

Successes and Failures of War and the Shifting Landscape: An Analysis of the
Dynamic Relationship Between the Elements of the Clausewitzian Trinity

Hannah Crosby

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Kahlib Fischer, Ph.D.
Thesis Chair

Tony Cothron, M.S.
Committee Member

James H. Nutter, D.A.
Honors Director

Date

Abstract

In his writing *On War*, Carl von Clausewitz explained the nonlinear nature of war and the inevitable chaos that occurs during times of conflict. Fundamental to his theory of war is the Clausewitzian Trinity, comprised of three elements: the people, the military, and the government. In the text, he emphasized the intrinsic relationship of these variables, observing that political objectives are the original motives for war. As such, the inherent values of the people will have a direct impact on the success of any war. In an examination of various military conflicts since the time of World War II, this paper will show that distinct objectives with measurable outcomes are fundamental to the success of the endeavor. Looking towards the future, the United States is facing an increasing threat from China. The lessons of history are on China's side. However, the United States also has a long military history, filled with valuable experience. The United States must continue to adapt and prepare for the future by understanding the enemy and making a concerted effort to project and maintain power.

Successes and Failures of War and the Shifting Landscape: An Analysis of the Dynamic Relationship Between the Elements of the Clausewitzian Trinity

In his writing *On War*, Carl von Clausewitz explained the nonlinear nature of war and the inevitable chaos that occurs during times of conflict. Fundamental to his theory of war is the Clausewitzian Trinity, comprised of three elements: the people, the military, and the government. In the text, he emphasized the intrinsic relationship of these variables, observing that political objectives are the original motives for war. As such, “The passions that are to be kindled in war must already be inherent in the people.”¹ The inherent values of the people will have a direct impact on the success of any war. As Clausewitz suggested, only a united nation can experience success in military conflict. Abraham Lincoln later echoed this sentiment when he stated, “A house divided against itself cannot stand. It will become all one thing or all the other.”² If there is endless unrest and quarreling domestically, coupled with criticism of those in positions of leadership, the nation will face increasing division and polarization, public morale will be destroyed, and the military will experience crippling defeat. Clausewitz also noted in his writing, “The same political object can elicit differing reactions from different peoples, and even from the same people at different times.”³ Political and military leaders, theorists, and analysts have attempted to understand the complexities of the wars and the resulting impacts; an accomplishment that has been easier said than done.

American history is marked by times of war and military conflicts. These wars have taken place across various eras, cultures, and geographical regions of the world with differing

¹ Carl Von Clausewitz, *On War* (Princeton University Press, 1976), 89.

² Abraham Lincoln, “House Divided” Speech, (Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC02533, 1857).

³ Carl Von Clausewitz, *On War* (Princeton University Press, 1976), 81.

intentions, capabilities, and outcomes for each. Regardless of the moment in history, the fundamental nature of war itself does not change, however, the ways of warfare are constantly evolving. The unchanging nature of war is based on the aim to change the behavior of the enemy. Clausewitz developed and defined the idea of Center of Gravity (CoG), the dominant characteristic(s) of the enemy's capabilities. The CoG is the hub of all power and movement for the enemy, the point against which all offensive energies must be directed within the operational environment. Common CoGs include key leadership, command-and-control nodes, strategic military installations, and essential resources. If the center of gravity is eliminated, the adversary will certainly crumble. Clausewitz noted there are strategic, operational, and tactical CoGs.

The fundamental strategy for war has three essential components: ends, means, and ways. Ends, the objectives and goals; means, the resources available; and ways, the methods of using the resources. The ways of warfare, however, are constantly evolving. Warfare can be limited or unlimited, with symmetrical and asymmetrical tactics. The ends, means, and ways will also change based on the circumstances. As such, the complexities of war are challenging to define and understand. Alan Beyerchen noted in his writings on Clausewitz, "He [Clausewitz] understood that seeking exact analytical solutions does not fit the nonlinear reality of the problems posed by war, and as such, the ability to predict the course and outcome of any given conflict is severely limited."⁴

In summation, when assessing the practical application of Clausewitz's theories to war, three overarching factors must be taken into consideration. First, Clausewitz understood that for an actor to experience success, each component of the trinity must be fully engaged. Likewise, if one is going to defeat an opponent, the aggressor should systematically target each element to

⁴ Alan Beyerchen, "Clausewitz, Nonlinearity, and the Unpredictability of War." *International Security*, 60.

bring about swift destruction. Second, the fundamental nature of war does not change. To achieve defeat, centers of gravity must be identified within each branch of the trinity and directly exploited. Third, the ends, means, and ways of warfare are not static, but rather dynamic. Strategists of war must understand and execute on each fundamental factor Clausewitz illustrated to experience success in military operations.

Successes and Failures of War

To accurately assess the successes and failures of American military engagements since World War II, there must be a foundational understanding of the strategic planning model and the concept of end state. The strategic planning model is employed throughout the entire operation and used to help define end state. The end state is the set of required conditions that defines achievement of the initial objectives.⁵ This model is broken down into eight key components that must be systematically addressed. To begin, strategists must understand the starting position, assess the values and principles of those involved, determine the ideal outcome, develop a vision, create goals, objectives, and an action plan, implement and monitor the plan, and continuously revise the plan. All these components should be integrated into the SMART analysis. Each component must be specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time bound.

In the United States, the Powell Doctrine is the set of criteria governing the use of American force abroad. Before military action can be taken, each question in the doctrine must be answered affirmatively. This doctrine, developed by General Colin Powell, includes six components. First, is a vital American interest threatened? Second, is there a clear and attainable objective? Third, is the action supported by the American people and international allies? Fourth,

⁵ “General Considerations for Strategy.” Air Force Doctrine Publication, last modified November 4, 2016, https://www.doctrine.af.mil/Portals/61/documents/AFDP_3-0/3-0-D04-OPS-General-Strategy.pdf

have risks and costs been fully and frankly analyzed? Have the consequences of each action been extensively considered? Fifth, have all non-violent policy means been exhausted? Sixth, is a plausible exit strategy in place to avoid endless entanglement?⁶

World War II

The United States entered the second World War after a direct attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941. Previously, the United States had refused to intervene based on the assessment that isolation was the best course of action given the circumstances. Prior to the attack, the fighting had not directly encroached upon the American domain and public support for US engagement was limited. However, by April 1941, public opinion polls indicated that approximately sixty-eight percent of Americans favored war against the Axis powers, a sharp increase compared to the twelve percent in support during the late months of 1940.⁷ The objective upon engagement was clear. The United States must extinguish the threat posed by Imperial Japan, and by extension, the remaining Axis powers, Nazi Germany, and Fascist Italy.

While the risks could not be ignored, the costs and consequences of entering the conflict were inferior to those presented by not engaging. The Axis powers threatened Allied interests on a global scale, compromised the safety and security of all nations, and embraced aggressive ideologies that would destroy fundamental freedoms essential for human existence. During the time before direct engagement, the United States had exhausted all non-violent foreign policy avenues, leaving military confrontation as the only alternative after the attack. The United States was able to confidently enter the war knowing total victory was the final outcome. The

⁶ Doug Bandow, "Resurrect the Powell Doctrine," CATO Institute, last modified October 28, 2021, <https://www.cato.org/commentary/resurrect-powell-doctrine>

⁷ American Institute of Public Opinion, "How Did Public Opinion About Entering WWII Change Between 1939 and 1941," <https://exhibitions.ushmm.org/americans-and-the-holocaust/us-public-opinion-world-war-II-1939-1941>

Americans troops had the unwavering support of the American government and public and were fighting alongside fierce and determined international partners. During the conflict, the Allied forces took decisive victories in the Battle of Midway, Battle of Normandy (D-Day), Battle of Iwo Jima, and Battle of Okinawa.⁸ During the extent of the war, the United States and Allied Forces experienced great success and were able to completely eliminate the threat of the Axis powers in 1945, bringing about resolution on all fronts.

