure, transportation, Army Prepositioned Stocks, and high readiness forces, and deployment exercises); access, basing, and overflight agreements; all-domain protection of key assets; forward forces, and the ability to target adversary vulnerabilities and sensitivities provide options for US policymakers to show resolve and shape crisis.	1, 2, 4	1. Achieve U.S. objectives by “winning the crisis.” (Strategic) 2. Create favorable conditions in case of armed conflict. (Operational, Tactical)
Combined joint all-domain operations capability; ally and partner joint all-domain operations capability; rapid power projection capability (planning, preparation of deployment infrastructure, transportation, Army Prepositioned Stocks, and high readiness forces, and deployment exercises); all-domain protection of key assets and formations; and forward forces provide the credible ability to achieve US objectives in armed conflict at acceptable cost.	1, 2	3. Reduce an adversary’s leverage so that it is less likely to employ coercion through crisis brinkmanship to achieve its objectives. (Strategic)
Combined joint all-domain operations capability, ally and partner joint all-domain operations capability, and sustained power projection capability (transportation capacity, resilient deployment and mobilization infrastructure, depth in active and reserve components, defense industrial base, equipment and munitions stockpiles) enable a sustained so that the U.S. can prevail in armed conflict.	1, 3, 4	4. Assure and enable allies and partners so they are less vulnerable to coercion through crisis brinkmanship. (Strategic)

Key:

Black bold denotes sub-components

Red bold denotes the end capability or activity

4. Direct Competition: Army Capabilities and Activities to Impede

Capabilities and Activities <i>The Army denies adversaries leverage by...</i>	Relevant Outcomes	Possible Outcomes
The capabilities, activities, and outcomes listed in chart 2, "Indirect Competition: Impede," also apply in Direct Competition.	2, 3, 4	1. Achieve U.S. objectives by "winning the crisis." (Strategic) 2. Create favorable conditions in case of armed conflict. (Operational, Tactical) 3. Reduce an adversary's leverage so that it is less likely to employ coercion through crisis brinkmanship to achieve its objectives. (Strategic) 4. Assure and enable allies and partners so they are less vulnerable to coercion through crisis brinkmanship. (Strategic)
Understand the adversary (chart 2), all-domain protection of key assets; resilient C2; resilient and distributed sustainment and deployment nodes; secure supply chains; counter-information operations; cyber defenses; counterintelligence and operations security; military deception under appropriate authorities; and the ability to fight on conventional-nuclear battlefield all mitigate or eliminate key vulnerabilities that could be exploited by an adversary in crisis.	3	
Understand the environment, allies, partners, and the adversary (charts 1 & 2), ally and partner joint all-domain operations capability; resilient C2 (chart 3); counter-information operations; and cyber defenses all mitigate or eliminate key vulnerabilities of allies and partners that could be exploited by an adversary in a crisis.	3, 4	
Combined joint all-domain operations (chart 3); ally and partner joint all-domain operations capability (chart 3); rapid power projection capability (planning, preparation of deployment infrastructure, transportation, Army Prepositioned Stocks, and high readiness forces, and deployment exercises); access, basing, and overflight agreements; mitigation or elimination of key vulnerabilities; and forward forces provide the ability to defeat an adversary fait accompli .	1, 2, 3, 4	
Combined joint all-domain operations (chart 3), ally and partner joint all-domain operations capability (chart 3), sustained power projection capability (transportation capacity, resilient deployment and mobilization infrastructure, depth in active and reserve components, defense industrial base, secure supply chains, equipment and munitions stockpiles), unconventional warfare and the ability of allies and partners to conduct effective resistance all raise the potential cost of armed conflict for adversaries .	1, 3, 4	
Understand the adversary (chart 2) and the ability to target enemy vulnerabilities and sensitivities (chart 3) reduce adversary confidence in military capabilities.	2	

Key:
Black bold denotes sub-components
Red bold denotes the end capability or activity

5. Narrative Competition: Army Capabilities and Activities to Advance and Impede

Capabilities and Activities <i>The Army enhances the US reputation by...</i>	Relevant Outcomes	Possible Outcomes
Message successes in direct and indirect competition (charts 1-4).	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	1. <i>Influence friends by providing value to their national security communities.</i> (strategic)
Develop, field, and demonstrate modern multi-domain capabilities.	2, 4, 5	2. <i>Create opportunities by demonstrating benefits of partnership with United States to the public and policymakers of allies and partners.</i> (strategic)
Demonstrate the capability to conduct large-scale joint all-domain operations (chart 3).	2, 4, 5	3. <i>Contribute to positive national legacy that creates favorable conditions for "competition among the people."</i> (strategic, operational, and tactical)
Provide value to allies and partners through security force assistance, stabilization, civil-military operations, humanitarian assistance, and disaster relief.	1, 2, 3	4. <i>Perception of U.S. strength serves as a cognitive deterrent for adversaries.</i> (strategic)
Obey the law of armed conflict and conduct operations in accord with national values and ideals.	2, 3	5. <i>Reputation of U.S. Army provides a mental advantage over adversaries at unit- and soldier-level.</i> (operational, tactical)
Coordinate messaging with other governmental departments and support their efforts.	1, 3	
Capabilities and Activities <i>The Army diminishes adversaries' reputation by...</i>	Relevant Outcomes	
Highlight malign actions, violations of international norms, and other harmful actions taken by adversaries.	1, 2, 4	

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