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**RETURNING TO COMPLEX STRATEGIC ANALYSIS: A DISCUSSION ON THE
DIMINISHING WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY FOR UNITED STATES NUCLEAR
POLICY PREPARATION WITH RESPECT TO CHINA**

A Master's Thesis

Presented to

The Graduate College of

Missouri State University

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Science, Defense and Strategic Studies

By

Christopher Keith Giuliano

May 2020

RETURNING TO COMPLEX STRATEGIC ANALYSIS: A DISCUSSION ON THE DIMINISHING WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY FOR UNITED STATES NUCLEAR POLICY PREPARATION WITH RESPECT TO CHINA

Defense and Strategic Studies

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Chris Giuliano

ABSTRACT

American upheaval over the Chinese technologically advanced strategic threat permeates throughout the government and political culture. The response to this fear is a somewhat nascent reactive U.S. policy toward China as it relates to strategic weapon systems. The U.S. currently is responding by attempting to revitalize an aging nuclear architecture, and re-prioritize strategic weapons in U.S. defense spending. However, U.S. policy must move beyond justifying nuclear weapons and requesting increased funding. What is necessary for this balance beyond an arms race is the intellectual prescription for the calculated employment or fielding of those arms. Ultimately, this paper suggests the U.S. develop a Chinese facing strategic weapons policy consisting of a phased approach of temporal periods with associated policies, technological pursuits, and arms control implications - similar to those posited in the early stages of the Cold War. This paper assessed formal U.S. policy documents, de-classified documents, and federal intelligence reports and testimonies to understand more completely nuclear/strategic weapon force postures. The research canvassed publications from well-known Western think tanks, diplomats, and officials; as well as comparable non-Western, primarily Asian sources for a more complete analysis of culture, economy, and policy. The paper concludes that Chinese nuclear force posture and economic dynamics provide a window for the United States to prepare its own strategic forces and policy to better address the growing threat. This type of complex strategic analysis proved critical to responsive nuclear force postures in the Cold War. An assessment of Chinese strategic culture provided insight into how to produce an effective and dynamic U.S. nuclear policy. Lastly, a sample time-bound force development road map depicts the utility and applicability of such a model, while making some key recommendations for future policy.

KEYWORDS: Chinese nuclear posture, U.S. nuclear policy, nuclear strategy, Chinese strategic culture, strategic periods, Cold War and current policy, Chinese economic challenges, U.S.-China rivalry, arms race, great power competition.

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In the interest of academic freedom and the principle of free speech, approval of this thesis indicates the format is acceptable and meets the academic criteria for the discipline as determined by the faculty that constitute the thesis committee. The content and views expressed in this thesis are those of the student-scholar and are not endorsed by Missouri State University, its Graduate College, or its employees.

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INTRODUCTION

A somewhat nascent reactive fear drives the current U.S. policy toward China as it relates to strategic weapon systems. The Cold War concepts of strategic balance of terror, nuclear parity, and mutually assured catastrophic responses are familiar to most American decision-makers. However, far from a well-reasoned and detailed strategy, our nuclear and strategic weapons posture rises on the laurels of a crude fear of the other. This fear is crude primarily because it is an initial reaction to a perceived or impending technological imbalance. The current National Security Strategy (NSS) states “China ... challenge[s] American power, influence, and interests, attempting to erode American security and prosperity. They are determined to make economies less free and less fair, to grow their militar[y] ...and expand their influence.”¹ This strategy reads as an initial call to action. The strategy targets primary adversaries, and identifies points of contention: “China [is] developing advanced weapons and capabilities that could threaten our critical infrastructure and our command and control architecture... Its nuclear arsenal is growing and diversifying.”² This type of language ushered in the return of great power competition as the central threat to U.S. interests. Here, the NSS characterizes the threat as advanced strategic weapon systems designed to hamper American security.

The acceptance of the great Chinese threat asserted by the NSS penetrates all levels of American governance and political commentary and theory. A publication from the National Defense University Press (NDU) provides in depth analysis of the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) reform and modernization. The NDU document also spotlights the American fear of

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1. United States White House. *National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington D.C.: GPO, 2017), 2, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf> (accessed January 2019).
 2. Ibid, 8, 25.

growing Chinese strategic might. The publication affirms, “Reforms to the broader Chinese armed forces... could permit... Beijing a strong hand in gray zone operations against other claimants... Moreover, a Chinese military [with] advanced and innovative weapons would be an even more formidable strategic competitor over the long term.”³ Much of the rhetoric consists of conditional projections, but the message is clear. Act now to avoid future systemic rebalancing or even peril. In an annual Department of Defense (DoD) report to Congress on the disposition of Chinese military strength, the DoD asserts that Chinese pursuits seek to increase military prowess to “expand the country’s international influence”.⁴ Here the DoD embraces and confirms the White House image of America under siege. Prominent members of academia further the concerns of the U.S. executive branch. University of California Berkley professor and Chinese expert, Lowell Dittmer, suggests that the U.S. fears a change in the status quo of its dominant global authority. This fear is predicated on China’s economy, even in conservative estimates, continuing down an unstoppable trajectory and soon surpassing that of the United States across multiple metrics; particularly as it relates to gross domestic product (GDP).⁵ Upheaval over the Chinese technologically advanced strategic threat permeates beyond the executive branch and academia, and receives bipartisan support from the United States Congress. Republican Representative Michael Waltz feared that a continuing resolution would “put U.S. defense behind bad actors like ... China” and called for joint political pressure on “China’s

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3. Arthur Ding, et al, “Chairman Xi Remakes the PLA: Assessing Chinese Military Reforms” (Edited by Phillip Saunders, National Defense University Press, 2019), 723.
ndupress.ndu.edu/Portals/68/Documents/Books/Chairman-Xi/Chairman-Xi.pdf.
 4. *Military and Security Developments Involving the People’s Republic of China*, Annual Report to Congress (Washington D.C.: United States Department of Defense, 2019), i, (accessed January 2019).
 5. Lowell Dittmer, *China’s Asia: Triangular Dynamics since the Cold War* (London: Rowman et Littlefield, 2018), 263, 273.
 6. Michael Waltz, and Jim Inhofe, “Morning News of Note” (Edited by Department of Defense Public Affairs Office, January 16, 2019); Michael Waltz. “Morning News of Note” (Edited by Department of Defense Public Affairs Office, November 6, 2019).

authoritarian regime”.⁶ Republican Senator Jim Inhofe describes the critical need to combat China in theaters of interest across the world.⁷ On two occasions, Democratic Senator Chuck Schumer spoke against Chinese commercial information technology companies and their nefarious strategic threat as tools employed by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).⁸ Democratic Representative Adam Schiff spoke vehemently against the CCP’s involvement in protests in Hong Kong characterized by Western media as democratic.⁹ The Chinese strategic threat remains one of the few majoritarian matters that carries vocal bi-partisan support in the U.S. legislature. The growing Chinese strategic threat described in the most recent NSS, shapes and reflects an American consensus.

Evidently, strategic competition characterizes the U.S. and Chinese relationship. As suggested above, America’s political leadership most frequently characterizes this relationship as a challenge to security. In fact, describing various components of this Asian security risk consumes most U.S. defense literature and commentary. This risk builds towards a rudimentary call to action by pointing out a relative U.S. vulnerability, and the negative impact it likely poses for U.S. deterrence. Compared to growing Chinese strategic weapon capabilities many experts describe the growing U.S. strategic weapon deficiency. The aging nuclear arsenal becomes the focal point of this deficiency due to the centrality of nuclear weapons in U.S. deterrence. The NSS justifies nuclear weapons as the most discussed and familiar component of strategic weaponry,

Nuclear weapons have served a vital purpose in America’s National Security Strategy for the past 70 years. They are the foundation of our strategy to preserve

7. Ibid

8. Charles Schumer, “Morning News of Note” (Edited by Department of Defense Public Affairs Office, November 24, 2019); Charles Schumer, “Morning News of Note” (Edited by Department of Defense Public Affairs Office, December 30, 2019).

9. Adam Schiff, “Morning News of Note” (Edited by Department of Defense Public Affairs Office, November 18, 2019).

peace and stability by deterring aggression against the United States, our allies, and our partners. While nuclear deterrence strategies cannot prevent all conflict, they are essential to prevent nuclear attack, non-nuclear strategic attacks, and large-scale conventional aggression.¹⁰

The 2018 Nuclear Posture Review (NPR) goes on to claim that deterring nuclear attack and maintaining an arsenal to accomplish this was and is the highest priority for the DoD.¹¹ With strategic weapon systems and nuclear weapons in particular so crucial to U.S. defense, the degradation of this capability is a major cause for concern. The concern only worsens in light of the consensus regarding the Chinese threat.

The United States reduced the role of nuclear weapons and their associated support structure following the Cold War.¹² Now, most of the U.S. nuclear arsenal is 40 years old with research and engineering replacement projects only in their early stages.¹³ The disparity between an American decaying force structure and the rapidly modernizing force of the soon to be largest global economy should menace U.S. policy makers. While the U.S. nuclear budget experienced 25 years of relative neglect regarding modernization, the Chinese developmental strategic weapons budget remained unconstrained.¹⁴ The natural response to this realization is a shock to the decaying nuclear infrastructure. The U.S. cannot continue to dominate great power strategy with a loss in pre-eminence of strategic weaponry.

The United States must, (largely has), prioritize nuclear weapons and new delivery mechanisms as top budget appropriations items. The constructs of federally funded research development centers and defense and commercial industry must turn an ear toward the call for

10. United States White House, NSS, 30.

11. United States Department of Defense, *Nuclear Posture Review* (Washington D.C.: GPO, 2018) 7, <https://media.defense.gov/2018/Feb/02/2001872886/-1/-1/1/2018-NUCLEAR-POSTURE-REVIEW-FINAL-REPORT.PDF> (accessed January 2019).

12. United States White House, NSS, 30-31.

13. United States Department of Defense, NPR, 8.

14. Thérèse Delpech, *Nuclear Deterrence in the 21st Century: Lessons from the Cold War for a New Era of Strategic Piracy* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2012), 159.

pre-eminence. The DoD asserted just this to Congress, “The United States will adapt its forces, posture, investments, and operational concepts to ensure it retains the ability to defend the homeland, [and] deter aggression.”¹⁵ Everything then seems to be falling into place. Even if the U.S. security infrastructure was slow to respond to the growing Chinese threat amidst the Global War on Terror, it has properly adjusted course. The U.S. identified a threat and is adequately responding. This assumption is incorrect due to the incomplete development of the U.S. response.

The NSS defines the issue with regard to strategic competition but it does not offer a specific strategy beyond technological development to maintain basic deterrent functions. Even the NPR reads mostly as a justification for why the U.S. needs nuclear weapons and new strategic weapon systems. Perhaps it should reflect an actual strategy for planned employment or planned development vis-a-vis our adversaries’ projected strengths. Without a sophisticated, tailored, and time bound strategy we risk missing the opportunity to approach these problems from a position of superiority. Currently, we hold the technological capability and force structure advantage over China. During the Cold War, Herman Kahn, Thomas Schelling, and many other prominent economists, physicists, and politicians sought to navigate the finer elements of nuclear strategy. While some of their theories may have been misquoted, unrealistic, or even flawed, the very nature of modeling and simulating such a complex existential issue created a familiar nuclear discourse. This environment unified policy makers in a mindset of preparation and strategic analysis. Prominent nuclear theorist and successor of Kahn and Schelling from the Research and Development Corporation (RAND) Therese Delpech remarked,

We should not forget that in the nuclear arena, combat is first and foremost an intellectual contest. The side that stops thinking is already losing, even if its operational capabilities are vastly superior to those of its adversary. The United

15. *Military and Security Developments*, iv.

States might be particularly vulnerable to this risk because of the known American preference for a technical or engineering approach to solving even the most daunting political problems.¹⁶

Delpech recognizes that while technological development is a key response, strategy is as much a component of diplomacy as it is security. Nuclear war planning requires materiel and psychology elements. To be deficient in either is to lose the competition. She understood that both the technological and intellectual architecture have atrophied, and so far, the U.S. is only attempting to match technological pursuits with competitors such as China. Intellectual deftness can prevent the U.S. from needing to pursue every costly weapons development program. In the new all domain strategic contest, somewhat abstract analysis can help to unify disparate disciplines. Conversely, under-developed strategy can undermine deterrence with the addition of too much uncertainty or the conveyance of incompetence. If deterrence fails, disorganization could undermine effective strategic war fighting.

Our current knee jerk response to the projected Chinese threat is necessary. However, U.S. policy must move beyond justifying nuclear weapons and requesting increased funding (the disposition of the current policy documents). Consultant on the 2001 and 2018 NPRs, Dr. Keith Payne furthers this argument: “In the absence of a close examination of the opponent and context, it will be impossible to appreciate the thinking and motivations underlying a challenger’s prospective behavior and how these might affect deterrence.”¹⁷ Payne, an advocate for reinventing the nuclear triad, also believes that of equal import is an intellectual assessment of the adversary. Prototyping an advanced system is great. However, understanding how and

16. Thérèse Delpech, *Nuclear Deterrence*, 17.

17. Keith B. Payne, *The Fallacies of Cold War Deterrence and a New Direction* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2015), Ch. 8.

when to implement in specific situation, against a particular adversary is better. This is a key component of any post-Cold War deterrence strategy.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo is one of the most vocal opponents of the CCP. Yet he ended a vehement call to action against China with a desire for peace and joint prosperity.¹⁸ The 2017 NSS, 2018 NPR and the 2019 DoD Annual Report to Congress on Chinese military power all share Pompeo's desire for an eventual balance of power, and a stable coexistence with China. What is necessary for this balance beyond an arms race is the intellectual prescription for the calculated employment or fielding of those arms.