When assessing how the Clausewitzian trinity impacted the dynamic of the American success during World War II, it is clear to see that the government, the military, and the people were all directly engaged in a positive way and the trinity remained stable. The government was comprised of leaders with extensive capabilities, experience, and determination. The individuals in key leadership roles established clearly defined objectives and maintained the capacity to affectively carry out operations. They were also able to partner with allied leaders in a way that maximized the war effort despite political disagreements. President Roosevelt of the United States, Prime Minister Churchill of Great Britain, and Premier Joseph Stalin of Soviet Russia formed the Grand Alliance which was essential to the allied victory in World War II. In conjunction with strong American leadership, the military was able to remain consistent, even in the face of defeat. The troops were invigorated by the support on the home front, and they continued to remain focused on the mission objectives. The American people were also directly engaged and displayed an intense desire to see the United States and her allies prevail in the war. Men, women, and children within the United States came together to contribute to the cause they believed was worth fighting for. Across the nation, contributions to the war effort ranged from

⁸ Kiegan Barron, "Major Battles of World War II," World Atlas, January 30, 2023. <https://www.worldatlas.com/world-wars/major-battles-of-world-war-ii.html>

growing victory gardens and rationing to the mass production of war materials. According to Victor Davis Hanson from the Hoover Institution, American production facilities produced more than all the other major powers combined with a new B-24 heavy bomber every hour and a ship from scratch every week. In addition to meeting the needs of the American troops, the United States also served as the supplier for major allies. By the close of the war, the United States had the largest Navy in history with 6,000 ships and was equipped with 34,000 fully functional B-17s, B-24s, and B-29s.⁹ In addition to the work of American adults in facilities across the nation, children were also encouraged to take part in the wartime effort in any way they could. The sustained contributions and efforts of the government, military, and the people were the foundational keys to success in World War II.

Vietnam War

When assessing how the Clausewitzian trinity fundamentally impacted the dynamic of the American involvement during the Vietnam War, the evidence suggests the bonds of the trinity were broken on numerous levels. This conclusion can be reached by evaluating each component individually. The United States intervention in the Vietnam conflict was a gradual process that occurred over a span of years. As historical research expert Heather Stur asserted, “All of the key moments in the process emerged from different contexts and the thinking of various players. However, three factors served to unify the efforts over time: communism, the Cold War, and credibility.”¹⁰ Because the American entrance and initial objectives were muddled, support for the campaign was limited and only dwindled over time, and no clear exit

⁹ Victor Davis Hanson, “Why America was Indispensable to the Allies’ Winning World War II,” National Review. May 14, 2015. <https://www.nationalreview.com/2015/05/why-america-was-indispensable-allies-winning-world-war-ii-victor-davis-hanson/>

¹⁰ Heather Stur, “Why the United States Went to War in Vietnam,” Foreign Policy Research Institute. April 28, 2017. <https://www.fpri.org/article/2017/04/united-states-went-war-vietnam/>

strategies were put into place. US involvement was costly in both time and resources including advisors, aid, and troops. The Vietnam War is a clear illustration of the integral relationship between the components of the Clausewitzian Trinity.

The critical point of failure was a total breakdown in support. During the height of the war, the United States was overwhelmed when the communist forces from North Vietnam launched a large scale, coordinated assault known as the Tet Offensive. The American forces lacked motivation to continue with the war, resulting in the complete disregard for valuable intelligence. Before the assault, military officers and intelligence analysts failed to accurately anticipate the intensity, coordination, and timing of the enemy attack despite the presence of multiple warnings. In the United States, public opinion had a negative impact on the Americans stationed in Vietnam. Most were against the war for a host of moral reasons. During the Offensive, a strategic attack was also conducted against the American embassy, a prominent symbol of the American presence in Vietnam. This attack served as a psychological assault on the American people, crippling the resolve to continue the efforts in Vietnam, and North Vietnam viewed the offensive as a strategic victory that fueled efforts against the American campaign. The United States exited the Vietnam War era broken on both an internal and external level.

War on Terror

After the calculated terrorist attack on the United States in 2001, American forces swiftly entered Taliban-controlled Afghanistan to combat Al-Qaeda leaders and operatives within the country including mastermind Osama bin Laden. During this time period, President Bush adopted a radical neo-conservative formula for global dominance. On a previously unparalleled scale, US forces were tasked with the aggressive agenda of bringing about a regime change

across the Muslim and Arab world.¹¹ The United States did not withdraw from Afghanistan after the Taliban regime fell and the insurgents receded to the Afghan mountains and Pakistan. For many years, the political and militaristic landscape of the United States' interactions in the Middle East entailed extensive political, economic, and operational resources to aid in the fight against violent extremism and terrorism.

Directly after the tragic events of 9/11, the American public collectively desired retribution against those who had harmed the nation in such an aggressive way. However, as the years of ceaseless war dragged on, support on the home front began to wane, and the troops in country felt the resulting impacts. As Mearsheimer noted, "The president and his advisors overestimated what military force could achieve in the modern world and the triumvirate of errors doomed the United States efforts to dominate the globe, severely undermining core American values and institutions within the nation, and ultimately threatening the nation's position on the world stage."¹² By the time the last American forces withdrew from Afghanistan in late 2021, the United States had demonstrated weaknesses easily exploitable by foreign actors. Additionally, many countries were left considering if the United States could commit and be consistent during a taxing engagement. The various failures of American interactions in the Middle East only serve to reinforce doubts about the reliability and influence of the United States on an international scale.

The War on Terror demonstrates an interesting component of Clausewitz's theory on war. Clausewitz surmised, "The same political object can elicit differing reactions from different

¹¹ John J. Mearsheimer. "Imperial by Design," *National Interest*; Jan/Feb 2011, Is. 111, 16-34.

¹² *Ibid.*, 30.

peoples, and even from the same people at different times.”¹³ The merit behind this assertion becomes evident in an analysis of the American involvement in the War on Terror. With respect to the trinity model, during this conflict, the government and military components became hopelessly entangled in a battle against ideology and deep-seated traditions rather than physically combatable forces. American leaders lost sight of the initial objectives for war and attempted to use military means to reform the Middle East on a grand scale. However, the American strategy only destabilized the region, increased radicalization efforts, and did very little to protect the United States homeland from acts of terror and terrorist organizations for years to come.¹⁴ As the years of ceaseless war waged on, the passions of the people shifted, and the success of American involvement decreased as a direct result. Directly after the attack on the American homeland, the people, the military, and the government were all engaged and effective. However, over time, the initial motives for war evolved into a nation building effort that was not supported by the people. Consequently, the success of American military operations waned and the government was forced to expend greater resources to maintain operational control within the region.

The Future: Competition with China

Assessing the ever-evolving global landscape is imperative for strategic leader nations such as the United States. In a militaristic context, there is immeasurable value to learning and understanding upcoming opponents. Worthy adversaries include actors capable of competition across various domains with effective influence operations in place targeting each component of the Clausewitzian trinity. Currently, the United States is facing an increasing threat from China

¹³ Carl Von Clausewitz, *On War* (Princeton University Press, 1976), 81.

¹⁴ Trevor Thrall and Erik Geopner, “Step Back: Lessons for US Foreign Policy from the Failed War on Terror,” CATO Institute, June 26, 2017, <https://www.cato.org/policy-analysis/step-back-lessons-us-foreign-policy-failed-war-terror>

after the CCP declared a “People’s War” against the US in 2019. During a speech detailing his vision for the Chinese Communist Party in January 2021, President Xi Jinping stated, “The world is undergoing great changes unseen in a century, but time and momentum are on our side. This is where our force and vigor reside, and it is also where our determination and confidence reside.”¹⁵ The President of the CCP exuded confidence and pride as he spoke these words, breathing to life the Chinese vision for the future. Media outlets across the globe likened him to a lion, proud, strong, and cunning. President Xi’s source of confidence is his knowledge of the overwhelming control he possesses around the world. The Chinese will stop at nothing to achieve their strategic goals, namely displacing the United States’ position on the world stage. The strategy stems from one originally proposed by Mao Zedong in 1956 when he proclaimed “yang wei Zhong yong” – “make the foreign serve China.”¹⁶ The CCP’s objectives include building control over other states through global expansion and extensive investments, power projection on both a political and military level, and shifting the global dynamic of power to establish a China-centric world. According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the People’s Republic of China, the Chinese objectives for the future include global development through international partnerships, true multilateralism, upholding the authority of international order, and reforming the global governance system.¹⁷ These objectives seem rather compassionate and reasonable when viewed from the Chinese perspective. However, the underlying action behind

¹⁵ Rush Doshi, *The Long Game: China’s Grand Strategy to Displace American Order*. (Oxford University Press,” 2021.

¹⁶ Peter Schweizer, *Red-Handed: How American Elites Get Rich Helping China Win*, (Harper Publishers), 2022.