Ultimately, this paper suggests the U.S. develop a Chinese facing strategic weapons policy consisting of a phased approach of periods - with associated policies, technological pursuits, and arms control implications similar to those posited in the early stages of the Cold War. In the second section of this paper, we will dissect the emerging strategic capabilities of China, primarily nuclear, from a technological standpoint. This section will look at Chinese nuclear/strategic force posture and determine if there exists a developmental or transitional period for the United States to leverage. The next section will assess the associated comparative economic challenges of such endeavors. It, too, will seek to substantiate that there currently exists a window of opportunity to shape the strategic dialogue with China. The fourth section will examine the efficacy of this type of strategizing in the Cold War nuclear deterrence model. It will then seek to relate a Cold War policy state of affairs to that between China and the United States. The fifth section will engage a thorough strategic culture assessment of China, and will draw relevant conclusions for developing a tailored approach to strategic deterrence. The sixth section will develop a sample strategy of periods with associated policy and implementation

18. Michael Pompeo "The China Challenge," (Speech, Hudson Institute Award Gala, 2019).

recommendations. The paper will close out with a few concluding remarks on the applicability of this intellectual exercise.

CHINESE TECHNOLOGICAL AND MILITARY DISPOSITION AND OPPORTUNITY

Chinese Nuclear and Strategic Force Posture

Almost 35 years of unprecedented growth have invigorated the military industrial complex within China. China's estimated military spending for 2018 was 190 billion dollars, second to only the United States.¹⁹ This figure will likely increase as the Peoples Liberation Army (PLA) develops more costly strategic assets and power projection weapon systems commensurate with its political goals. Naturally, with the second best funded military on earth and the largest economy by purchasing power parity (PPP), the United States is paying close attention. More specifically, the U.S. is monitoring Chinese force structure, research and development, and relative power. For the sake of this discussion, relative power most closely describes strategic systems and deterrence capabilities therein. After all, to reference Cold War era political theory, with the advent of nuclear weapons the purpose of militaries is no longer to chiefly fight wars, but to prevent them.²⁰

Beyond statistics, the U.S. government is interested in Chinese military development because of China's aspirations to become a powerful, prosperous, modernized society, essentially equivalent to the United States by 2049.²¹ China seeks a powerful and preeminent modernized military funded by their prosperous economy. The 2049 Centenary Goals that

19. Robert Ashley, "Statement for the Record: Worldwide Threat Assessment," Defense Intelligence Agency, 2018, <http://www.dia.mil/News/Speeches-and-Testimonies/Article-View/Article/1457815/statement-for-the-record-worldwide-threat-assessment/>.

20. Bernard Brodie, Frederick Sherwood Dunn, and Arnold Wolfers, *The Absolute Weapon: Atomic Power and World Order* (New York: Harcourt, 1946), 76.

21. Lu Ding, "China's 'Two Centenary Goals': Progress and Challenge," *East Asian Policy, Nanyang Technological University*, May 3, 2017, 80.

Chinese President Xi Jinping prescribed to the CCP in 2013 provided a momentum to military development and international relations. This momentum keenly focuses on strategic level power projection. China's most recent Military Strategy of 2015 states, "China will optimize its nuclear force structure... and deter other countries from using or threatening to use nuclear weapons against China".²² China's nuclear rhetoric is prominent, declaratory, and central to its strategy. Moreover, China is prioritizing strategic competition with the United States. General Ashley, Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), testified before the U.S. Congress that the ongoing modernization of the PLA nuclear force is to ensure the viability of China's strategic deterrence in the face of perceived U.S. capabilities.²³ The next great strategic competition is upon the United States. Prior to positing strategy, characterizing the disposition of the Chinese nuclear force and enabling forces will help to structure the discussion. The following will present the general capabilities, posture, and trajectory of the Chinese nuclear force so that we can discern what, if any, opportunity presents itself for future U.S. deterrence and dominance.

China possess approximately 290 nuclear warheads. Most of these are land-based, with the remainder being sea-based.²⁴ This number is somewhat misleading as there is a strong emphasis in the PLA for dual-use systems - conventional and nuclear.²⁵ Moreover, Chinese unregulated quantities of fissile materials and current industrial complexes are poised as is, if necessary, to produce over 100 nuclear weapons a year.²⁶ The opacity of China's military

22. "China Military Power, Modernizing a Force to Fight and Win," Defense Intelligence Agency, January 2019, 37, www.dia.mil/Portals/27/Documents/News/Military%20Power%20Publications/China_Military_Power_FINAL_5MB_20190103.pdf.

23. Robert Ashley, "Statement for the Record," DIA.

24. Caitlin Talmadge, "The U.S.-China Nuclear Relationship: Why Competition Is Likely To Intensify.," Global China, September 2019, 4, www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/FP_20190930_china_nuclear_weapons_talmadge-2.pdf.

25. Yogesh Joshi and Frank O'Donnell, *India and Nuclear Asia: Forces, Doctrine, and Dangers* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press., 2019), 90.

26. Thérèse Delpech, *Nuclear Deterrence*, 119.

operations particularly, and the classified nature of strategic assets in general, make the approximate size and scalability of these statistics the key metric. While 290 may seem low for assured counterforce targeting, it is more than adequate to raise ambiguity regarding assured counter-value targeting or homeland defense against an invading force. The PLA Rocket Force owns and operates road-mobile medium range ballistic missiles (MRBM), the DF-26; intermediate range ballistic missiles (ICBM), the DF-26; with recently updated silo-based equivalents, and the DF-31AG variant of the also employed DF-31A.²⁷ The concentration on mobile assets significantly improves the survivability and flexibility of China's somewhat low stockpile numbers. The mobile ICBMs are of particular value for the survivability of strategic deterrence against the United States. Additionally, the PLA is developing and employing long-range cruise missiles capable of deployment from ground, sea, and air.²⁸ Once employed, such modular systems will afford China a cost effective measure capable of supporting a "nuclear triad". A nuclear triad is traditionally considered the optimal force structure for flexible and survivable nuclear deterrence. This Cold War construct is not only of practical use for the Chinese, it will serve as a symbol of peer competition and status once fully realized by the Chinese (in keeping with their 2050 goals). The dual-use nature of the cruise missiles also adds to deterrence due to the difficulty of ascertaining their employment. This type of ambiguity in the nuclear domain increases the potential repercussions of bold and hasty decisions.

Also under development for the new generation of mobile missiles are multiple independently targetable reentry vehicles (MIRVs) with penetration aids and countermeasures to increase survivability.²⁹ Additional strategic technologies in the research and engineering process

27. Caitlin Talmadge, "The U.S.-China Nuclear Relationship," 4.

28. Robert Ashley, "Statement for the Record," DIA.

29. "China Military Power," DIA, 37.

include maneuvering warheads, built-in ballistic missile jamming technology, thermal shielding, and hypersonic glide vehicles.³⁰ MIRVs, complex counter measures, and hypersonic vehicles all add another dynamic to the nuclear triad that complicates an adversary's deterrent and defense potential. For instance, the United States currently only has developmental hypersonic vehicles itself, no MIRVs, and no defensive answer to either.

In 2017 the PLA was assigned a nuclear mission with a developmental upgraded long-range H-6K bomber and J-20 stealth fighter as its backbone.³¹ The development of the air leg rounds out the Chinese nuclear triad. Furthermore, the recall-ability of aircraft - along with their time to target - are key for strategic signaling, flexible decision making, ally assurance, and other sophisticated tenants of strategic deterrence. Long-range aircraft also extend the range of any weapon system on-board. The aforementioned air-launched cruise missile, air launched ballistic missile, as well as some stockpile gravity bombs would find a home here.

The PLA currently has six type 094 Jin class nuclear powered, ballistic missile capable submarines. These submarines are capable of carrying 12 sea-launched ballistic missiles (SLBM) each.³² While rudimentary, this forms China's first viable sea leg for nuclear deterrence. China's is a strategic force organized around the pursuit of relative parity with the world's top nuclear powers for now; and pre-eminence across certain platforms for the future. Understanding the nature of nuclear forces is critical to navigating the deterrence milieu. However, in today's all domain environment, the great enablers of strategic weapon systems and potential defenses, space assets and cyberspace systems, require consideration.

30. Robert Ashley, "Statement for the Record," DIA.

31. Caitlin Talmadge, "The U.S.-China Nuclear Relationship," 4; Robert Ashley, "Statement for the Record," DIA.

32. Caitlin Talmadge, "The U.S.-China Nuclear Relationship," 5; Robert Ashley, "Statement for the Record," DIA.

Disposition of Enabling Capabilities

Tracking, signaling, and engaging assets and targets are all space-enabled elements of traditionally deterrence-gearred weapon systems. Cyberspace connects these space-based components to their terrestrial end items. Of course, this depiction is crude and over-simplified. However, the takeaway is that ballistic and hypersonic missile guidance and tracking systems operate from space. Engage or launch on remote sophisticated capabilities are programmed off space radars or satellite linkages to multiple ground-based radars. Those linkages are executed across an increasingly difficult to secure cyber domain. Counter measure employment, aircraft launching mechanisms, and anti-submarine warfare tracking systems are all reliant upon cyberspace. The more sophisticated Chinese strategic systems become, the more proficient and prolific in these areas they will need to be. U.S. satellites or U.S. operated commercial satellites and information technology infrastructures will not suit Chinese classified systems or operations. U.S. systems are unsuitable because, ethics and litigiousness aside, U.S. systems and software presumably provide the U.S. with access and expertise for exploiting information contained therein. Operational security in an emerging great power competition pits China and the United States against one another in space and cyberspace. U.S. ubiquity in these domains currently demands offensive and defensive independence in each domain. Battlespaces without national borders also make operating in space or cyberspace preferable for maintaining conflict below the threshold of total warfare – a key intention of strategic deterrence. PLA strategy regards the employment of space-based systems and the denial of space operations to adversaries as a central component of warfare today.³³ In fact, a major component of recent PLA reforms was the creation of the Strategic Support Force (SFF). The CCP specifically designed the SFF to unify

33. Robert Ashley, “Statement for the Record,” DIA.

space and cyberspace and extend power projection into these strategic frontiers. This pivot from primarily land-based defense is essential to how the reformed PLA plans to fight and win The SSF, like the Rocket Force, is an independent entity outside of the Chinese theatre commands.³⁴ This force structure signifies the critical importance granted to the enabling mechanisms for strategic operations, deterrence, and if required, strategic warfighting. Below are a few general examples of space and cyberspace policy and capabilities to elaborate on the above.

Pursuant to the aforementioned strategic competition, China is developing antisatellite capabilities to degrade key space-based support infrastructure of its adversaries.³⁵ As China works to catch up to the U.S. and others in space-based systems, it is more cost effective to patch capabilities by neutralizing your enemy's advantages; i.e. U.S. missile defense. Other counter-space capabilities include missile forces based on the ground, sea, or in the air; cyber warfare; and on-orbit dual-use anti-satellite systems.³⁶ Inter-atmospheric and space-based dual-use systems are key for China's deniability of making space a warfighting domain. China publicly condemns warfighting in space, and obvious counter-space assets could bring condemnation, sanctions, etc. Additional anti-satellite developmental capabilities include satellite jammers, directed energy weapons, and kinetic kill vehicles (likely fielded).³⁷ The satellite jammers are somewhat of a crossover between cyber and space operations that the new construct of the SSF serves well.

The 2007 and 2010 Chinese destruction of its own satellites and missiles in space as well as the 2014 test of the anti-satellite missile system demonstrate Chinese strategy, capability and

34. John Costello and Joe McReynolds, "China's Strategic Support Force: A Force for a New Era," National Defense University Press, October 2, 2018, <https://ndupress.ndu.edu/Media/News/Article/1651760/chinas-strategic-support-force-a-force-for-a-new-era/>.

35. Yogesh Joshi and Frank O'Donnell, *India and Nuclear Asia*, 82.

36. Robert Ashley, "Statement for the Record," DIA.

37. Ibid.

resolve in space-based strategic operations.³⁸ A rising great power, China refuses to accept what it calls the American monopolization of outer space.³⁹ Furthermore, China views counter space operations as playing a key role in counter third-party intervention during military conflicts.⁴⁰ China is willing to demonstrate a strategic capability they would employ to deter U.S. intervention. While the CCP does not publicly correlate the 2007, 2010, and 2014 demonstrations with deterrence, their policy allows for the logical connection. To diminish further the U.S. “monopoly”, China is developing more capable space-based surveillance, communications, and geo-location for more precise targeting options.⁴¹ China wants to leverage its own systems for military or political purposes. Using U.S. based global positioning systems or commercial satellites is likely not a sustainable or secure option in a conflict or deterrence scenario that pits the two nations against one another. Beyond precise military missions, such as targeting, China also seeks Chinese controlled surveillance and intelligence collection. In general, the CCP leadership is bolstering space-based intelligence collection; satellite communication and navigation, and human and robotic space operations.⁴² Chinese space-based operations serve a myriad of missions. However, their connection to security operations, military strategy, and deterrence are clear.

The PLA considers cyberwarfare a major element of any modern strategic force.⁴³ This seems banal as the “internet of things” now supports nearly all aspects of civilian sector - let alone military sector operations. What is intriguing is the reorganization of dispersed PLA assets to prioritize cyberwarfare as a necessary support mechanism to national strategy. In fact, the

38. “China Military Power,” DIA, 38.

39. Thérèse Delpech, *Nuclear Deterrence*, 148.

40. “China Military Power,” DIA, 40-41.

41. Yogesh Joshi and Frank O'Donnell, *India and Nuclear Asia*, 84.

42. Robert Ashley, “Statement for the Record,” DIA.

43. Michael Chase and Arthur Chan, *China's Evolving Approach to "Integrated Strategic Deterrence"* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2016), Ch. 3.

primary function of the SSF is information operations with a major emphasis on cyber warfare. The SSF has a dedicated round-the-clock cyber-espionage and cyber-sabotage team.⁴⁴ Cyber network attacks (CNA) and cyber network exploitations (CNE) are a daily occurrence in the realm of U.S. information assurance. With organizations like SSF, the scale and organization of CNA and CNE increase, and so the threat posed by those attacks increases.

Cyberwarfare is central to Chinese strategy when examining the DoD personnel Standard Form 86 document breach. Another example of Chinese cyber strategy is the theft by the APT10 group of hundreds of gigabytes of sensitive data regarding aviation, space and satellite technology, manufacturing technology, communications technology, computer processor technology, etc.⁴⁵ Some CNAs are probing rehearsals to test the resolve and redundancy of firewalls. Other CNAs clearly are targeted missions. Both prove the utility China sees in cyber campaigns. Attacks with Chinese originating internet protocol addresses even sought a strategic advantage for the PLA by attempting to steal U.S. and Japanese anti-submarine warfare technology.⁴⁶ This technology undoubtedly could have been used to enable the freedom of maneuver for the nascent sea-based leg of the Chinese nuclear triad. On the information assurance and connectivity side of cyber operations, the PLA is modernizing its command and control network specifically to operate its nuclear forces more effectively and quickly in a crisis.⁴⁷ Faster, better protected, and redundant networks are key to ensuring control over volatile and existentially daunting nuclear weapons systems. The Chinese readily recognize this.

The previously mentioned jamming techniques of weapon systems are also a major component of modern cyber warfare. If China can eliminate an adversarial advanced capability

44. John Costello and Joe McReynolds, "China's Strategic Support Force".

45. *Military and Security Developments*, 9-10.

46. *Ibid*, 14-15.

48. Caitlin Talmadge, "The U.S.-China Nuclear Relationship," 4.

before it leaves the ground or before delivering its payload, then concepts like assured second strike become much less of an abstract calculation. Like space, there is a clear marriage of cyberspace, Chinese strategy, and strategic weapon systems. Moreover, the Chinese are investing into these areas heavily and publicly refining their skills. Yet what, if any, opportunities exist within developmental technology and these new domains for the United States to exploit in its favor?

Assessment of Window of Opportunity

Despite the rapid advancement and mobilization of Chinese strategic capabilities, their largely new and developmental nature provide a strategic window of opportunity to the United States. The opportunity arises from the experienced and robust U.S. architecture, larger stockpile, and Cold War arms race institutional experience. Chinese force reorganization, two of three nuclear triad “legs”, fledgling joint and strategic operational concepts and organizations all suggest a lack of a robust force and a lack of proficiency. Chinese declaratory policy and national objectives, coupled with technological development projects provide the United States with a somewhat clear intent of the future Chinese nuclear force composition. The United States currently has a superior capability and force structure to that of the Chinese. The U.S. knows where China intends to take its technological advancements and to what end. The gap in time it will take for the CCP and PLA to realize those capabilities is a period of advantage that U.S. leadership should not squander. The below delves further into the characteristics of various strategic synapses that depict a critical preparatory period for the United States to advantage. How the U.S. should exploit such an opportunity will be the topic of a separate section.

Road-mobile ballistic missiles are problematic for targeting purposes. However, “China still stores warheads separately from delivery vehicles in peacetime.”⁴⁸ This means that currently, China’s force structure has some built in lag-time, and potentially the warheads would be targetable separately from the launch and delivery systems, simplifying the issue. Additionally, not all of the road-mobile systems are ICBMs - capable of endangering U.S. territory. If you subtract the non-mission capable systems from the relatively minimal ICBM systems, the numbers may be somewhat manageable and suggest that the Chinese ground-based nuclear posture is not yet strong enough to deter U.S. strategic pressure. It is worth mentioning that the silo-based systems do not number enough to be survivable to a Soviet era type counterforce-targeting plan. If China deploys MIRV enabled ICBMs, coupled with increased long-range delivery vehicles and mobile launch platforms, which are all in development, their ability to survive and respond to a nuclear threat may be too risky for a U.S. coercive gamble. These survivable, reliable, and capable systems would prevent assurances of U.S. damage limitation in a worst-case nuclear scenario. Luckily for American counterforce and deterrence considerations, the Chinese ground force, the most robust leg of the Chinese triad, does not yet prevent U.S. relative nuclear pre-eminence. Essentially, the U.S. is rightly confident that the Chinese cannot inflict unacceptable damage to U.S. cities following an American first strike. This security provides an opportunity for strategic latitude that may quickly dissipate.

Additionally, as the newly centralized elements of the Rocket Force and SSF will become better practiced and integrated into the new theater commands. At that time, the Chinese military will likely have the capacity to change standard operating readiness levels to co-locate warheads and delivery systems. Furthermore, “a better trained, organized, and equipped PLA

48. Yogesh Joshi and Frank O'Donnell, *India and Nuclear Asia*, 90.

will be in a stronger position to accomplish its primary functions: winning modern wars... as the PLA educates and trains commanders and staff to employ joint forces”.⁴⁹ However, this is a goal, not an operational reality for the PLA. As of 2019, the DIA estimated that China is not yet practiced in this joint environment.⁵⁰ Joint force readiness and synchronization affects all branches of the triad, not just the ground forces. The command and control system refresh to increase effective nuclear and strategic force employment points also to a current joint operating deficiency. The “growing pains” in the current force organization and command structure add additional impetus for the United States to shape a strategic dialogue before a more efficient force lessens the CCP’s desire to compromise.

With respect to the sea leg of the fledgling nuclear triad, there is a present point of inflection, as well. China’s nuclear submarine fleet is rather noisy and vulnerable to U.S. and Japanese anti-submarine detection and defeat. In fact, in the event that deterrence failed, the U.S. and its allies would likely be able to confine these submarines to waters within the first island chain. From here, the JL-2 missile cannot range the continental United States, would be easier to target, and serves as a weaker deterrent. However, China is working on an upgraded, quieter, more efficient nuclear submarine as well as a longer-range JL-3 missile.⁵¹ China currently cannot operate or negotiate from a position of an effective and survivable nuclear triad. The U.S. can continue to not acknowledge them as a nuclear peer. The implications of China not being a strategic peer is a better coercive position from which the U.S. can implement regional policy with adjacent nations, reach a diplomatic agreement with China, or coerce a favorable outcome in a policy matter if necessary. This potential success would be contingent upon quick action and

49. Arthur Ding, et al, “Chairman Xi Remakes the PLA,” 722-724.

50. Ibid.

51. Caitlin Talmadge, “The U.S.-China Nuclear Relationship,” 4.

organized strategy while the opportunity presents itself. Moreover, General Ashley describes China's blue water fleet development as allowing power projection and submarine protection beyond the first island chain.⁵² This capability does not yet exist. China's navy is still very much a coastal force. The majority of naval and general military operations remain focused toward potential conflict with Taiwan, and what some would term the near abroad.⁵³ A Chinese blue water navy will eventually inhibit our ability to deter anti-U.S. interests regionally and globally. Global power projection and the associated strategic systems are certainly receiving a lot of attention and funding endorsed from the highest levels of the party. Although, most of the military industrial culture have not yet increased their policy scope accordingly. If the military culture and the CCP are watching Taiwan, they are not yet focused on the United States. As China's global role increases, they will eventually need to broaden their aperture.

As mentioned above, the SSF is a construct of a rather new concept. Even internally, its space and cyber forces seem to have competing conceptualizations. This could hinder their initial effectiveness and organization in a military that is already somewhat bloated and over-bureaucratized. Force integration at lower levels of administration within the newly established SSF remains a challenge. Moreover, communication and clearly delineated roles and responsibilities between the SSF and theatre commands will take some time to sort out.⁵⁴ The SSF is somewhat an amalgamation of pieces of United States Strategic Command, Cyber Command, and the National Security Agency. Their newly centralized, cross-domain role will be inefficient at first. The PLA and the CCP know that strategic integration and the new associated constructs are more policy than procedure at this point in their development. They will likely

52. Robert Ashley, "Statement for the Record," DIA.

53. *Military and Security Developments*, 14-15.

54. John Costello and Joe McReynolds, "China's Strategic Support Force".

close this gap through exercises and iterations of enforcing policy. The United States must exploit the time it has to formulate a China-centric nuclear and strategic weapon system policy. Once Chinese proficiency divests the U.S. temporal advantage, U.S. theater forces and diplomats alike will lack the necessary time to proof and implement key tenants of whatever new policy they deem necessary to deter conflict. The RAND Corporation provides insight into the significance of understanding new technology implications prior to fully employing them: “in relation to the problem of cyber-warfare, [we are] at the same stage of intellectual development as we were in the 1950s in relation to possible nuclear war.”⁵⁵ For new warfighting domains or game changing technologies, such as CNE and CNA malware or hypersonic glide vehicles, U.S. strategy needs time to adapt our operating picture to incorporate properly their utility or their threat. The U.S. currently has the time to develop new capabilities, to understand their uses and implications, and to field them smartly. If the U.S. security community does not seek to leverage this strategic window, they will soon find themselves chasing the largest economy and most rapidly advancing military in the world. The United States should not desire to be running behind the fastest runner in the race. Proper planning, as much as technological innovation, can prevent this.

Current Chinese nuclear posture revolves around a no first use (NFU) policy. This type of policy relies on a high degree of ambiguity, deception, and mobility to support low force numbers. China’s 2049 great power status goals along with its vast technological development programs do not seem to support the tenants of its previous NFU policy. Moreover, their operational restructuring to expand the import and ubiquity of nuclear forces seems to contradict traditional Chinese nuclear policy. The closing window of opportunity for strategic action and

55. Thérèse Delpech, *Nuclear Deterrence*, 152.

negotiations for the United States spans beyond technological development. Very possibly, the world is experiencing the final years of Chinese NFU, which would only complicate strategic coercion or negotiations. Officers within the PLA write publicly to argue for conditions under which the military should violate the NFU policy. Heightened readiness, streamlined strategic decision making, launch on warning capabilities, and space-based early warning systems all support an expanded concept for nuclear use.⁵⁶ Deeper analysis within the PLA of scenario driven events in which first use may be necessary also suggest the beginning of a shift in strategic culture.⁵⁷ Furthermore, there exists a growing strategic shift within the political and PLA elite toward a more complete parity or deterrence of the United States as a peer.⁵⁸ This paper does not argue that any of the above is unreasonable, or unpredictable in a realist driven international environment. Instead, it is most important to note that these discussions, goals, and concepts may signal a shift in Chinese nuclear policy. This shift will lower the effectiveness of U.S. nuclear deterrence, and so of U.S. coercive policy imposition on strategic matters. China is seeking parity in that it is mirror imaging its force structure and capabilities with that of the United States, as well as developing new capabilities to menace any U.S. calculation that may suggest a nuclear exchange, particularly counterforce, could end in its favor. If China desires to interact as a strategic equal with the United States, then the United States should forecast the future implications, prepare the future force, and generally be prepared with policy goals and initiatives. The U.S. needs to accomplish what it can prior to parity, and understand limitations within the new status quo upon parity.

56. *Military and Security Developments*, 36.

57. Yogesh Joshi and Frank O'Donnell, *India and Nuclear Asia*, 85.

58. *Ibid*, 83.

Additionally, the U.S. must acknowledge that as parity approaches, deterrence may fail. This should spark a more culturally tailored version of a Herman Kahn, or 1950s RAND-esque assessment of actions upon failure; and how to re-establish deterrence. The strategic environment is changing. China is one of our biggest strategic competitors, and soon it will likely be our greatest. However, at the moment, China's reliance on relatively limited ground assets, the dynamic of their nascent nuclear triad, the developmental nature of their advanced capabilities, and the still-present ability of the U.S. to limit damage and re-establish deterrence if necessary provides an opportunity. The United States should take advantage of the remaining time it has to plan for the future in order to maintain the strategic upper hand on China. Of course, U.S. research and engineering elements should be vigorously at work to prevent a lasting parity. These relative technological developments rely upon continued economic strength. The following section will discuss the economic challenges China may face as it approaches parity with the United States. That section will conclude with a final assessment of the aforementioned window of strategic opportunity in light of Chinese economic dynamics.