¹⁷ H.E. Wang Yi, “China’s Diplomacy in 2021: Embracing a Global Vision and Serving the Nation and its People,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Dec. 12, 2021. https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjb_663304/wjzbz_663308/2461_663310/202112/t20211220_10471930.html#:~:text=China%20will%20continue%20to%20follow,we%20have%20never%20plundered%20others.

each objective is quite sinister. The key to China's success is an offensive operation that transcends all traditional boundaries to gain maximum influence, including strategically targeting and breaking down each part of the Clausewitzian Trinity.

Unrestricted Warfare

Unrestricted Warfare, written by two PLA colonels in 1999, outlined the plethora of strategies that could be employed to shift the balance of global power to China's advantage. The text challenges the traditional requirement of a strong army for conquering another country. Rather, Liang and Xiangsui present the case for a relentless offensive, targeting the United States in every stratum of society, systematically attacking the nation. This strategic offensive is designed to corrode the United States over a period of time, rather than in quick succession, for maximum advantage. The Chinese stealth offensive "reaches back centuries. They have been refining their view of history, strategic culture, and political philosophy for much longer than the United States or the West have been around."¹⁸

Historical Influence

The ideas in *Unrestricted Warfare* are greatly influenced by the works of the Chinese philosopher Confucius and military strategist Sun Tzu. Students are immersed in a "strategic culture influenced by Confucian ideas of hierarchy, harmony, and responsibility, coupled with pragmatic views on how power, wealth, and influence can be acquired."¹⁹ Confucius believed that time is a living element, constantly shifting and moving. He used this perspective on time to teach strategic planning and patience and how to maximize an outcome when the moment is

¹⁸ Robert Spalding, *Stealth War: How China Took Over While America's Elite Slept*. (Portfolio Publishers,) 2019.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 21.

right. As a leader, Confucius also stressed the power of information to create influence, and in his opinion, capitalizing on influence is the closest thing to actual power.

The Art of War, by Sun Tzu, has been studied by every generation of Chinese leaders, military personnel, philosophers, and businessmen alike, and is considered to be one of the most influential texts on war to date. *The Art of War* defines and outlines military strategy and warfare, but the ideas expressed in the text are not limited to warfare alone. Robert Spalding, a retired USAF Brigadier General commentated on an interesting aspect of the work: “For a book on warfare, a large portion of the text is devoted to explaining how to advance national interests without really going to war.”²⁰ Throughout the text, Sun Tuz suggested that the Chinese culture values intense competition as a means to further strategic goals without the danger of engaging in armed conflict, for which they are not prepared. In *The Art of War* Sun Tzu stated, “All warfare is based on deception. Therefore, when capable, feign incapacity. When near, make it appear that you are far. Offer the enemy a bait to lure him. Pretend inferiority and encourage his arrogance. Keep him under strain and wear him down. When he is united, divide him. Attack where he is unprepared; sally out when he does not expect you. These are the strategist’s keys to victory.”²¹

Ten Thousand Methods

The seventh chapter of *Unrestricted Warfare* titled “Ten Thousand Methods Combined as One: Combinations that Transend Boundaries” grants disturbing insight on the complexity and magnitude of the Chinese strategy for victory over the United States. Liang and Xiangsui noted the existence and significance of boundaries and limits can be relative in a world where all things

²⁰ Robert Spalding, *Stealth War: How China Took Over While America’s Elite Slept*. (Portfolio Publishers,) 2019.

²¹ Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, (Capstone Publishing,) 2010.

are interdependent. The writers proposed there is always a means to be found that can break through any limit to achieve an objective. However, they were clear to state that unlimited surpassing of limits is impossible to achieve. Any surpassing of limits must be conducted within certain restrictions and over a prolonged period of time. The Chinese generals surmised, “The principle is to assemble and blend together more means to resolve a problem in a range wider than the problem itself.”²²

Liang and Xiangsui expressed that warfare has begun to escape the traditional boundaries, and is demonstrating a trend towards low causality, high intensity operations. The world is experiencing evolving domains of warfare with new forms of war including information, political, economic, and academic influence. Presently, there is no domain that cannot be used for the purpose of offensive war against an enemy. The course of any war could be changed, or the outcome decided, by any number of factors, and the use of beyond-limits strategy and tactics to combine all resources in war provides the possibility for confidence in victory. As a result of this generation of evolving warfare, the relativity of methods and means is difficult to define. As such, “A means at one level serves a higher objective, while at the same time being the objective for the means at the next lower level.”²³ During times of war, methods that surpass traditional military means can be employed to achieve a desired objective.

Effective Targeting of the Trinity Model

Over the course of the past two decades, the Chinese Communist Party has systemically applied the teachings of Confucius, Sun Tzu, and Liang and Xiangsui to effectively combat the United States and render it incapacitated. To experience success against an enemy, an actor must

²² Qiao Liang and Wang Xiangsui, *Unrestricted Warfare: China's Master Plan to Destroy America*, (Albatross Publishers), 2020.

²³ *Ibid.*, 13.

first deeply understand the opponent. China has studied the innerworkings of the United States with great attention to detail and remarkable patience. Chinese leaders developed and implemented the “deep water fish” strategy, establishing thousands of agents “hidden in the deepest strata of American society” to work for Chinese intelligence services and the state.²⁴ This strategy was the key to the success they have experienced thus far. American governance, systems, morals, and mentalities are vastly different to those found within China. The Center for Strategic and International Studies conducted a survey of Chinese Espionage in the US since 2000. The study showed one hundred and sixty publicly reported instances of espionage with twenty-four percent occurring between 2000 and 2009 while seventy-six percent occurred between 2010 and 2021. The study also noted that of the reported incidents, eighty-nine occurred after Xi Jinping took power.²⁵ The CSIS study is not exhaustive by any means, but it is indicative of the Chinese focus on and commitment to exploiting the United States in every sphere of society. The CCP has been able to gain valuable insight on the United States while remaining largely elusive.

Active Operations

The Government

The White House and Congress. The sphere of political and diplomatic influence within the United States is fraught with corruption and deception. As Professor Walter Mead wrote for the *Wall Street Journal*, “America’s greatest risk is not the vulnerability of voting machines or the susceptibility of party apparatchiks. It is the erosion of ethical standards in the

²⁴ Peter Schweizer, *Red-Handed: How American Elites Get Rich Helping China Win*, (Harper Publishers), 2022.

²⁵ “Survey of Chinese Espionage in the United States Since 2000,” CSIS, Archives, <https://www.csis.org/programs/strategic-technologies-program/archives/survey-chinese-espionage-united-states-2000>

American political and business establishments that poses the greatest risk of foreign interference in the United States.”²⁶ The CCP has developed a strategic, long-running process for political influence operations within the United States. First, China had to develop a deep understanding of the American political system and which positions possess the power to the make things happen within that system. Then, the CCP had to cultivate a select group of individuals capable of completing the desired tasks within the target positions. This process is made possible through manipulating the targets, without coercion, by helping them serve their own self-interests. The concept of elite capture, first used to describe to ability for the socially advantaged to gain control of economic benefits and aid, has been generally applied to describe how political projects can be hijacked, in principle or in effect, by those who are well positioned and resourced through various means.²⁷ China targets individuals by observing their motives, calculating the possibility for alignment, then offering access to money or wielding information to gain the desired outcome for the CCP.

In the upper reaches of American politics, building relationships and striking deals is an essential part of the job. Personal engagement is a crucial part of day-to-day life and presents the perfect opportunity for influence and exploitation. The White House and Congress are comprised of individuals who either possess the power to make decisions directly or are in a position to advise those who do. China wants to shift narratives in its favor and promote pro-Beijing politicians – or sometimes just sow chaos and falsehoods to distract from risky Chinese operations. They do not stop at the national level either. China is increasingly targeting state

²⁶ Walter R. Mead, “Why Foreign Influence is on the Rise,” *Wall Street Journal*, 2021
<https://www.wsj.com/articles/why-foreign-influence-is-on-the-rise-11569885340>

²⁷ Olufemi O. Taiwo, “Identity Politics and Elite Capture,” *Boston Review*, May 7, 2020,
<https://www.bostonreview.net/articles/olufemi-o-taiwo-identity-politics-and-elite-capture/>

politicians, mayors, governors, and legislators.²⁸ The CCP has employed a top-down approach, targeting leaders at the national level, and supplementing their efforts on a state level for maximum impact. In Washington and abroad, deals can be struck with the family members of prominent officials in exchange for favorable political dealings with China. Two of the most startling examples of political influence by the Chinese are the Biden family and the family of House Speaker Pelosi.