CHINESE ECONOMIC DISPOSITION AND OPPORTUNITY

Chinese Economic Strength

Earlier in this paper, I briefly alluded to the economic prowess of China. Because this section has quite a bit of critique of the Chinese economy, it is important to state that underestimating the CCP and the Chinese economy has not gone too well for naysayers in the past. Not the Tiananmen Square protests and associated crackdown, nor the Falun Gong populist movement, nor the Hong Kong “democratic” protests have slowed economic growth much. However, I believe the demographic, structural, and political challenges facing China today to be much more dynamic than the past 33 years. Yet, the reader should not underestimate the resiliency of the CCP. From 1950 to 2010, only 10 countries achieved per capita gross domestic product (GDP) growth of 6% annually that lasted longer than 10 years. China sustained 8.2% for 22 years.⁵⁹ Obviously, the Chinese economy is consistently impressive. The last section went over countless ways in which China may be spending its increased resources. When discussing projections for relative strength between the U.S. and China, it merits an examination of the Chinese economy to understand if continued economic, and so military growth can sustain, and to what extent. Due to the sensational claims of unending and unimpeded growth, and impending collapse, the following will examine the challenges facing the Chinese economy closely and broadly. Within each sub-category of examination, we will determine if economic factors back the assertion of a strategic capability window of action open to the U.S. vis-a-vis China. Former Senior Military Fellow for NDU and former U.S Army attaché to Beijing and Hong Kong, Dennis Blasko states, “All forms of national power...will be utilized in the pursuit of

59. Lu Ding, “China’s ‘Two Centenary Goals’”.

accomplishing the PRC's objectives. China's military doctrine continues to rely on the idea of 'people's war,' as adapted for modern times, as a way to integrate the latent potential of China's economy and population into its military capabilities."⁶⁰ Informed conversation regarding military capability and political objectives, particularly in China, cannot divest an economic assessment from serious analysis. China stands as the second largest, and by most accounts, soon to be largest economy in the world. Before we get into at what level this accomplishment will continue to persist, it may be useful to delve into how China "arrived".

China's economic growth was powered by: an incentivized bureaucracy with limited to no government imposed regulations, a call for growth over all other facets of development and governance, and a government subsidy program to state owned enterprises to help invigorate particular sectors. Large migrant worker populations allowed for low real wages for the increasingly productive workforce, increased working age to dependent age populations, and increased the number of workers per those working age. With a limited number of trans-national immigrants, and a negative view of them in general, regional migration served the same function for China on an immense scale. In certain key sectors, China was able to bridge developmental industrial and technological gaps by reverse-engineering technology bought, borrowed, or stolen. This type of acquisition in large part includes the Chinese nuclear acquisition. Rapid structural changes to the national financial system created an abundance of jobs that helped guide and boost population growth toward further economic growth.⁶¹ For instance, the government's lessening of economic and property control but maintenance of bureaucratic and key industry control helped pivot macro-economic policy when necessary. Lastly, low dependency rates and

60. Dennis J. Blasko, "Integrating the Services and Harnessing the Military Area Commands," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 39, no. 5-6 (2016): pp. 685-708, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402390.2016.1208613>.

61. Barry Naughton, "Is China Socialist?," *The Journal of Economic Perspectives* 31, no. 1 (2017): pp. 3-24.

the lack of a “middle-class” allowed for minimal social responsibility to the workforce. These demographic dynamics also permitted aggressive and broad investment policies while creating a state of unprecedented savings.⁶² The wide-scale savings served to keep inflation low throughout this period. In light of such perfect demographic alignment and deft structural adjustments, why should anyone posit challenges to this streamlined machine? The discussion that follows will assert that much of what once worked in China’s favor demographically is beginning to hinder progress.

Furthermore, economic achievements have reached a threshold that diminishes the same old structural adjustments from stimulating real growth without massive macro-economic adjustment internally or achievement externally. Additionally, certain political dynamics complicate the pursuit and realization of such adjustments and achievements. Essentially, some of the facets of its historically remarkable and unrivaled 35-year growth have reached macro-economic tipping points and require plans for sustenance and mitigation measures for this transition. The implementation of macro-level adjustments will provide a period of uncertainty for the Chinese government and so a period of opportunity that will synchronize with the capability period of opportunity described above. Chinese growth will inevitably slow, but to what degree their trajectory of power slows depends on how capably they address the changing demographic and structural dynamics of their nation. While they may be well prepared to lessen the immediate effects of some of the transitions, their economic policy to sustain long-term prosperity and prevent further recession remains in its nascent stages at this time. All of this coalesces to a pause in certainty. Later in this paper, we will engage how deliberate U.S. action at this time may be able to affect change in its favor.

62. Ibid.

Middle Income Gap Challenges Facing China

All of the challenges that face China center around their ability or inability to overcome the middle-income trap. At \$15,000 a year per capita GDP, industry becomes less economical for nations. China requires switching to a service-based economy to continue to grow efficiently as it is at \$16,000 purchasing power parity GDP and non PPP GDP, \$12,000. This transition will take China from a middle to a high-income economy. Succeeding in a service-based economy requires a strong consumer base. China needs to either increase wealth distribution internally to help consume goods, or it needs to create external opportunities to stimulate its economy if its populace cannot.

20 years from now, China's economy will likely be double its current size.⁶³ This growth does not necessary mean efficiency, nor is growth guaranteed. Much of this may be redirected towards personnel targeted or structural targeted institutions due to massive demographic shifts (discussed below). If expenditures continue to increase while the institutions that fueled growth diminish, China's increase will not necessarily translate into military or political power. China recognizes the challenges ahead. Social stability and internal reform are the primary objectives of the CCP in the near term.⁶⁴ American rhetoric like that discussed coming from the DoD, Congress, the State Department, all fears China's perceived global power aspirations. Those designs certainly exist. However, for the immediate future, China is prioritizing other goals to help overcome the income gap and its associated implications – lest the CCP lose the mandate of heaven. The mandate of heaven is an ancient Chinese concept whose main tenants are military

63. Jared McKinney, "Status, and Great Power Status," (Lecture, Washington DC, August 26, 2019).

64. Barry Naughton, "Is China Socialist?," 3-24.

strength and the feeding of the masses. The mandate carries serious implications for the staying power of regimes in the eyes of the citizenry.

Overcoming the middle-income trap requires social restructuring and macro-economic transition/pivoting, which is very difficult to do in a country of China's size. The United States cannot know with certainty whether China will successfully navigate such a critical developmental period. The U.S. cannot really even assess how long it will take with certainty. However, it can leverage the shifting of Chinese attention away from purely strategic goals to complicate their political landscape and assert a favorable U.S. position.

Demographic Challenges Facing China

Beginning in 2014, the working age population declined from the previous year for first time in China's expansive growth. This decline in labor force will continue. Beginning in 10 years it will increase almost exponentially.⁶⁵ The Chinese population is aging. This means less workers available to power the economy. This demographic shift means increased costs to take care of the elderly, and an increased percentage of the population caring for the elderly – which even as a profession is not the type of work that tends to stimulate growth. This in itself is perhaps the greatest factor imposing a time limit on China's ability to transition from a manufacturing economy to a knowledge and service-based system.

Further complicating workforce shortages is the slowing of the migration of workers from rural areas to the cities.⁶⁶ This population previously served as a never-ending stream of inexpensive labor akin to the mass waves of European immigration into the United States

65. Yukon Huang, *Cracking the China Conundrum: Why Conventional Economic Wisdom Is Often Wrong* (Oxford University Press, 2017), 41.

66. Barry Naughton, "Is China Socialist?," 3-24.

throughout the late 19th and 20th centuries. Those migrant workers that choose to remain require basic medical care, life support services, and housing. However, they currently cannot afford to live in the cities.⁶⁷ This creates social pressure on local governments and strain on the basic provision of civil services across cities. If left unattended, such crises could cause cities to be less desirable, lead to costly inefficiencies in transportation or other civil services, or even civil unrest. With cities gaining on average two million citizens per year,⁶⁸ inelastic rural populations mean that cities must spend money to increase the incentives for people to want to work at the jobs that most effectively drive the economy. The Chinese can no longer rely on countless numbers of cheap labor either willing to return to the countryside for life support, or willing to work for less than those trying to establish themselves in the cities. Lastly, this issue has the obvious ramification of requiring wage increases and other incentives. While greater wealth distribution is a hallmark of a service-based economy, this will temporarily cause China's economy to slow, and could cripple certain industrial hubs altogether. Issues of overcrowding in major cities can also lead to limited real estate for new industry and businesses. Overcrowding could harm an already burdened ecological system, and lead to food shortages or disease. China has some major demographic issues that will diminish its profit margins and increase social welfare and urban planning costs all at a time when profit is most essential for the continued strength of the society.

A review of the above justifies China's inward focus. Demography is the single greatest factor that makes China's future one of expenses, social responsibilities, and uncertainties. The United States, which will age less rapidly than many Asian states largely thanks to immigrant populations, should take this time to plan a nuclear strategy. The U.S. should seek to gain

67. Ibid.

68. Jared McKinney, (Lecture, Washington DC, August 26, 2019).

international or at least East Asian regional legitimacy before an economically secure China thrusts upon them a strategic reality largely divested of U.S. interests. Regardless, demographic dynamics create a moment of inward focus and likely slowed growth for China.

Further demographic complications that shift focus from strategic weapons systems and policy are wealth distribution and social responsiveness. We already described a little about how those fueling the economy cannot afford to live where they are now attempting to settle. This is a characteristic of the massive wealth disparity that exists between the rich and the poor. China has one of the largest wealth disparities of countries with similar GDP. Consumption as a percentage of GDP is also lower than any other major global economy.⁶⁹ Wealth distribution matters beyond complicating local governance. A more equitable distribution of wealth increases consumer bases for a service economy, and increases advanced education geared towards high income economy enterprises. Additionally, there are negative implications for the legitimacy of any government, particularly a socialist government, for poor civil services and wealth disparities. Traditionally, the CCP is very concerned with its image and portraying its legitimate rule. The question of legitimacy will likely lessen attention and funds to security matters.

Another factor associated with demography and governmental responsiveness is ecological improvement. China spurred growth at all costs. Unregulated environmental degradation means that certain rivers do not flow to their deltas some years; that cities have harmful air quality; and that drinking water is often contaminated. The most significant affect is on agricultural production.⁷⁰ China historically struggles to feed its population as the western portion of its landmass is largely arid or mountainous or both. Overcrowding of cities, coupled with agricultural degradation in a nation without agro surpluses is another recipe for questions of

69. Yukon Huang, *Cracking the China Conundrum*, Ch. 4.

70. Barry Naughton, "Is China Socialist?," 3-24.

legitimacy. China's government increasingly is concerning itself with environmental degradation and its social implications.⁷¹ This period of concern could directly hinder the defense industry or indirectly draw attention from it. Demographic issues related to uniquely Chinese characteristics as it approaches the middle-income gap should pull attention and resources from strategic matters. Despite the outcome of this dynamic situation, the United States should at least have a brief period to address nuclear strategy as one of its national priorities during a time when it may be beyond the CCP's grasp of equal attention.

Structural Challenges and Initiatives

China cyclically reinvigorated its growth by incentivizing the bureaucracy to take capital from national banks and invest it in state owned enterprises (SOE) - with almost no interest or requirements placed upon the sum. This essentially gave certain key industries free money, and helped stimulate plateaus in growth with a massive internal investment stream.⁷² This process is crudely akin to large-scale state-sponsored insider trading. It depended largely on the immense amounts of capital the Chinese people saved in Chinese banks, as well as an economy that was less open to the global "free market" and less susceptible to its forces. Demographic shifts, described above, are causing the Chinese people to save less money, which limits large-scale bank investments, and drives interest higher on this previous model of bureaucratic incentives.⁷³ Additionally, as China opens up more to the global economy, stimulating state owned enterprises is proving only to create artificial growth and not lasting economic growth as it once did.

71. Veysel Tekdal, "China's Belt and Road Initiative: at the Crossroads of Challenges and Ambitions," *The Pacific Review* 31, no. 3 (2017): p. 378, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09512748.2017.1391864>.

72. Barry Naughton, "The Current Wave of State Enterprise Reform in China: A Preliminary Appraisal," *Asian Economic Policy Review* 12, no. 2 (2017): pp. 282-298, <https://doi.org/10.1111/aepr.12185>.

73. Ibid.

For instance, in the 2008 global financial crisis, China lessened the blow on its economy and key state industries by using this model to invest \$600 billion into SOEs. This proved to be an artificial patch as now China has an immense surplus of finished goods with no actual demand or consumers to purchase them. The tapering of inflation will also resume its climb without proper stimulation.⁷⁴ This surplus is driving China to pressure current trade partners and look for new partnerships to consume these goods. Ultimately, the Chinese will need to expand their consumer base to stimulate continued high levels of growth. Projects like the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), or civil military integration (CMI) are potential avenues for external and increased demand. The BRI is long-term and somewhat uncertain, while enticing multinational Chinese companies to support and propel military innovation – CMI - will require some cultural adjustment. Complicating this matter, “China’s senior leaders recently reaffirmed their commitment to CCP control over the state-led economic apparatus, including through state-directed investment and innovation.”⁷⁵ Adjusting the senior leader culture to understand the new demands on the Chinese economy by the global market, and how the old bureaucratic model of investment will need to adapt, will take time. Finding external consumers and stimulus to continue to invigorate Chinese growth into the future, will take time. This major economic priority will also draw CCP leadership away from raw security strategy. The CCP may become desperate for the success of particular economic programs, which provides a different type of opportunity. The above rather technical and specific review depicts another avenue of economic change that supports the assessment of a potential window of strategic opportunity for the United States.

74. Barry Naughton, “The Current Wave,” 282-298; Jared McKinney, (Lecture, Washington DC, August 26, 2019).

75. *Military and Security Developments*, 9.

Furthermore, China is seeking largely external initiatives to shock its economic structure from its current plateau. These initiatives may very well serve to reinvigorate stellar growth rates and make China the economic center of the Eastern Hemisphere. However, these programs face their challenges and growing pains that make their immediate success uncertain. China should remain somewhat vulnerable economically compared to the past and prior to some of these initiatives “paying off”. This vulnerability may make the CPP more suggestable to the political and policy goals of the U.S.

The Belt and Road Initiative essentially seeks to re-establish the Great Silk Road and the associated economic corridor. The eventual goal would be to redefine regional economics around Chinese financial institutions and Chinese currency. The long-term goals would be to help revise Western global financial institutions in favor of China.⁷⁶ The BRI faces many operational complexities including: challenges from local governments, transiting through disputed territory, major competitors that may seek to block the initiative (such as India), an immense scale of investment and transnational support the project requires in light of more recent Chinese economic plateauing.⁷⁷ The DIA assesses the BRI as also pursuing influence over nations to align their interests with China and deter criticism or conflict over sensitive policy matters.⁷⁸ Should the BRI succeed on the scale China hopes, the political influence the United States can exercise due to its economic and security roots in the region will decrease. Border nations that hedge against a powerful China with the U.S. security umbrella and associated investments may be reluctant to oppose China or maintain neutrality if China comes to dominate the region economically. Even if some sort of combination of significant U.S. regional influence and

76. Colin Flint and Cuiping Zhu, “The Geopolitics of Connectivity, Cooperation, and Hegemonic Competition: The Belt and Road Initiative,” *Geoforum* 99 (2019): pp. 95-101, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2018.12.008>.

77. Veysel Tekdal, “China's Belt and Road Initiative,” 373-390.

78. *Military and Security Developments*, 1-2.

Chinese influence becomes reality, the U.S. may find itself currently at the height of its regional power. This would be the perfect time to negotiate, create precedence, come to agreements, sign deals, or move forces into or out of appropriate operational positions.

Another dynamic present in such geographically dispersed initiatives with China as the lead state is the security of those initiatives against piracy, terrorism, civil unrest, natural disasters, and other forms of disruption. DIA posits that these rolls will fall to the PLA.⁷⁹ The PLA does not currently have the proper structure nor likely the requisite experience to support a dispersed project of this scale – let alone approval from partner nations to enter their borders and secure Chinese investments. This logistical complexity adds another development snag to the BRI. This snag further elongates the window available to the U.S. before such an initiative may reverse structural and demographic challenges. Once beyond its challenges, China may not feel the need to negotiate at all with the U.S. regarding nuclear policy and regional strategy.

As a brief aside, it is worth mentioning that China does not currently “dominate” trade or investment in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) region. China is one of the four main investors and trade partners with ASEAN - along with the United States, the European Union (EU), and Japan. In fact, the EU is the primary investor, and injects more capital than the U.S. and China combined.⁸⁰ Additionally, out of all of the ASEAN nations only two economies rank as highly dependent on China: Malaysia and Taiwan.⁸¹ Malaysia is a neutral nation and Taiwan is vehemently anti-Chinese. Clearly economic dependence does not necessarily beget political dependence. These statistics matter because there is an image that China has already attained economic domination of its region. Western rhetoric often asserts that most nations rely

79. *Military and Security Developments*, 9-12.

80. “Flows of Inward Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) to ASEAN by Source Country and Economic Sectors ,” Indicators: ASEANStatsDataPortal, 2019, data.aseanstats.org/.

81. Ibid.

on China to a high degree; and that they impose political will through these economic connections. Currently, the United States and its close military and economic allies make up three out of four key ASEAN investors and trade partners. U.S. economic influence and ability to set regional strategic objectives is very much alive and well. If China can overcome the middle-income gap issues and continue to grow, this dynamic will diminish but likely not go away entirely. This information backed by statistical analysis serves as evidence that now is the time for the U.S. to attempt to better prepare for regional nuclear/strategic weapon system dynamics.

Other regional incentives that may counter the economic conditions that provide the U.S. with a period of strategic opportunity essentially follow the dynamics of the BRI, described above. The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) is a proposed economic agreement between the ASEAN nations and five regional partners. To oversimplify, this deal hopes to reduce the cost of doing business and provide special partnerships and incentives to the agreement's members. This deal would be the largest economic agreement of its kind, in history. However, India's recent decision to withdrawal from the deal is in part due to their belief that it would essentially lead to China unfairly advantaging the Indian economy for capital gain. Indian withdrawal complicates balancing Chinese influence in RCEP for countries such as Japan.⁸² Other nations who likely share similar sentiments to Japan and India may be hesitant to enter into the deal, or enter into it as freely as before now that it has lost a bit of momentum and scope. Certainly, this has prolonged the negotiations of the deal. In the very least, this prolonged negotiation period provides the U.S. time and opportunity to maneuver within the region before a major partnership potentially chips away at its influence.

82. Mie Oba, "The Implications of India's RCEP Withdrawal," – The Diplomat (for The Diplomat, November 14, 2019), <https://thediplomat.com/2019/11/the-implications-of-indias-rcep-withdrawal/>.

The informal financial partnership and banking construct that formed on the sidelines of the G20 known as “BRICS” (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa), is another institution seeking to decrease U.S. financial influence and increase Chinese (and member) influence. This organization signals a desire for a more inclusive or even regionally based international system. However, it does not hold much authority or capital. Moreover, its members at times are closer with the West and its institutions than each other.⁸³ The informal institution that China hopes will help grant it enough international economic influence to counter its domestic challenges, is not exactly poised to right demographic or structural issues of the largest nation on earth.

U.S. State of the Union and Opportunism

The previous section goes over the various ways the CCP must sort certain demographic and structural issues that are stalling the “inevitable” Chinese domination of East Asian or global economics and politics. At the moment, China’s political culture and economic growth provide the perfect opportunity to plan a counter-Chinese technological, operational, and political strategy. Hard and soft economic data currently reflect a strong U.S. economy, and project strength throughout 2020. Military investment is breaking records year after year with bi-partisan support for widespread spending in the form of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). The Congressional statements in the introduction to this paper show a rare bipartisan support within majoritarian political issues. Their agreement is that China is an aggressor against the United States, and our defense spending must prepare for this. With the Chinese economy and external strategic imperatives somewhat stalled or secondary in priority, the U.S.

83. Feng, Liu, “China-India Engagement in Institutions: Convergence and Divergence on Global Governance Reforms,” in *The China-India Rivalry in the Globalization Era*, ed. by T.V. Paul ((Telangana, India: Orient BlackSwan, 2019), 233-238.

environment is ideal to unify support behind a national initiative. The executive and legislature must move beyond calling simply for technological advances. They need to detail how those advances should be flexible strategically, how they need to be employed, and what the associated diplomatic strategy needs to be. During the Cold War, there was agreement that the Soviet Union was our enemy and that we needed to couple resources and man-hours to out strategize them. Whether you agree with the rhetoric, or with the NDAA, the political atmosphere is ready for a new wave of strategic thought. However, this section follows the discussion of technological capability in part to signify the reliance of research and engineering upon a foundation of resources. Abstract analysis and war-gaming to combat China's rise will mean nothing if the U.S. economy shrinks continuously while the Chinese economy grows conversely. Dr. James Kurth, former professor of strategy at the Naval War College where he received the Medal for Meritorious Civilian Service; and senior fellow and member of prominent think tanks in Philadelphia, New York, and London, posits:

Underneath most of the strategic options of the United States lies a fundamental assumption—and perhaps a fatal flaw—and that is that some-how the United States will be able to maintain and modernize its military forces... so that they can serve as a creditable counterpart to the rising Chinese military. For this assumption to remain sound, however, the United States must also maintain and modernize its economy, and particularly its industry, so that it can provide the necessary weapons systems and budgetary expenditures to support its military.⁸⁴

Despite the promise the current technological/political and economic disposition of China presents the United States, we will be standing before a fire with no hose if our economic prowess wanes. The two most prominent RAND intellectuals that shaped Cold War deterrence theory, and that still shape the fundamental questions of deterrence today, were a physicist and

84. James Kurth, "Confronting a Powerful China with Western Characteristics," *Orbis* 56, no. 1 (2012): pp. 58-59, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.orbis.2011.10.003>.

an economist. The most prevalent theory in the U.S. belonged to the economist. This is a crude characterization, but nonetheless it identifies the critical importance of economic factors on strategy. The next section will examine Cold War strategy to determine the efficacy of this type of thought and its applicability to the current milieu between the United States of America and the People's Republic of China (PRC).

COLD WAR DETERRENCE THEORY: RECAPTURING EXPERTISE FOR CURRENT USE

The opportunity seems to exist for U.S. strategy to coincide with armament innovation to prevent significantly expanded Chinese force posture and operations. The Pentagon and Congress recognize the implications of the growing Chinese threat. Public statements and policy documents support rapid advanced technological development. Calculated and intentional employment of these new systems in a way tailored to the disposition of Chinese forces and culture is equally as necessary. While the strategy of the Cold War may have been imperfect, it was constant. Legislators and policy makers spoke the language of theorists like Herman Kahn and Thomas Schelling. Concepts of nuclear deterrence such as survivability, damage limitation, assured destruction, assured second strike, escalation rungs, etc. - while often misquoted were nevertheless ubiquitous in the media and to some extent the general populace. The question I will examine below is how effective was this type of comparatively advanced strategic contemplation. This section will seek to prove that high-level strategic thought was very effective at rightly organizing and preparing the U.S. against the adversarial strategic threat. It will postulate characteristically why this type of strategy was successful. Lastly, I will discuss if this type of policy development is applicable to the U.S. – China security environment.

Rightly Ordered Cold War Documentation and Practice

“The Long Telegram”, as it came to be known, was essentially an intelligence estimate based off an intimate study of political climate, culture, policy, and somewhat from supporting force posture for that policy. This document was detailed and well informed. George Kennan’s

telegram was so logically based on a strategic assessment that it set the tone for the containment policy and a similar mode of assessment throughout the Cold War. The telegram reviewed basic features of post-war Soviet outlook, background for that outlook, its projection in practical policy on an official level, its projection on an unofficial level, and practical deductions or recommendations from a U.S. policy standpoint.⁸⁵ Notice that the telegram depicted sections of tailored top-level political culture. In a post-World War II milieu, force structure would have been a readily suggestible and somewhat knowable undertone with respect to this recent U.S. ally. However, it is not one of the sections Kennan completed to inform his President of the world-shaping policy imperatives facing the U.S. This Soviet specific and in-depth strategic type of assessment drove home the urgency of the document's recommendation. More importantly, it formulated a policy that most would agree significantly contributed to ultimate American success.

Kennan's reasonable and convincing strategic assessment matriculated throughout the US. Government. Its legacy led to the establishment (indirectly) of a science advisory steering committee with a technology capabilities assessment panel. This document laid out a timetable of relative force posture development between the U.S. and Russia. The purpose for this was apparent, "to clarify the effects of evolving technology on our military position relative to Russia... inherent in the development of technology over the next decade or so."⁸⁶ This 1950s policy provided context and direction to technology development beyond the costly model of matching capabilities.

The steering committee's projections for the Cold War were as follows:

85. George Kennan, Received by The Secretary of State, United States, "The Long Telegram," (Moscow, Soviet Union, February 22, 1946).

86. *Report by the Technological Capabilities Panel of the Science Advisory Committee*, National Security Policy vol. XIX, (Department of State Office of the Historian, 1955), (accessed January 2019) 42.

Period I—The Present Phase: we have an offensive advantage but are vulnerable to surprise attack...

Period II (Starting 1956/57—Ending 1958/60): We will have a very great offensive advantage relative to USSR and will be less vulnerable than previously to surprise attack...

Period III This is a period of transition from Period II to Period IV involving the occurrence in some order of the following characteristics: The development of advanced weapon capabilities by the Soviets...Substantial strengthening of U.S. defenses...Continued improvement in U.S. delivery capabilities...

Period IV (Indefinite in length; possibly beginning within a decade):
An attack by either side would result in mutual destruction. This is the period when both the U.S. and Russia will be in a position from which neither country can derive a winning advantage⁸⁷

These periods defined how the U.S. envisioned the nuclear dynamics of the Cold War. While the estimated dates may have been inaccurate, their conceptual chronology and framework were critical tools in planning for the challenges of the Cold War. However, for the utility of the policy maker, the panel textured their characterization so much further. Each period discussed specific capability characteristics, and effects or implications on policy and the security environment therein. The periods included friendly and adversarial assessments of operational latitude for certain provocations or security actions, and even recommendations for further analysis and study.⁸⁸ The work by this panel was good strategy because it identified a problem, extrapolated its conditions for long-term planning, looked realistically at the nature of the problem, and provided a series of conditional actionable guidelines for navigating the problem. Conditional analysis is key when dealing with uncertainty, lest the nuclear force ends up prepared for a very specific and never occurring posited eventuality. Moving beneath the

87. Ibid, 42-45

88. Ibid, 42-46

theoretical to a call for specific actions within specific periods is also key. This process charges subordinate elements and bodies with tangible goals. Abstract conjecture alone cannot win a war.

Furthermore, reactive technological development tends to pigeonhole new systems to single purposes. Limited systems may find themselves behind a threat that pivots as the counter technology gets released - and behind at a great cost. Beyond potential technological obsolescence, continuously reacting to foreign force developments creates a myriad of costly projects without overarching control or assessment of what is most imperative or feasible. To determine this, a desired end state is necessary. The development requires a context of the environment of employment, and strategically what the system needs to establish or re-establish based on dynamic security policy. This panel was acutely aware that a framework for comparison was critical for complex analysis and planning. With finite resources and the risk of strategic surprise, informed organization techniques keep planning bodies and policy makers on task. These techniques generally help with visualizing complex problems. Unfortunately, the U.S. is currently engrossed in a period of reactive technological development. The U.S. stands amidst phase one of two or three, etc., and largely shows a lack of impetus to move beyond this current step in the process of strategizing.