In the White House, Hunter Biden enjoyed the position of vice president's son from 2009 to 2017. During this time, he struck numerous deals with Chinese officials and made countless arrangements on the back of his father. These venture deals included partners and investors from the Chinese elite, all of whom were granted access to private meetings in the White House with Joe Biden himself. According to a comprehensive list of email threads between Hunter and various foreign actors, it can be determined that there were at least fourteen confirmed meetings in which Joe Biden was present between 2009 and 2017.²⁹ During his time as vice president, Biden was known for being favorable towards China when constructing American policies. In a series of documents compiled by Peter Schweizer and his team, it was assessed that the Biden family received approximately \$31 million dollars from Chinese businessmen with very close ties to the highest levels of Chinese intelligence during and after Joe Biden's time as vice president of the United States.³⁰

²⁸ Joshua Kurlantzick, "China's Growing Attempt to Influence US Politics," Council on Foreign Relations, Oct 31, 2022, <https://www.cfr.org/article/chinas-growing-attempts-influence-us-politics>

²⁹ Jessica Chasmar, "Joe Biden met with at least 14 of Hunter's Business Associates While Vice President," Fox News, July 28, 2022. <https://www.foxnews.com/politics/joe-biden-met-14-hunters-business-associates-vice-president>

³⁰ Peter Schweizer, *Red-Handed: How American Elites Get Rich Helping China Win*, (Harper Publishers), 2022.

During her early years in Congress, Nancy Pelosi made a name for herself as a strong critic of the human rights practices taking place in China and even went so far as to visit the country multiple times to observe the situation in an official capacity. However, her views began to change considerably as her husband and son began to engage in commercial opportunities in mainland China. Paul has been an active investor and partner in numerous ventures on the Chinese market including the Matthews International Capital Management, an investment firm with a preference for Chinese based companies. In 2010, reports indicate that Paul held between \$5 million and \$25 million in a fund that specialized in Asian investments.³¹ Through the years, the Pelosi family made a sizable profit from various corporations that boasted Chinese investors and clients. As their family profits grew, Speaker Pelosi's aggression against China began to wane. In 2020, Pelosi blocked all efforts by Congress to investigate the origin of the COVID-19 virus even with evidence indicating a lab leak in China.³² Additionally, as tensions continue to increase between China and the United States over Taiwan, Speaker Pelosi made a visit to the small island off the Chinese mainland. Paul Jr. was in attendance on the trip; however, his name was not included in the official list of officials on the trip released by Speaker Pelosi's office.³³ In the wake of the visit to Taiwan, China imposed sanctions against Speaker Pelosi. While the statement did not outline the extent of the sanctions, it was made clear the punitive actions would also be applied to her "immediate family members."³⁴ If the Pelosi family were not profiting

³¹ Peter Schweizer, *Red-Handed: How American Elites Get Rich Helping China Win*, (Harper Publishers), 2022.

³² *Ibid*, 159.

³³ "Nancy Pelosi's Son, Who Tagged Along on Taiwan Trip, is Investor in Chinese Tech Firm," New York Post, Aug 11, 2022. <https://nypost.com/2022/08/11/nancy-pelosis-son-is-investor-in-chinese-tech-firm-report/>

³⁴ Alexandra Ma, "China Sanctions Pelosi and her Family in Revenge for her Taiwan Visit," Insider, Aug, 5, 2022. <https://www.businessinsider.com/china-sanctions-pelosi-and-family-revenge-for-taiwan-visit-2022-8>

from the Chinese state, there would be very little need for the state to apply such harsh sanctions against the entire family. The Biden and Pelosi families are not the only ones to profit from political power exchanges with China; countless other presidential and congressional figures have profited handsomely from commercial ventures that were repaid with political favors; all of which served to shift the dynamic of power away from the United States.

American Economy. Wall Street and Silicon Valley are the metaphorical kings of the economic empire in the United States. Therefore, the CCP has worked to strategically position itself within both spheres. On Wall Street, investors are encouraged to fund Chinese companies because in the stock market, the most appealing word is “growth” and China has provided it for years. The titans of Wall Street “clamor for an opportunity in China, having been lured with the promise of financial riches.”³⁵ As a result of these personal gains, Beijing is lavished in praises by the Wall Street elite who encourage the dictatorial regime in the American media, help finance more Chinese companies, and even fund some CCP propaganda efforts globally. There is also security in Beijing’s relationship with Wall Street. Whenever political leaders threaten to take a more critical stance on China’s trade protectionism, currency manipulation, or technology theft, Wall Street profiteers use their influence to push back against the suggestion.

In Silicon Valley, big tech leaders are driven by the desire for innovation. Technological advancements require large amounts of data for better integration, and consequently, China has become the most valuable resource for data. The Chinese government systematically collects large sums of data from the Chinese people while also probing other areas of the world for valuable intellectual property. In recent years, TikTok has taken the world by storm. People

³⁵ Peter Schweizer, *Red-Handed: How American Elites Get Rich Helping China Win*, (Harper Publishers), 2022.

across the globe have joined the app and actively participate on a daily basis. According to leaked audio reports from eighty internal meetings at BtyeDance, the parent company of TikTok, data engineers in China repeatedly accessed intimate information on American users between September 2021 and January 2022.³⁶ While laws in the United States prevent tech companies from accessing such information on app users, equal laws do not exist for the same companies operating in China. As American author Ian Easton brilliantly asserted, “If a user does not have to pay for the product, the user *is* the product.”³⁷ This simple statement highlights the hidden truth of social media platforms and other technologies like video games, virtual reality, and artificial intelligence. While the user sees the product for the presumed face value, the technology is designed to study the user and report critical data that can then be weaponized. As a result of the Chinese data harvest, Silicon Valley companies are eager to partner with the CCP. Unfortunately, this partnership is a stumbling block for the United States and compromises the integrity of American national security. China gains access to the development and integration of American technology, while also stealing vital American information from the technology infrastructure.

Beijing is also able to capitalize on their military capabilities from the partnership with Silicon Valley. The CCP requires civilian-military fusion, meaning any advancements made in the civilian sector must also be directly applied to the military. According to the Department of State, “a key part of MCF is the elimination of barriers between civilian research and commercial sectors, and its military and defense industrial sectors. The CCP is implementing the strategy

³⁶ Travis Clark, “Leaked Audio Revealed that TikTok Data of US users was Accessed Repeatedly in China,” Insider, Jun 17, 2022. <https://www.businessinsider.com/tiktok-us-user-data-repeatedly-accessed-bytedance-china-report-2022-6>

³⁷ Ian Easton, “The Looming Threat: The Threat of China and the Quest for Global Domination.” Lecture in Demoss 1164 at Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA, March 23, 2023.

through Chinese research and development efforts and by acquiring and diverting the world's cutting-edge technologies in order to achieve military dominance.”³⁸ This fusion allows China to reduce the gap between their capabilities and those of the United States military. In the last few years, China has increased research investments in small American technology and manufacturing firms by a staggering four hundred and twenty percent, some of which are also subcontractors to major contractors for the American Department of Defense.³⁹ Due to strategic partnerships with Wall Street and Silicon Valley, China is awarded great economic influence because the CCP has worked to strategically align their goals with the financial growth of individuals. Due to the capitalistic nature of the United States, as Americans work harder, China further solidifies its place as the center of financial control and influence within the United States.