Each of the U.S. Congress people quoted in this paper's introduction recognized a threat from a different perspective. If the DoD could once again articulate a phased methodology that classified threats and broad strategic responses beyond technologically complex explanations, they would likely find resonance of their mission within the legislature and their electorate. With the background of Soviet policy and designs, the U.S. assessed relative force postures and the projections for those forces. This led to a time bound and particularized plan of action that formulated the superstructure of nuclear strategy throughout the Cold War. This articulated

framework gave intellectuals, engineers, and policy makers a platform for discussion. The discussion helped prepare a metric system for gauging long-term efficacy of policymaking. This became part of the culture of the political and nuclear elite of the time. The policy that came forth from those elite was better because of it. Now we will look at a sample of the continued complex and detailed development of strategy within the Cold War.

Mindful of period two above, U.S. Policy makers were taking advantage of the assessed lack of vulnerability, to war game further active and passive defense measures. A few days prior to the publishing of the well-know Gaither Report in 1957, the council that developed the report met with the President. White House staff entered that conference into the official record by way of a memorandum. This was another instance of academic analysis driving force investments due to the “growing power of Soviet forces”.⁸⁹ Recognizing that during the current nuclear “period” the U.S. could deliver a “greater blow”, the council was assessing five years into the future when true strategic vulnerability might come based on Soviet capability advancement. The council found that the U.S. “must educate our people for the scientific and technological needs, and must also educate our people so they will support what is required... The President said that groups must be organized throughout universities, business groups, and other elements...to put across the needs of the situation.”⁹⁰ Essentially, by navigating the comparative framework for projected implications of losing preeminence, and sounding that against intelligence, the council was assessing future needs. This merging of academic and strategic thought recommended the investment into what became science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) programs. Recognizing a deficiency, critical analysis helped ensure technical proficiency for

89. *Memorandum of a Conference with the President*, National Security Policy vol. XIX, (Department of State Office of the Historian, 1957), (accessed January 2019).

90. Ibid.

generations into the future (through federal interest in STEM education). The educational focus of this initiative and its long-term scope is not particularly characteristic of a Joint Staff or DoD solution. Yet, thinking strategically beyond near-term weapon-system prototyping birthed the next generation of developers and technically proficient strategists.

The 1957 Gaither report, released three days later dealt primarily with assessing the efficacy of defense measures and deterrent capability of our retaliatory forces. Again, prior to allocating funding, the decision makers in the national capital region desired informed theory. The report found that the Strategic Air Command (SAC) provided the primary deterrence for the U.S. population. Yet, SAC was significantly vulnerable to Soviet surprise attack. Some prescriptions included specific force increases for ICBMs and other ballistic missiles, various hardening measures for the defense of the force, fielding a sea leg of the triad to bolster deterrence, and the report bound most of these measures for completion by 1958 or 1959.⁹¹ This analysis identified where the United States needed to focus efforts. Were the specific measures eventually employed just enough, too much, maybe not enough, or was the U.S. simply lucky? Unfortunately, the efficacy of deterrence is hard to claim because one cannot prove a negative. However a scientific and intelligence based assessment found a weakness in deterrence, that our counterparts were likely to exploit – or so we thought. Increasing and improving ICBMs, hardening SAC forces, and adding a sea leg to our nuclear triad undoubtedly made our nuclear forces more survivable and more effective. These elements likely contributed to deterrence at the time. Regardless, offering deadlines, specific force goals, and a responsible agent to execute, helped these goals quickly become official funded policy. Today, our strategic weapons policy

91. Horace Gaither, “Deterrence and Survival in the Nuclear Age, ‘The Gaither Report,’” *The Cold War*, (President's Science Advisory Committee, Security Resources Panel, 7 Nov. 1957), alphahistory.com/coldwar/gaither-report-1957/, (accessed January 2019).

documents do not often offer such actionable metrics coupled with clearly charged offices. This report bolstered what became the most critical element of our nuclear deterrence. Policymakers and lawmakers alike continue to agree on the importance of its tenants.

The aforementioned policy planning was not unique to the early cold war. National Security Decision Memorandum (NSDM) 242 was the employment of modified measures originally investigated in the National Security Study Memorandum (NSSM) 169, on U.S. nuclear policy or posture. NSDM 242 did not only follow NSSM 169, it followed Presidential Directives (PD) 18, 41, 53, 57, and 58 - and 59 shortly succeeded it. These are certainly not the only relevant studies or nuclear policy documents of the seventeen years between the Gaither Report and NSDM 242, just the best known. The very fact that U.S. leadership studied, evaluated, and amended nuclear policy in a significant way every two years, stands in contrast to our post-Cold War once every 10 year argument to keep nuclear weapons. NSDM 242 stated that should nuclear deterrence fail, the U.S. needed to prepare to terminate war as quickly as possible and at the lowest level of conflict as possible. This objective required planning a wide range of limited nuclear employment and targeting measures to use in conjunction with political and other military action to control escalation.⁹² The very intent of Cold War nuclear warfighting planning for the U.S. was to control escalation of such existentially menacing weapons. While deterrence remained an imperfect gamble, the U.S. afforded considerable attention and assets to limiting the potential for assured destruction through NSDM 242. This memorandum more specifically called to maintain reserve nuclear forces, increase the amount of particularly costly Soviet targets, and limit the damage to U.S. forces and infrastructure.⁹³ The document took the findings of a study

92. National Security Council United States, *National Security Decision Memorandum 242, Policy for Planning the Employment of Nuclear Weapons*, (Washington D.C.: GPO, 1974), (accessed January 2019).

93. Ibid.

and laid out courses of action to rectify force deficiencies. The memorandum set the tone for U.S. posture and dialogue from 1974 through the end of the Cold War. In depth analysis and complex strategic planning allowed the U.S. to pursue tailored courses of action that presumably maintained deterrence. This policy further confounded the adversary with questions of parity.

Equally as important, the document goes on to say:

Within three months, the Secretary of Defense shall present for Presidential review an initial set of limited employment options. At quarterly intervals thereafter, the Secretary of Defense shall present for Presidential review a summary of available options and an analysis of any additional recommended options. Each presentation should include illustrative scenarios for each limited employment options.⁹⁴

I kept this quote in full because it once again demonstrates the specific and confident requirements that came from an intellectual and well-maintained strategic tradition. These documents did not banter over the purpose of the dialogue, it navigated a robust tradition, and expanded on an in depth study. Lastly, it had specific requests and requirements to execute quickly its intent. Great power competition seems to necessitate this kind of quick analysis, accountably, and speed in response.

A few years later, in 1980, PD-59 elaborated on specific upgrades to weapon systems and an increase and modification to the targeting tactics and procedures.⁹⁵ The United States took further measures regarding what to do if deterrence failed. At the time, the U.S. believed that the Soviets had a robust nuclear war concept.⁹⁶ We know now this assessment of the Soviets was correct. The tradition of evolving policy to match the adversary and parry it when necessary was successful. Success was in the usurping of the Soviet policy advantage through deep strategic

94. Ibid.

95. William H. Kincaide, "Of Special Interest: U.S. Targeting Plans," *Arms Control Today*, vol. 10, no. 8, 1980, pp. 11–11. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/23622912.

96. William Burr, "How to Fight a Nuclear War," *Foreign Policy* (Foreign Policy, September 14, 2012), <https://foreignpolicy.com/2012/09/14/how-to-fight-a-nuclear-war/>.

analysis superimposed on nuclear force posture. In fact, one month after the release and leak of PD-59, Zbigniew Brzezinski wrote a letter to the President. In this letter he was addressing the concerns regarding overturning of previous policy with the endorsement of PD-59. Mr. Brzezinski very effectively provides the intentional narrative throughout each major nuclear policy document of the previous 20 years or so. He explains their implications, and why our nuclear force posture required each one.⁹⁷ What is incredibly evident in this description is the continuity of intentional, tailored policy. This tradition led to a non-partisan continuity of much of the actual policies, themselves. This kind of unity of process and objective allowed for a much more coherent, well-practiced nuclear policy during the Cold War. These documents are not just relics of an obscure nuclear thing. They are evidence of an intellectual tradition, that while flawed at times, critically analyzed and implemented policy with an efficiency and proficiency largely lost in today's reemergence of great power politics.

Responding to General Deterrence Criticism

The opponents of deterrence are more so opponents of some of the deterrence concepts from the Cold War. Mostly the assumption of reciprocal applicability of what could reasonably deter the U.S. political machine would deter the Soviet political machine. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, declassified documentation proved that this mirror imaging of perceptions was often incorrect. Deterrence expert Keith Payne characterizes this sentiment well, “Nevertheless, confident assertions and promises continue unabated predictably...such assertions and promises should now be recognized as hubris” (Payne, *Gamble* Ch. 7).⁹⁸ To be clear, this is not the kind of

97. Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Carter Transformation of Our Strategic Doctrine*, (Washington D.C.: United States White House, 1980), (accessed January 2019).

98. Keith B. Payne, *The Great American Gamble: Deterrence Theory and Practice from the Cold War to the Twenty-First Century* (Fairfax, VA: National Institute Press, 2008), Ch. 7.

theorizing this paper suggests or champions from the Cold War. This type of truncated analysis and mirror imaging seeks to shorten the exhaustive and tailored intellectual process Dr. Payne and the fourth section of this paper claim is so central to effective deterrence. Informed dialogue, routine studies, and responsive force structures, along with synchronized science, policy, and theory are the tenants of Cold War deterrence thought. Such a tradition seems so central to what in fact prepared America to parry the Soviet Union. “Further... there is no logical basis for anticipating that China could be inspired by Schelling’s reciprocal fear of surprise attack to strike first at U.S. retaliatory forces. Unless the U.S. behaves very foolishly by abandoning its retaliatory capabilities.”⁹⁹ Payne’s error here is that he assumes a proficiency of strategic or nuclear deterrence thought that I would argue the United States largely has lost; and that China is only beginning to have. In fact, without reference to Chinese strategic culture and a contextualization of scenario-based analysis, this assumption seems based upon a largely Western rationality. His, and many others’, initial critique disproves the very common second assertion above. Payne, a critic of simplified and culturally projected modes of deterrence, concludes his analysis by stating: “for the purposes of post-Cold War deterrence, it is important to know the opponent to the extent feasible, acknowledge that which is not known, and to establish deterrence policies informed by what can be known about the specific opponent’s beliefs and modes of thought.”¹⁰⁰ This type of deterrence policy is the kind my study seeks to engage. Uninformed or premature presumptions are in fact the enemy of deterrence. Unfortunately, these were characteristics in Cold War deterrence theory. However, much of the architecture of Cold War deterrence is valuable, yet absent today.

99. Ibid.

100. Keith B. Payne, *The Fallacies*, Ch. 7.

This paper delves into the constructs of deterrence because “as long as nuclear weapons exist, deterrence appears to be the most— some would say the only—acceptable policy, far better than any possible alternative (such as blackmail, intimidation, coercion, or actual use).”¹⁰¹ Deterrence is often a system of purposeful ambiguity and, thanks to operational security, almost never explicitly acknowledged as successful. So why bother? The answer is the scale and implications of the devastating effects of a nuclear detonation. Delpech goes on to say, “Ideas have consequences. So does a lack of them. During the Cold War, a mixture of deterrence, containment, conventional capabilities, and arms control seemed successful in preventing a nuclear exchange with the Soviets. Luck may have played a part as well.”¹⁰² All of the tools at the disposal of a government exist to obtain its objectives. Militaries provide security and coercive force. The design and posture of these forces is to both deter wars and win them. Strategists must plan for both. As Brodie acknowledges above, conventional modern wisdom puts a stronger emphasis on deterrence versus warfighting. Even prominent statesman and intellectual Henry Kissinger stated that “negotiations are less about arms or control than about strategy”.¹⁰³ As the U.S. conceives its next generation of arms control, technological pursuits, and deterrence mechanisms, it must unify behind an overarching strategy to maximize their coherence and applicability.

Cold War Deterrence’s Potential for Current Resonance

There still exists an opportunity between the United States and China to apply strategic analysis, dialogue, and deterrence. Nations with an established trust to some degree, and who

101. Thérèse Delpech, *Nuclear Deterrence*, 11.

102. Ibid, 10.

103. Ibid, 21.

operate joint security environments together need not worry about how to deter the other from aggressions very unlikely to occur. States hell-bent on warfare ignore deterrence. Everything in between these archetypes allows for the possibility of the efficacy of deterrence. The United States and China openly state that they do not wish to go to war with the other. The DIA in a report to the U.S. Congress assess, “China’s leaders employ tactics short of armed conflict to pursue China’s strategic objectives through activities calculated to fall below the threshold of provoking armed conflict with the United States, its allies and partners, or others in the Indo-Pacific region.”¹⁰⁴ China’s economic rise precipitated from the current world order. With their need to overcome the middle-income gap, China will likely await further stability at home before upsetting the status quo. For instance, the current trade war with the United States in part caused the Chinese economy to plateau. If China cannot rely on a strong economy to provide the vehicle for demographic and structural reform, they risk a GDP not commensurate with a highly developed society.