The Military

Maritime Strategy and Expansion. American naval strategist Alfred Thayer Mahan maintained the basic view that “total command of the seas is always the best means to a great power’s grand strategic end.”⁴⁰ China presents an increasing threat to maritime security and global commerce for various reasons. Chinese success in manufacturing capabilities, port expansions, and maritime commerce create vulnerabilities in access to critical goods as well as compromising the integrity of American trading routes, military capabilities, and commercial

³⁸ “Military-Civil Fusion and the People’s Republic of China,” US Department of State, <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/What-is-MCF-One-Page.pdf>

³⁹ Paul McLeary, “DoD’s New Pushback Against Chinese Money in US Defense Industry,” *Breaking Defense*, April 12, 2021. <https://breakingdefense.com/2021/04/dod-pushes-back-against-prc-money-in-us-supply-base/>

⁴⁰ Andrew Latham, “Mahan, Corbett, and China’s Maritime Grand Strategy,” *The Diplomat*, August 24, 2020. <https://thediplomat.com/2020/08/mahan-corbett-and-chinas-maritime-grand-strategy/#:~:text=Mahan's%20basic%20view%20of%20what,enemy%20fleet%20from%20the%20seas.>

shipping. It critical to understand the implications of Chinese production in the global maritime industry. Currently, China is responsible for manufacturing ninety-six percent of all shipping containers, eighty percent of port cranes, and forty-eight percent of total shipbuilding orders.⁴¹ The United States and many allied consumers rely heavily on these Chinese manufacturing capabilities. The increasing dependence creates security threats to American ports, trading routes, and commercial vessels. China can easily exploit products they developed and sold, and this exploitation process undermines national security efforts being made by the United States.

In 2021 the Office of Naval Intelligence assessed that China has now surpassed the US and become the world's largest navy in terms of total battle force ships. China has been able to successfully manufacture more battle-ready ships than the United States within the past few years. A pentagon report concluded that China possessed a battle force of 355 ships with a projected 460 by 2030, compared to the U.S. Navy's 294 ships.⁴² While the US still maintains more experience on the seas, the Chinese are quickly bolstering their capabilities against the aging American fleet.

China has practiced strategic patience for many years while slowly and inconspicuously acquiring a global maritime portfolio worth billions. As it stands, China owns or has investments in more than one hundred ports in sixty-three countries around the world.⁴³ In the Indo-Pacific, the most notable investments include ports in Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Indonesia, Malaysia, and

⁴¹ China Power Team, "How is China Influencing Global Maritime Connectivity," April 30, 2021. <https://chinapower.csis.org/china-ports-connectivity/>

⁴² Steven Stashwick, "Growing Naval Imbalance Between Expanding Chinese and Aging US Fleets," November 9, 2021. <https://thediplomat.com/2021/11/growing-naval-imbalance-between-expanding-chinese-and-aging-us-fleets/>

⁴³ Matthew Rochat, "China's Growing Dominance in Maritime Shipping," December 18, 2021. <https://thediplomat.com/2021/12/chinas-growing-dominance-in-maritime-shipping/>

Djibouti, which is also home to the first Chinese overseas military base. These ports are strategically located at chokepoints like the Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea, the Strait of Hormuz, and the Strait of Malacca. China has also begun work on a port in Egypt near the Suez Canal, another major trade chokepoint. In Europe and the Mediterranean, China owns approximately one-tenth of the ports, most notably in France, Belgium, Spain, Italy, Turkey, Greece, and Israel. In South America, there has been exponential growth in Chinese port possession. Currently, China has major investments in Panama, strategically located near the Panama Canal, Brazil's largest port, Cuba's second largest port, as well as investments in smaller ports in Peru, El Salvador, Trinidad and Tobago, the Bahamas, Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay.

China is now in a position to assert dominance in commercial maritime shipping. Excluding the wide array of investments in overseas ports as part of the String of Pearls Strategy, mainland China has seen explosive maritime development since the early 2000s. According to a congressional report, from 2012 to 2019, the Chinese government invested approximately RMB 1 trillion (roughly \$153 billion) to expanding new port facilities and upgrading current port infrastructure. During the same time period, the American government spent less than \$110 billion on all water transportation infrastructure.⁴⁴ Currently, the Chinese coastline is home to seven of the ten busiest ports in the world. According to the Liner Shipping Connectivity Index (LSCI), which scores countries and their ports based on the level of integration into established liner shipping routes, in the first quarter of 2021, Chinese ports had an average connectivity score of 60.6, while the United States only averaged 44.5 on the index.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Matthew Roach, "China's Growing Dominance in Maritime Shipping," December 18, 2021. <https://thediplomat.com/2021/12/chinas-growing-dominance-in-maritime-shipping/>

⁴⁵ Michael J. Green, "China's Maritime Silk Road: Strategic and Economic Implications for the Indo-Pacific Region," CSIS, April 2, 2018. <https://www.csis.org/analysis/chinas-maritime-silk-road-strategic-and-economic-implications-indo-pacific-region>

China also possesses the second largest commercial shipping fleet behind Greece. China Ocean Shipping Company (COSCO) and China Merchants Group (CMG), two of the largest global maritime transportation companies, are both state-owned enterprises that received \$153 billion dollars in state support from 2010 to 2018.⁴⁶ These state-owned shipping enterprises grant China dominance in commercial maritime shipping capabilities and the resulting revenue. As a result of the strong grip China has on the global maritime transportation industry, the United States and other allied nations are at the mercy of the Chinese. America is increasingly dependent on China for valuable goods like pharmaceuticals, medical supplies, electronic equipment, textiles and fabricated products, and other manufactured consumer goods. The threats are vast due to this dependence, but the most critical is a threat to supply chain exploitation and military capabilities within the commercial sector. Similar to OPEC using oil as leverage during the oil crisis of the 1970s, Chinese control of the shipping industry has the potential to create vulnerabilities in access to essential goods.⁴⁷ Chinese commercial maritime control has direct implications on the ability to project military power and control across the globe.

Development within the United States. In addition to the steps being taken to gain maritime control on a global scale, China has also devoted resources to shift the balance of power within the continental United States. According to a report by the American Enterprise Institute, between the years of 2005 and 2022, China invested approximately \$190 billion in American production across various sectors including real estate and construction,

⁴⁶ Michael J. Green, "China's Maritime Silk Road: Strategic and Economic Implications for the Indo-Pacific Region," CSIS, April 2, 2018. <https://www.csis.org/analysis/chinas-maritime-silk-road-strategic-and-economic-implications-indo-pacific-region>

⁴⁷ Matthew Rochat, "China's Growing Dominance in Maritime Shipping," December 18, 2021. <https://thediplomat.com/2021/12/chinas-growing-dominance-in-maritime-shipping/>

manufacturing, energy, chemicals, metals and natural resources, health, transportation, and agriculture.⁴⁸ With the understanding that all Chinese investments serve both a civilian and military purpose, the data is concerning. The CCP has strategically invested in all the critical areas that impact the daily lives of Americans. A breakdown of recent investments reveals that the real estate and construction sector had sixty-three deals totaling \$32.4 billion, the manufacturing sector had sixteen deals totaling 38 billion, the energy sector had twenty-eight deals totaling 17.3 billion, the chemical sector had four deals totaling \$2.3 billion, the metals and natural resources sector had twenty-four deals totaling \$9.5 billion, the health sector had twenty five deals totaling \$7.4 billion, the transportation sector had thirty-four deals totaling \$23.9 billion, and the agriculture sector had five deals totaling \$8.3 billion.⁴⁹ Chinese leaders have assessed that American dependence on their resources and investments will have a direct correlation to the success of future confrontations. According to a DoD report, American manufacturing represents just eleven percent of gross domestic product, however it accounts for thirty-five percent of American productivity growth and sixty percent of exports.⁵⁰ These datapoints shed light on the essential role that manufacturing plays in the overall sustainment of the United States. The CCP has created the opportunity for increased dependance within the United States that will ultimately shift the balance of power in China's favor. If the United States were to engage in a direct conflict with China, essential American infrastructure would be crippled. Manufacturing capabilities would slow, and Americans would not be able to get the

⁴⁸ Derek Scissors, "Chinese Investments in the US," American Enterprise Institute, Jan 23, 2023. <https://www.aei.org/multimedia/chinese-investments-us-handout/>

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Devon Bistarkey, "US Manufacturing Ecosystem Key to Economic Growth, Innovation, Competitiveness." Department of Defense, Oct 14, 2022. <https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/3189049/us-manufacturing-ecosystem-key-to-economic-growth-innovation-competitiveness/>

critical resources they need to survive. Service capacity would be limited, and the laws of scarcity would relegate the acquisition of goods to the highest bidder leaving large sums of the American population vulnerable to both internal and external threats. The Department of Defense reported that “manufacturing chokepoints across sectors, including skilled labor, machine tools, critical chemicals and a reliance on foreign resources, directly impact operational readiness.”⁵¹ In a confrontation with the US, China would be in a position to manipulate the manufacturing system, hindering operational readiness and the overall American posture in the conflict.

In addition to the Chinese contributions to American resource manufacturing, there has been a strategic intent to amass large quantities of land across the United States. Reports from the USDA indicate that Chinese landowners with deep ties to the CCP control approximately 383,000 acres of farmland within the United States. The report also noted that between 2010 and 2021, Chinese ownership of American farmland “jumped more than twenty-fold from \$81 million to nearly \$1.9billion.”⁵² Upon closer examination, it would seem that the CCP is targeting land surrounding US military bases including Grand Forks Air Base and Laughlin Air Force Base. Both of these bases operate top-secret technologies that are vital to American intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance efforts within the US and across the globe. Garrett Bess, vice president of Heritage Action stated, “The presence of a CCP-affiliated corporation near a military installation potentially undermines the integrity of high-capability military bases,

⁵¹ Devon Bistarkey, “US Manufacturing Ecosystem Key to Economic Growth, Innovation, Competitiveness.” Department of Defense, Oct 14, 2022. <https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/3189049/us-manufacturing-ecosystem-key-to-economic-growth-innovation-competitiveness/>

⁵² Houston Keene, “Republicans Sound Alarm Over Chinese Government-Linked Farmland Purchase Near North Dakota Air Base,” Fox News, Sep 27, 2022. <https://www.foxnews.com/politics/republicans-sound-alarm-chinese-governmentt-linked-farmland-purchase-north-dakota-air-base>

jeopardizing American strategic interests.”⁵³ Overall, there has been a blatant disregard for boundaries and American leaders have done very little to prevent the Chinese operation.

The People

Academic Influence. In the United States, China has capitalized on the culture of inclusivity and awareness amongst the younger generations. Since 2004, the CCP has been funding Confucius Institutes at universities across the United States that function as an arm of the Chinese state and are allowed to ignore academic freedoms granted to other educational institutions. These centers for education are used as a key element of China’s soft power against the United States, teaching political lessons that unduly favor China.⁵⁴ Educators are pressured to ignore sensitive issues, rather presenting a more “culturally acceptable” version of Chinese history. The American youth are not educated on the horrors of Tiananmen Square, the Cultural Revolution, or the genocidal treatment of the Uyghurs, rather, they are taught to admire Marxist-Leninist-Maoist-Xi thought.⁵⁵ Additionally, American universities are limited in their speech and advocacy rights for fear of upsetting Chinese officials. Academic institutions that house Confucius Institutes are not allowed to engage with leaders or promote topics that do not align with the CCP including discussions on the independence of Taiwan or the religious practices of Tibet. A staff report produced in 2021 by the Senate’s Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee indicated that there were fifty-five operational Confucius Institutes and five

⁵³ Houston Keene, “Republicans Sound Alarm Over Chinese Government-Linked Farmland Purchase Near North Dakota Air Base,” Fox News, Sep 27, 2022. <https://www.foxnews.com/politics/republicans-sound-alarm-chinese-government-linked-farmland-purchase-north-dakota-air-base>

⁵⁴ Lee Edwards, “Confucius Institutes: China’s Trojan Horse,” The Heritage Foundation, 2022, <https://www.heritage.org/homeland-security/commentary/confucius-%20institutes-chinas-trojan-horse>

⁵⁵ Ibid.

hundred and nineteen CCP-funded Confucius Classrooms in K-12 schools across the United States.⁵⁶ As a result of this careful cultivation, students only receive a propagated understanding of China. In turn, there is an upcoming generation of American political leaders and businessmen alike who do not have the necessary understanding of Chinese history and adversarial influence to assess interactions with China and protect the United States from pervasive ideology.

Social Perception and Media Influence. The key to a successful offensive is ideological subversion, effectively manipulating the perception of reality. According to Yuri Alexandrovich Bezmenov, this process includes four key components. Demoralization, which takes fifteen to twenty years to execute, destabilization, which takes two to five years, crisis, which can happen almost instantly, and then normalization, which last indefinitely: “The great masters of warfare techniques during the 21st century will be those who employ innovative methods to combine various capabilities so as to attain tactical, campaign, and strategic goals.”⁵⁷ The power that is wielded through news outlets and media platforms by anyone capable of typing on a keyboard is a harrowing realization intrinsic to the digital age of the modern generation. This capability provides the perfect opportunity for maximum influence on the American public with little to no personal interaction. The CCP tasks millions of Chinese citizens with the duty of constructing posts on social media promoting party policy as well as constantly assessing the presence of disinformation and misinformation globally. In 2016 President Xi commented, “Wherever the readers are, wherever the viewers are, that is where propaganda reports must extend their tentacles.”⁵⁸ The carefully curated online image of the Chinese government is a critical part of

⁵⁶ Jack Bradley, “Lawmakers Call for End to CCP’s Influence on US Education,” April 12, 2021. <https://youngkim.house.gov/media/in-the-news/lawmakers-call-end-ccps-influence-us-education>

⁵⁷ Qiao Liang and Wang Xiangsui, *Unrestricted Warfare: China’s Master Plan to Destroy America*, (Albatross Publishers), 2020.

the long-running influence operation against the United States. Social support is fickle at best, the key however, is perception. Most individuals simply jump on the bandwagon with their peers in an effort to gain acceptance and importance in the digital world. As a result, when the narrative is controlled, and social perception is supportive, media becomes an advantageous force multiplier for CCP goals.

Censorship is the dominant way that Beijing maintains control of their presence in the media. Over the years, Chinese officials have gone to great lengths to mediatize the presentation of their homeland, CCP political actions, and values. The unspeakable actions of Tiananmen Square, the persecution of the Uyghurs, and the dire conditions of the Winter Olympics, among other things, have all been swept under the metaphorical rug and buried under millions of pro-Chinese posts on social media. For every post criticizing of the CCP, there are ten socially appealing to take its place. Once the approved posts are published, the Chinese government counts on the digital society to have a positive perception and further the dissemination process globally. When the natural course of dissemination is insufficient, the CCP turns to harassment, intimidation, and cyberbullying to silence news or opinions that are disfavored by the Chinese government.⁵⁹ All the while, the American public continues to go unaware to the true brutality of the CCP. Influence of the media is one of the most effective and lucrative techniques employed by the Chinese government. Moreover, this avenue grants access to all the other various spheres of influence within American society.

⁵⁸ Sarah Cook, "Beijing's Global Media Influence 2022," Freedom House, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/beijing-global-media-influence/2022/authoritarian-expansion-power-democratic-resilience>

⁵⁹ Ibid.

Current United States Posture

Assessment

In recent years, there has been a focus on returning to normal military posture around the world and furthering American strategic policy planning and decision making. After the 2021 Global Posture Review, there appeared to be a consensus among military and policy leaders in Washington to prevent conflicts that would force the United States to display a show of strength or engage militarily. Commentator Becca Wasser also asserted, “The military posture is incongruent with the broader US defense strategy, instead reflecting outdated interests and requirements and the sticky, inelastic nature of force movements and basing access.”⁶⁰ This strategic intent is rather alarming considering the current world circumstances which have developed during the past few years. Foreign actors like China and Russia are actively demonstrating increased military power and strategic political advantage while the United States struggles to maintain its status as a global superpower.

When assessing the current approach to national security and the American posture, US leaders appear to have lost sight of some of the significant foundational elements included in strategies of the past. The 1986 Reagan National Security Decision Directive is a valuable benchmark for comparison with current and upcoming directives. The Reagan administration faced many complex international issues that required strategic, resilient, and innovative diplomatic thinking which were reflected in the 1986 NSDD. The 1986 directive was forward and concise in language with clearly defined and described goals, objectives, and strategies. The document summarized the success of the strategy was dependent on the “ability to wage a successful competition for influence among less developed countries, the ability to influence

⁶⁰ Becca Wasser, “The Unmet Promise of the Global Posture Review,” War on the Rocks, Dec 30, 2021, <https://warontherocks.com/2021/12/the-unmet-promise-of-the-global-posture-review/>

events beyond direct American control, and the ability to project military power abroad in defense of United States interests.”⁶¹ These foundational principles are still valuable and relevant decades later, but the current strategy seems to invert traditional national security strategy formulations that were successful in the past. The present guidance places an emphasis on perceived shortcomings in domestic issues rather than external threats that could have critical impacts on the security of the United States both at home and abroad.