The tenuous period of Chinese fragility described in the second section provides a window where the Chinese will be more likely to accept a model of deterrence rather than a shaky international policy resting upon an unstable domestic situation. Moreover, as China seeks to become a world leader worthy of greater prestige and recognition, a modern account of prestige may drive the Chinese away from desiring direct, heated conflict. “In the present, peaceful pursuits and qualities, such as network centrality, cultural radiance... sporting prowess, language or the revelations of a rich and creative history, are more likely to realize national prestige...Quality and credibility in commercial, technological, [and] cultural spheres engender

104. *Military and Security Developments*, 15.

prestige.”¹⁰⁵ Real defense capability and force posture has always been a component of power. However, now there are elements of power obtained through international recognition and admiration. Those states who play the role of antagonists become “rogue” or sanctioned - which hurts economic potential. Perhaps China’s desire for greater recognition may not necessitate raw power dynamics and conflict. This likely means that China will be open to some form of negotiation, arms control, or declared force postures in an attempt to be cooperative and avoid a loss of face internationally. This environment would only assist the deterrence regime.

A 1955 intelligence estimate described a Soviet-U.S. relationship ripe for stability through deterrence:

Faced with a world situation increasingly inhospitable to their aims, the Soviet leaders began to seek a way to restore their maneuverability short of the alternative extremes of war... these leaders have become less openly belligerent ... and have made a series of conciliatory gestures... The [Soviets] ... sought ... to convince the Free World that it is possible to establish conditions of ‘mutual trust.’¹⁰⁶

If the Chinese truly wish to resist war, then history would suggest that there will be opportunities to apply deterrence for stability’s sake. The U.S. also needs to work to re-establish this type of milieu to increase the potential efficacy of deterrence. This paper demonstrated that in all likelihood the Chinese economy will surpass that of the U.S. Emeritus professor at the London School of Economics, Barry Buzan asserts. “The West as a whole, and the U.S. in particular, need to accept that they no longer own the future.”¹⁰⁷ The U.S. should lessen some of its recalcitrance toward the Chinese at all levels of government. Strict aversion is more akin to Stalin’s not one-step backward proclamation than actual strategy. Simply put, the United States

105. Steve Wood, “Nations, National Identity and Prestige,” *National Identities* 16, no. 2 (March 2014): pp. 99-115, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14608944.2014.897315>.

106. *National Intelligence Estimate, World Situation and Trends*, National Security Policy vol. XIX, (Department of State Office of the Historian, 1955), (accessed January 2019) 132-133.

107. Barry Buzan, “The Inaugural Kenneth N. Waltz Annual Lecture A World Order Without Superpowers,” *International Relations* 25, no. 1 (2011): p. 25, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0047117810396999>.

cannot function in a system it does not accept. Should China eventually obtain near nuclear parity, parity, or marginal preeminence, an ill-prepared United States will struggle to control the strategic atmosphere. The U.S. should pursue a long-term strategy that accepts the changing global dynamic instead of purely fighting it. This will create an environment more permissible to preventing strategic-level conflict – the intent of deterrence. The current strategic environment requires the informed deterrence engaged in the Cold War. The U.S. needs to accept this so that it can lead the effort, and hopefully control the relationship.

Historically, projections of material power are notoriously unreliable as it relates to total factor productivity and roles in international politics.¹⁰⁸ Chinese analysts, like American analysts, will be aware of the limited margins of certainty in economic and especially political power projections. This should make the Chinese receptive to forms of conflict short of warfare. The Chinese creation of the SFF, a USSTRATCOM-like body, shows their devotion to strategic level thought and planning. A key component of this, and historically the most emphasized component, is deterrence. The Chinese should absolutely be receptive to a revitalized U.S intellectual architecture for long-term strategy to help inject stability and preparation. Dong Wang, professor at the School of International Studies, Peking University, China; and head of the Institute on China-U.S. People to People Exchange, Peking University, China, believes it naïve, even dumb for China to make America feel insecure. He recommends that China do as much as it can to avoid conflict, share respect, and cooperate.¹⁰⁹ Insecurity in a nuclear environment could lead to enticements for pre-emptive use. This insecurity in a new arms race with an economically and technologically capable China could have catastrophic consequences.

108. Ian Clark, “China and the United States: a Succession of Hegemonies?,” *International Affairs* 87, no. 1 (2011): p. 27, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2346.2011.00957.x>.

109. Dong Wang, “Is China Trying to Push the U.S. out of East Asia?,” *China Quarterly of International Strategic Studies* 01, no. 01 (2015): pp. 59-84, <https://doi.org/10.1142/s2377740015500049>.

Becoming more efficient at destroying forces and taking lives without vigorous intellectual control is careless. With China seeking to avoid conflict and maybe even avoid their normal opacity, the environment is ripe for a Cold War type deterrence architecture.

UNDERSTANDING DETERRENCE AND CHINA: A STRATEGIC CULTURE ASSESSMENT

Towards the end of the last section, I discussed that the critics of Cold War deterrence models found issue with mirror imaging cultural ideas to neatly justify suppositions as the foundational elements for strategy. Cold War strategic analysis was comprehensive. It created a language and frame of mind that allowed for informed national debate regarding nuclear force posture. Such analysis is still relevant to the dynamics between China and the United States. However, this analysis absent the lens through which to assess the context of the situation and the adversary surely would err. That lens is strategic culture (SC). In this section, I will first discuss why it is so critical to engage strategic culture. Concurrently, I will define strategic culture and provide a framework to better reference and catalog relevant aspects of Chinese culture. After this initial stage-setter, this section will provide an in depth depiction of Chinese SC, and analyze briefly how it may be relevant to U.S. strategy formulation.

Why Strategic Culture

The issue of projecting American security ideals and trends upon our adversaries continues in current international defense relations. Dartmouth associate professor and Harvard Reischauer Institute faculty associate, Jennifer Lind; and her colleague Daryl Press, Dartmouth associate professor and DoD consultant, claim that the greatest danger to present international relations is the US belief that its current policies are benign. It appears to the authors that no one in Western national strategic policymaking is willing or able to try to see things as China would

see them.¹¹⁰ The underlying urgency and frustration in the above suggests not so much that the U.S. is incorrect in its assumptions. However, the U.S. interpretation of its actions in international relations, while important, is largely irrelevant for effective deterrence. If the U.S. seeks to deter Chinese from thinking or doing something, they must know how the Chinese think, and what responses certain thoughts illicit. The useful fearmongering to shock an aging strategic architecture into action and Western political commentary is largely devoid of a thorough and useful investigation into understanding the Chinese beyond a threat assessment. “The goal is not to sound the alarm over the new salience of nuclear weapons in Russian doctrine or over the nuclear buildup in China... [but] to understand how nuclear weapons are contemplated by other actors at a time when we ourselves tend to dismiss them.”¹¹¹ The United States is not only avoiding the centrality of nuclear and strategic weapons in policy, they are often ignoring a critical requirement for developing that policy.

The implications for truncated nuclear deterrence are grave. In essence, deterrence is a series of existential threats and coercion. These stakes demand as much accuracy as possible when navigating a conflict or potential conflict. When communicating threats of force, if the U.S. lacks proficiency in the correct language, they risk making the wrong statement. For example, “If one’s deterrence threats are considered ‘irrational’ by the targeted society, they may not be considered credible... They may not even be considered threats, or they may be considered challenges to be confronted, thus having the exact opposite effect of that desired.”¹¹² During much of the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s the United States’ chief political actors and lawmakers

110. Jennifer Lind and Daryl Press, “Are China and America Destined to Clash?,” *The National Interest* (The Center for the National Interest, June 27, 2015), <https://nationalinterest.org/commentary/the-sources-the-sino-american-spiral-9088>.

111. Thérèse Delpech, *Nuclear Deterrence*, 21.

112. Jeannie L. Johnson, Kerry M. Kartchner, and Jeffrey Arthur Larsen, *Strategic Culture and Weapons of Mass Destruction: Culturally Based Insights into Comparative National Security Policymaking* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 9.

were certain that nuclear war planning of cross-domain counterforce targets with scalable collateral damage - was irrational and unnecessary. The U.S. military did partially prepare for multiple nuclear scenarios. However, U.S. policy adhered largely to an assured second strike, minimal nuclear war-fighting methodology. If it had not been for documents like NSDM 242 and PD-59 in the 1970s, our loss of relative nuclear superiority could have caught us unprepared to deter.

Strategic culture does not produce cultural prejudice similar to WWII-esque sociological and anthropological notions of the adversary. “Strategic culture may be, to some a theory... I propose we think of strategic culture as a research program, one in which certain topics would seem natural objects of our curiosity.”¹¹³ SC provides a lens through which to examine a scenario or an equation into which to plug data in order to draw the most informed conclusion. In this way, SC also does not provide exact predictions. It gives decision makers insight and probabilistic models much like finished intelligence. Former Department of State senior advisor and SC expert Kerry Kartchner claims, “SC should be used as a supplement to realism and constructivism... even as a predictor and explainer in certain circumstances where realpolitik fails to provide a complete or accurate depiction of either.”¹¹⁴ Essentially, deterrence is dependent on hard power dynamics. Despite what is known to be true regarding coercive force, the conveyance of what may be unknown in the way of materiel; and particularly the unknown preferences and courses of action of another state must “properly” resonate within the SC of another actor. This cannot happen without detailed analysis of that culture. The definition of SC this paper will use is:

113. David G. Haglund, “What Good Is Strategic Culture?,” *Strategic Culture and Weapons of Mass Destruction*, 2009, p. 17, https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230618305_2.

114. Jeannie L. Johnson, Kerry M. Kartchner, and Jeffrey Arthur Larsen, *Strategic Culture and WMD*, 14.

Strategic culture is that set of shared beliefs, assumptions, and modes of behavior, derived from common experiences and accepted narratives (both oral and written), that shape collective identity and relationships to other groups, and which determine appropriate ends and means for achieving security objectives.¹¹⁵

The below discussion will subdivide SC into identity, values/symbols, norms, and perceptual lens. Identity is the state's collective characterization of self. Values are symbols, past-times, and traditional collective roles that are elevated to a common import with a prescribed pattern of behavior – not necessarily political in nature. Norms depict how identity and values translate into political patterns of behavior. Perceptual lens qualifies how a culture or state views its political role, its adversaries, and conflict.¹¹⁶ I believe this methodology generally to cover all necessary insights into applicable cultural dynamics. These focus areas are interrelated and as such their implications reinforce one another.

The most famous name in U.S. nuclear deterrence, “Thomas Schelling defines deterrence as ‘influencing the choices that another party will make, and doing it by influencing his expectations of how we will behave’.”¹¹⁷ Enacting this central principal of deterrence without actually studying expectation formulation and communication dynamics is illogical.

Identity

Historically, China perceived itself as the “middle kingdom” whereby all other states (particularly in its region) were to form concentric circles of vassal tribute like contour lines on a map.¹¹⁸ This concept still resonates amongst many Chinese elite. Those who subscribe to this concept of the Chinese state interpret their expanding military, economic, and diplomatic clout as

115. Ibid.

116. Kerry Kartchner, “Introduction to Strategic Culture,” (Lecture, Washington DC, January 17, 2019).

117. Jeffrey S. Lantis, “Strategic Culture: From Clausewitz to Constructivism,” *Strategic Culture and Weapons of Mass Destruction*, 2009, p. 44, https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230618305_3.

118. T. V. Paul, *The China-India Rivalry in the Globalisation Era* (Telangana, India: Orient BlackSwan, 2019), 12.

manifestations for the realization of this collective identifier and mission.¹¹⁹ Much like 20th century imperial Japan, any identification or status of China as less than central is conditional and likely will not satisfy the desires of Chinese elite. Polls conducted by Taiwanese academics show that 60% of the population strongly support the CCP, 80% at least mostly support the CCP and are proud to be Chinese.¹²⁰ This indicates that the Chinese people do in fact see themselves largely as subjects of a legitimate communist party and a single people with the common history of the middle kingdom. The Chinese people view themselves as peace loving and harmonious.¹²¹ However, there seems to be an almost Confucian hierarchy within this construct. Peace and harmony are not synonymous with equality, but a society of proper order. Their identity as a harmonious people would likely require deference over seeking agreeability, in diplomacy.

Many Chinese elites view their state as a stirring gentle giant, emerging from incapacitation. Throughout Western exploitation, China remained “ethically advanced” when compared to its captors.¹²² From this formulation, the Chinese conceive their identity as less offensively violent and less materialistic. The Chinese view themselves and their actions as defensive, largely based on this historical trauma of the state identity. China’s past codifies a rebellion against the harmful external images of China’s identity; and would likely make elite sensitive to being treated “less than” by the West. This may also manifest itself in suspicion of Western action as almost neo-colonialist or occidental. An example of this is the assumed purposeful disenfranchisement of the Chinese from global liberal institutions.

119. Jared McKinney, (November 11, 2019).

120. *Military and Security Developments*, i.

121. Manjari Chatterjee Miller, “China, India, and Their Differing Conceptions of International Order,” in *The China-India Rivalry in the Globalization Era*, ed. by T.V. Paul (Telangana, India: Orient BlackSwan, 2019), 85.

122. Andrew Scobell, “Himalayan Standoff: Strategic Culture and the China-India Rivalry,” in *The China-India Rivalry in the Globalization Era*, ed. by T.V. Paul (Telangana, India: Orient BlackSwan, 2019), 171.

The keepers of this culture are political elite, military brass, and academic strategists brought together by the CCP in an orchestrated cultural reawakening.¹²³ The CCP understand their central role to maintain a unified national identity. Any challenge to this identity, such as the Taiwanese or Muslims in the western regions, would challenge what it means to be Chinese. The CCP deems collective identity as too costly for experimentation.