In October 2022, the Department of Defense released its Strategic Reviews for 2022 including the National Defense Strategy, Nuclear Posture Review, and Missile Defense Review. The public commentary available reviewing the classified documents highlighted “four top-level defense priorities the DoD must pursue to strengthen deterrence including defending the homeland, paced to the growing multi-domain threat posed by the PRC and prioritizing the PRC challenge in the Indo-Pacific region.”⁶² The shift in focus from recent years is a positive sign, however, the United States must work to compensate for the time lost with the misaligned priorities of years past. Additionally, excerpts from the 2022 Posture Review revealed the DoD “established priorities to support broader, whole of government efforts to develop terms of interaction with China that are favorable for American interests and values, while still maintaining strategic competition and enabling the pursuit of cooperation on common challenges.”⁶³

⁶¹ Ronald Reagan, National Security Decision Directive Number 238. September 2, 1986.

⁶² US Department of Defense, “Department of Defense Releases its 2022 Strategic Reviews – National Defense Strategy, Nuclear Posture Review, and Missile Defense Review,” October 27, 2022, <https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/3202438/dod-releases-national-defense-strategy-missile-defense-nuclear-posture-reviews/#:~:text=The%202022%20National%20Defense%20Strategy,and%20partners%20on%20shared%20objectives>.

⁶³ USNI News, “2022 National Defense Strategy, Nuclear Posture Review,” October 27, 2022. <https://news.usni.org/2022/10/27/2022-national-defense-strategy-nuclear-posture-review/#:~:text=The%202022%20NDS%20advances%20a,stable%20and%20open%20international%20system>.

Critical Resource Allocation

Due to social demands like failing welfare systems and carrying capacity challenges within the homeland, the American government had been forced to reallocate resources away from expanding maintenance and advancement projects in other areas such as the American military and intelligence community. Recently, Congress made the commitment to enact approximately \$130 billion in discretionary spending cuts which have direct impacts on the defense budget. Mike Rogers, Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, heatedly remarked, “A budget that proposes to increase non-defense spending at more than twice the rate of defense is absurd. The President’s incredibly misplaced priorities send all the wrong messages to adversaries of the United States.”⁶⁴ He is not the only individual who maintains this view, and many are concerned with the far-reaching impacts of such misaligned spending. While foreign actors across the globe are innovating and prospering, the United States must address only the most pressing needs and threats while rapidly increasing the national debt. The United States is now faced with the challenge of rapidly emerging innovation and competition from various actors in other parts of the world and “the US is reluctant to frame the deteriorating relationship with China as something other than what it is: a new cold war.”⁶⁵ As it stands, the United States is not prepared for intense innovative competition from actors like China and their affiliates which creates a lack of preparedness for upcoming global and domestic challenges. This reallocation of resources and increasing strain on the United States provides the perfect opportunity to execute critical strikes against the United States and her allies.

⁶⁴ Bryant Harris, “GOP Blasts ‘Inadequate Biden Defense Budget as it Vows Spending Cuts,” Defense News, Mar 10, 2023. <https://www.defensenews.com/congress/budget/2023/03/10/gop-blasts-inadequate-biden-defense-budget-as-it-vows-spending-cuts/>

⁶⁵ Robert Daly, “On the Horizon 2023 – China” Wilson Center, Jan 6, 2023. https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/horizon-2023-china?gclid=Cj0KCQjww4-hBhCtARIsAC9gR3ZOWNvX96C5SP9kL7c3uT7m2JpFTbqL0qPOR8eupowREcS2G0OUc6QaAlqzEALw_wcB

Long-Term Landscape: A New Cold War Era

Currently, the United States military, intelligence community, and private sector are faced with the challenge of rapidly emerging innovation from various countries in other parts of the world. China is expected to be completely prepared for advanced technology warfare by 2025.⁶⁶ Time is a vulnerability for the United States, new developments and advancements must be made daily, not yearly. However, “Perfection is the enemy of progress” and the United States continues to encounter challenges that are difficult to overcome. In a lecture given by Dr. Rita Bush who serves as the Deputy Chief of the Computer and Analytic Sciences Research Group at the NSA, Dr. Bush outlined four steps must be completed for the successfully creation of sustainable innovation.

First, there must be creative problem formulation which identifies the various weaknesses and outdated features within a system. Second, strategic process execution is required. This means advancement must be applicable and ready for implementation in all areas of the military and intelligence community. Third, there must be the ability to maintain a lasting impact over time. The innovation must be able to evolve and take shape as demands evolve. Lastly, the innovation must be resilient; it cannot be susceptible to invasion or influence from outside actors.⁶⁷

The People’s Republic of China has been assessed to be the only country fully capable of mounting a deadly challenge to the United States on all fronts. The most critical elements threatened are international order, influence operations, science, military, and economics. To successfully mount this challenge, China has undergone rapid modernization using the strict implementation of rules-based order and strengthening global partnerships. Presently, Chinese

⁶⁶ Rita Bush. “Government and Public Fusion: The Future of AIML,” Lecture at Intelligence and National Security Summit in Washington DC, Sep 12, 2021.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

leaders believe they are in a time of strategic opportunity given the shift towards a China-centric eastern hemisphere and are encouraging the Chinese people to unify. President Xi stated, “In the coming period, the risks and challenges we face will only increase and become more severe. Only when all of the people think in one place, work hard in one place...can we continue to win new battles.”⁶⁸ Consequently, most southeast Asian countries feel increasing pressure to choose between ties with the United States or China. This puts the United States in a precarious position.

The Chinese military has also experienced a rapid transformation since the early 1990s. In 2021, the PRC announced a military budget increase to \$209 billion continuing the twenty-year annual increase in defense spending.⁶⁹ This is a sharp contrast to the defense spending of the United States, which is continuing to suffer drastic cuts on a yearly basis. The key to the rapid modernization is the adoption of a system vs. system approach that aims to adapt to and improve upon every militaristic advancement made by the United States military. The emergence of Chinese military technologies resembling those of the American F-22 fighter jet and MQ-9 Reaper drone show that China is slowly bridging the chasm with the US due to ongoing intellectual property theft.⁷⁰ This has been successfully accomplished through a surge in the hostile reproduction and exploitation of American defense products. In addition, there have been increasing developments in the Chinese strategic nuclear force. In 2022, the DoD assessed that China had more than four hundred operational nuclear warheads in its arsenal and if the

⁶⁸ Laura He, “Xi Hits Out at US as He Urges China’s Private Firms to ‘Fight’ alongside Communist Party,” March 7, 2023. <https://www.cnn.com/2023/03/07/economy/china-two-sessions-xi-jinping-speech-us-challenges-intl-hnk/index.html>

⁶⁹ “Military and Security Developments Involving the People’s Republic of China,” Department of Defense, Nov, 3 2021. <https://media.defense.gov/2021/Nov/03/2002885874/-1/-1/0/2021-CMPR-FINAL.PDF>

⁷⁰ Mark Moore, “China Reportedly Stole US Military Technology for J-20 Fighter Jet,” March 9, 2023. <https://nypost.com/2023/03/09/china-reportedly-stole-us-military-technology-for-its-j-20-fighter/>

modernization effort continues, the Chinese could amass more than fifteen hundred by the year 2035.⁷¹ Unfortunately, the United States has no plausible way to enforce any sort of regulation over the Chinese nuclear development project or even apply pressure to deter the efforts.

Artificial intelligence and machine learning are the future of advanced technologies in the modern era. For the United States, there is still a large sum of work to be done in the AIML field. As the situation stands, there are very few clear and concise commands for how to proceed on advancements and there are significant limitations on the individuals creating and running AIML within the United States. For the PRC, future warfare is based on emerging and disruptive technologies. The PLA is actively “exploring next-gen operational concepts for intelligitized warfare, such as attrition warfare by intelligent swarms, cross domain mobile warfare, AI-based space confrontation, and cognitive control operations.”⁷² Currently, the biggest competitor of the United States does not face the same restrictions and regulations that the United States must comply with and work around. China is willing to give up individuality and democracy for the sake of strength and the overall advancement of the state.

Not only does China present a meaningful threat to AIML capabilities, but algorithmic advancements themselves present a threat. Pretrained models can produce significant threat vectors that cannot be assessed effectively enough to prevent such vectors in a timely manner. Successful AIML advancements within the United States requires two essential elements.⁷³ First,

⁷¹ Jim Garamone, “China Military Power Report Examines Changes in Beijing’s Strategy,” Department of Defense, Nov 29, 2022. <https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/3230682/china-military-power-report-examines-changes-in-beijings-strategy/>

⁷² “Military and Security Developments Involving the People’s Republic of China,” Department of Defense, Nov, 3 2021. <https://media.defense.gov/2021/Nov/03/2002885874/-1/-1/0/2021-CMPR-FINAL.PDF>

⁷³ Rita Bush. “Government and Public Fusion: The Future of AIML,” Lecture at Intelligence and National Security Summit in Washington DC, Sep 12, 2021.

the United States must own the system end to end. This is a fairly challenging request due to the significant amount of American outsourcing in the technology industry. Most of the existing systems are jointly owned and developed by various collaborating groups from around the world. Second, the program must be fully deployable from a single system maintained solely by the United States. Currently, most of the known AIML capabilities require various contributors with various systems to successfully operate. Large American defense contractors like Lockheed Martin invest in partnerships across the globe to develop technologies, foster innovation, and feed supply chains worldwide.⁷⁴ In the future, the United States must gain AIML independence and function to defend against threats from outside actors in the realm of advancing technologies.

Space also presents a unique challenge for the United States because of strategic competition. Presently, both the United States and China aspire to be the leader in space for various reasons. As it stands, the Americans and Chinese share satellite hardware and software. As part of the larger Belt and Road Initiative, the PRC has designed a “Space Information Corridor.” According to the DoD, the most important elements of the project include the Beidou satellite navigation system, the Fengyun weather satellite constellation, terrestrial satellite control, and cutting-edge data relay nodes.⁷⁵ This poses significant security risks for the United States. Therefore, it is critical the United States seizes firm control of the prime position in space. Geospatial capabilities present both strategic and commercial opportunities for advancement. There are opportunities for emerging technology, resilient systems, operational control, and

⁷⁴ “Lockheed Martin Partners with Uni of Adelaide on Machine Learning,” Lockheed Martin News, Oct 9, 2018. <https://lockheedmartinau.mediaroom.com/2018-10-9-Lockheed-Martin-partners-with-Uni-of-Adelaide-on-machine-learning>

⁷⁵ “Military and Security Developments Involving the People’s Republic of China,” Department of Defense, Nov, 3 2021. <https://media.defense.gov/2021/Nov/03/2002885874/-1/-1/0/2021-CMPR-FINAL.PDF>

various other advancements. Being able to manipulate timing, precision, and location are critical factors that would present both political and economic opportunities. Currently, China also has advanced anti-satellite capabilities that the United States does not possess. This is an enormous challenge that the American intelligence community and military must work together to overcome while simultaneously accelerating toward leadership in advanced space capabilities.

Moving Forward

In Federalist No. 22 Alexander Hamilton surmised, “One of the weak sides of republics, among their numerous advantages, is that they afford too easy an inlet to foreign corruption.”⁷⁶ While he was a strong proponent of the Constitution and the values it established, Hamilton also understood the vulnerabilities inherent a system like that of the United States. Individual rights and liberties do not come without tradeoffs, but they must be protected at all costs. American citizens enjoy many liberties that citizens in the People’s Republic of China do not. Americans are free from the oppression of dictatorships and absolute government control. However, unlike the United States, the Chinese Communist Party is far less susceptible to outside influence because of the rigid control they maintain over their systems, people, and resources. When assessing how each component of the Clausewitzian Trinity model can be better defended moving forward, it is important to note interdependency between the three elements of the trinity. In the future, “Protecting the US homeland and prosperity and diminishing China’s ability to harm the US will require a whole-of-government and whole-of society approach.”⁷⁷ Vulnerabilities will still exist because of the nature of democracy and liberty, however, threats to

⁷⁶ Alexander Hamilton, *Federalist No. 22*, Library of Congress, Dec 14, 1787.
<https://guides.loc.gov/federalist-papers/text-21-30>

⁷⁷ “Winning the New Cold War: A Plan for Countering China,” Heritage Foundation, March 28, 2023.
<https://www.heritage.org/asia/report/winning-the-new-cold-war-plan-countering-china>

the United States can be limited with the implementation of protective measures that will better serve to counter Chinese efforts.

Government

Within the American government, there are three main areas that need to see improvement including current priorities and precedents, transparency within American leadership, and limits on the ability for Chinese backed parties to gain strongholds in the American economy and homeland. The United States will be better prepared for the impending confrontation with China if there is a realignment of priorities to accurately reflect the needs of the people, the military, and global interests. American leaders have abandoned the principles learned through hard lessons in historical confrontations with adversaries. The decisions of multiple administrations, compounded over time, have only left the United States more dependent on China. Leaders within the White House and Congress must revitalize American capabilities and create a national focus on independence. This will begin to change the current posture of the United States, increase operational readiness, and bolster the spirits of the citizens to encourage engagement. Greater transparency from leaders of the United States is also vital to the progression effort. Leaders must agree to give up certain personal privacy privileges while they serve in a position of power and exercise influence over the nation. If they do not wish to abide by such strict guidelines, they do not have to run for office. Congress and the voters are well equipped to debate and establish an acceptable standard for transparency amongst the leadership of the nation. The government must also strive to protect the nation against Chinese strongholds within critical sectors like real estate, manufacturing, and the economy. This shift will promote independence and will help these sectors remain stable during future conflicts.

American systems will not be at the mercy of the enemy if there is an emphasis on US self-sustainment.

Military

With respect to the United States military, the most critical step forward is a reprioritization of defense funding. A continuing trend in budget cuts is not conducive to dominance and sustainability. Currently, there is a disproportionate amount of funding that is being diverted to efforts like the war in Ukraine in comparison to funding that is focused on reinvigorating the American military. The continued misappropriation of funds severely limits the ability for the United States to project power on a global scale. The United States must prioritize the continued development of the Navy, Marines, Army, Air Force, and Space Force so the nation is equipped to effectively combat and eliminate threats. China is seeking every advantage and they certainly will not reduce their investments in the Chinese military. The military should be prepared to defend critical global assets like Taiwan and have the willingness to restore and enforce deterrence. Innovation should also be an essential priority for the military. Time is a vulnerability for the United States, new developments and advancements must be made daily, not yearly. American leaders need to address the role that China maintains within DoD partners and adapt accordingly. The integrity of defense supply chains must be preserved. There must also be an increase in military-civil fusion efforts and a reduction in the dependance on foreign components for critical defense capabilities. The ability for the United States' military to project power on a global scale is a critical component of globalism and international order.

People

The role of American citizens must not be overlooked in the trinity model. While it might appear to be the least threatening element of the trinity, the power of the people is a force to be

reckoned with. The power lies with the people. Moving forward, the United State should seek to create public awareness about Chinese global aggression, influence operations, and their ambitious strategy for international dominance and hegemony. Right now, Americans are either uneducated or unwilling to see the destructive actions of the CCP. In the future, the United States must address Chinese exploitation of the media and social platforms. Preventing shifting narratives and prioritizing the dissemination of fact-based information is essential for success. Chinese influence must be cut out of academia, state and local governments, and the digital world. While the people cannot be privy to every dealing due to national security risks, it is still the duty of the government to provide the people with vital information. There is a unique relationship between the government, the military, and the people within the United States. Each component is only as strong as the other two. American leaders must not underestimate the impact that informed, or even uninformed individuals, groups, and communities can have on the long-term success of the United States.

Conclusion

As Clausewitz suggested, only a united nation can experience success in military conflict. For years, leaders, theorists, and analysts have attempted to understand the complexities of the wars and the resulting impacts; an accomplishment that has been easier said than done. American history is most notably marked by times of war and military conflicts. These wars have taken place across various eras, cultures, and geographical regions of the world with differing intentions, capabilities, and outcomes for each. Regardless of the moment in history, the fundamental nature of war itself does not change, however, the ways of warfare are constantly evolving. The unchanging nature of war is based on the aim to disarm the enemy. Looking towards the future, the United States is facing an increasing threat from China. The lessons of

history are on China's side. However, the United States also has a long military history, filled with valuable experience. The United States must continue to adapt and prepare for the future by understanding the enemy and exploiting the strategic centers of gravity. China must not be allowed to further their strategic goals against the United States. Countless nations around the globe depend on the United States for protection and resources. In the global landscape, China threatens the integrity of the American homeland, interests, and allies. As such, appropriate action must be taken to accurately assess the CCP threat and project power to counter the nefarious efforts of the People's Republic of China.

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