China views itself as modernized, sagely, and benevolent. The CCP clings to these historic cultural characteristics to maintain legitimacy.¹²⁴ Again, because the Chinese see themselves as wise relative to others, external perceptions of controversy would not outweigh the internal essence of right purpose. Moreover, the Chinese elite may find it of critical import to claim some sort of gain from diplomatic interactions. Claiming victory will add to the legitimacy of the leadership by aligning them with tradition conceptions of Chinese wisdom. The Chinese must be the shrewd navigators of international dynamics.

Anti-traditionalism seeks to supplement nativist tendencies with best practices or lessons learned from modernized foreign societies.¹²⁵ The sage wisdom allows for party adjustments to traditionalism in the name of advancement. Moreover, this delicate navigation belongs to the elite and seems to serve as a partial justification for party rule. Therefore, there is a great impetus on advancing technology and economic growth associated with legitimacy. The Chinese government is imbued with the mandate of heaven.¹²⁶ It has a divine right as part of its identity. This makes challenges to its dominion particularly offensive. Furthermore, any net loss in major diplomatic matters may signal a loss of heaven's mandate for the ruling party. This loss could

123. Andrew Scobell, "Himalayan Standoff: Strategic Culture and the China-India Rivalry," 177.

124. Christopher Ford, "Behind the Official Narrative China's Strategic Culture in Perspective," *Strategic Asia Program, The National Bureau of Asian Research*, November 1, 2016.

125. Kenneth Johnson, "China's Strategic Culture: A Perspective for the United States," *Strategic Studies Institute, United States Army War College*, June 2009, 1-15.

126. Christopher Ford, "Behind the Official Narrative".

manifest as a simple public challenge to the CCP. These historical concepts and narratives form the identity and justification for the party in the absence of legitimacy derived from an electorate. Additionally, China draws on such a long and storied history that its SC naturally compiles elements that seem contradictory into a single narrative vein that explains away temporary weaknesses and suggests the permanence of the powerful Chinese people. Being insensitive to such a delicate concept could allow U.S. policy makers to overlook a potential cultural trigger for force, or to give too much credence to pacifist claims.

Values/Symbols

China values its military tradition of strategy - most prominently displayed during the Ming Dynasty or from authors such as Sun Tzu. Furthermore, traditional realist conceptions of strength resonate with Chinese strategy.¹²⁷ Its rich strategic memory provides a patience in policy that may confound most Western, particularly American actors. This is deeply intertwined with Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism. Confucian thought carries the power of millennia of influence and emphasizes harmony over conflict, as well as prosperity and righteousness. Sun Tzu, who was influenced by Confucian thought, suggested that winning through non-violent strategy was the most preferred and sophisticated victory.¹²⁸ The spiritual and truth-seeking meditative dynamics of Taoism and Buddhism traditions may make the Chinese more cautious to exact an immediate reaction or to respond publicly. Seeking harmony and righteousness also provides a potential mode of legitimizing governmental actions.

127. Andrew Scobell, "Himalayan Standoff: Strategic Culture and the China-India Rivalry," 178.

128. Kenneth Johnson, "China's Strategic Culture", 3-4.

The Chinese value virtue and specifically truth in their prosperous leadership, which supports their focus on defense, a noble pursuit, over the frivolity of offensive operations.¹²⁹ These subjective qualities require a strong narrative to justify them. A major component of that narrative will be the relative success of political actions during which virtue can be on display. This is likely to increase the significance of failure or a slight to that consistent with a religious conflict or edict. The focus on prosperity and non-violent victory provides competitors with a potential avenue to exact a well-calculated deterrence that maintains a mutually beneficial *quid pro quo*. As long as a competitor is not directly inflammatory, or if they are willing to make some concessions, avoiding conflict may be desirable but also critical for an appearance of legitimacy. Sun Tzu and the Great Wall stand as Chinese symbols of potent pacifism for the ever-present emphasis on defense. Unfortunately, these symbols of defense serve to justify most Chinese actions as defensive and so comparatively “good”.¹³⁰ Therefore, condemning Chinese military forays into new areas as provocative may not make much sense to the Chinese body politic. Furthermore, sanctions based upon provocations, if not delicately maneuvered will only justify the concept of foreign aggression and the symbol of the defensive CCP. Competitors may better seek inconspicuous counter efforts, and only condemn the most egregious acts to prevent resonance of this narrative.

The Chinese value pragmatism and economic growth because they are paths to global power status. Furthermore, China should pursue whatever path achieves this status.¹³¹ Ultimately, growth at all costs supports a *realpolitik* policy with key traditional sensitivities that can act as triggers.¹³² Status in this context is essentially a reworking of the middle kingdom

129. Christopher Ford, “Behind the Official Narrative”.

130. Andrew Scobell, “Himalayan Standoff: Strategic Culture and the China-India Rivalry,” 174.

131. Kenneth Johnson, “China's Strategic Culture”, 7-9.

132. Ibid.

concept. Pragmatism and returning to a historically rightly ordered world justifies compromises of traditionalism, adding some institutionalized unpredictability to Chinese policy. However, the emphasis on economic growth or modernization may be an avenue if a competitor's policy must move against a traditionally Chinese concept or value.

Another manifestation of China valuing distinctly Chinese harmonious leadership is its view of international institutions. China belongs to many international institutions or great power clubs. However, the more its influence increases, the more it develops its own institutions.¹³³ China values international cooperation and common development, but the value of traditional concepts of power or control matter more. The proper name for the Chinese value of harmony is *tianxia*, conceptualized by Hu Jintao as the harmonious world or Xi Jinping as the China dream.¹³⁴ There exists a genuine component and desire for peace, and stability within *tianxia*. *Tianxia* provides hope to competitors that at the core of Chinese international relations is a value for coexistence and cooperation. However, China also seeks to export this concept as a soft power concept to make Chinese rule more attractive.¹³⁵ The lack of trust inherent in *realpolitik* drives China to desire security and harmony. Therefore, Chinese peace supplants peace imposed by a non-righteous and perhaps violent outsider. Nonetheless, there is an opportunity for the efficacy of deterrence particularly in a period of parity – as long as some affront to cultural sensitivities do not make the Chinese feel insecure. If this happens, they may well seek their harmony through expanded strength and security.

Domestic political stability is a critically important value. This sets the conditions for modernization, stability, and maintaining governmental legitimacy. At times, Chinese political

133. Xiaoyu Pui, "Asymmetrical Competitors: Status Concerns and the China-India Rivalry," in *The China-India Rivalry in the Globalization Era*, ed. by T.V. Paul (Telangana, India: Orient BlackSwan, 2019), 59.

134. Manjari Chatterjee Miller, "China, India, and Their Differing Conceptions," 85.

135. Ibid.

elite assuaged nationalists with rhetoric and actions necessary to maintain order. However, international policy often remains more calculated and pragmatic.¹³⁶ Essentially, the Chinese are willing to say and do seemingly (to a Western observer) rash things to stabilize the domestic environment. While this may worry the foreign observer, Chinese elite understand that they are operating in different environments. China's strict valuing of sovereignty helps demarcate broad permissibility to maintain stability in domestic affairs. This suggests a sustainable efficacy of deterrence despite the Western perception of implications from a domestic crack down.

Norms

Historically, China used force to pacify disagreements in critical areas, yet sought to settle disputes along its periphery.¹³⁷ This has tremendous implications for U.S. Chinese security policy. If the U.S. identifies critical points of contention such as Taiwan and the 12 nautical miles off its coast, they can likely settle or stabilize other major disputes in their favor. (Disputes for reference include the nine dashed line dispute in the South China Sea, or the East China Sea island nationalization dispute.) Strategic deterrence could be a victory won from ceasing arms sales to Taiwan or limiting provocative U.S. naval patrols.

China's "virtuocratic" culture may make it seem more irascible in international encounters relative to other actors.¹³⁸ To reiterate, an elite culture founded on virtue carries the normative implication of pursuing rightness or success at all costs. The pursuit or even demonstration of rightness seems to invigorate what is a millennia-old emphasis on offensive

136. Kenneth Johnson, "China's Strategic Culture", 7-9.

137. T. V. Paul, *The China-India Rivalry*, 12.

138. Christopher Ford, "Behind the Official Narrative".

strategies over static defense and an efficacious view of violent conflict resolution.¹³⁹

Furthermore, the conceptual interaction between operative realpolitik and Confucian-idealized discourse offers a normative justification of coercive measures. This dynamic predisposes China to the unquestioned justification for the use of force compared to other states, particularly within its region.¹⁴⁰ The justification of force under the guise of defense is akin to an offensive crusade to defend the holy land. While this is admittedly sensationalist, the key takeaway is that the opportunity for rapid escalation is a serious concern when competing with China. Further complicating matters, there is somewhat of a disconnect between the PLA and the CCP leadership due to the relative operational autonomy of the PLA.¹⁴¹ Therefore, passive Chinese strategic policy may still quickly escalate under the nascent strategic constructs and civilian leadership to military integration controls mentioned in previous sections.

China increasingly abandons non-provocative postures, exacting its self-interest, despite official propaganda.¹⁴² The norm here is really the hierarchy of power relative to softer measures. China uses cultural propaganda to justify typical great power actions without seeming like the Western targets of animosity. A long-standing Chinese norm is to interpret security policy through the lens of historic Chinese cultural maxims and concepts.¹⁴³ This practice may mean that China is not always even aware when divergent policy and actions smell of contradiction or seem to be propaganda. An example is Chinese culture as normatively defensive – as described above. This characterization rests upon the concept of Chinese permanence or the staying power

139. Alastair Iain. Johnston, *Cultural Realism: Strategic Culture and Grand Strategy in Chinese History* (Princeton UP, 1998), 248-266.

140. Andrew Scobell, “Himalayan Standoff: Strategic Culture and the China-India Rivalry,” 180.

141. James Johnson, “Chinese Evolving Approaches to Nuclear ‘War-Fighting’: An Emerging Security Dilemma?,” *The US-China Military and Defense Relationship during the Obama Presidency*, 2018, pp. 121-152, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-75838-1_6.

142. Christopher Ford, “Behind the Official Narrative”.

143. Andrew Scobell, “Himalayan Standoff: Strategic Culture and the China-India Rivalry,” 174.

of its people, prominence, and some form of government.¹⁴⁴ The Chinese see this prolonged existential normalcy as a sort of manifest destiny they must defend. Somewhat ironically, instigating violence in the name of defense seems contrary to Chinese policy documents based on Western interpretations. However, to the Chinese, their actions do not warrant judgement from the West, which further complicates Chinese – U.S. relations.

Shaping international policy and seeking uniquely Chinese avenues to do so is becoming a normal practice.¹⁴⁵ This nests within the Chinese increased pursuit for global leadership. However, this does not always put China in the contrarian role as Western sources oft accuse. In fact, China actually complies with Western-based international rules and often behaves like a status-quo power. Assertive or hardline discourses exist alongside political elite with moderate opinions.¹⁴⁶ It is a Western misperception that China purely seeks systemic revision or a violent reordering of interest. That very publicly stated supposition is probably the fastest way to impinge on a Chinese environment where normal is some sort of open debate regarding strategy.

The Chinese obtain status through dominance and prestige. Dominance signifies hard power; prestige signifies influence. There remains a trend consistent with historical practices to maintain both measures of power in a delicate balance. Today, the Chinese regime is focusing on soft power more than ever before.¹⁴⁷ This provides a unique window to pander to the less harmful of the two power vehicles. The U.S. could recognize Chinese status as an equal of sorts to the United States, and treat it accordingly. This could all occur without any major concessions in the realm of hard power, zero-sum domination. Evidence of this concept rests with the history

144. Kenneth Johnson, “China’s Strategic Culture”, 10-14.

145. Christopher Ford, “Behind the Official Narrative”.

146. Shogo Suzuki, “Journey to the West: China Debates Its ‘Great Power’ Identity,” *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 42, no. 3 (2014): pp. 632-650, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0305829814536629>.

147. Jared McKinney, “The Foundation: Is China’s Economy for Real,” (Lecture, Washington DC, November 11, 2019).

of China-Vietnam relations. For hundreds of years, China and Vietnam enjoyed stable relations and respect for the territorial interests of the other. Vietnam accomplished this through a normative practice (at the time) known as kowtowing. The Vietnamese emissary bowed before the Chinese emperor, recognizing his prestige and superiority symbolically. The dispute settled as a compromise in Vietnam's favor, and up until South China Sea tensions recently, normalized stability between the two actors based on regular recognition of the Chinese self-image. Additionally, prior to the Opium Wars, the British emissary bowed before the emperor symbolically recognizing his prestige. This calmed initial tensions enough for the British to unfortunately take great advantage of the Chinese people for mercantilist gain. There exists a precedent for prestige-based placation of the Chinese. This precedent could prove valuable when developing U.S. nuclear strategy.

Perceptual Lens

China's frame of reference is a continuous and ancient narrative where China is the benevolent leader, pacifying a violent world. This lens allots a considerable amount of strategic patience to China.¹⁴⁸ China need not rush to accomplish its objectives. With a history that spans thousands of years, it can allow others to act full hardy while it bides its time and pursues long-term goals – the two Centenary Goals for instance. “Pacifying” is more akin to the Pax Romana, as keepers of the peace with a hegemonic monopoly on violence.

In the sections regarding identity and value, I discussed the importance for CCP legitimacy and maintaining control over China's people. China's elite consider the reunification of Taiwan as a top priority. Due to the recent arms sales to Taiwan, the United States is a direct

148. Christopher Ford, “Behind the Official Narrative”.

enemy of a cause for which one third of the Chinese military prepares. Moreover, the “Spheres of Influence” foreign occupation compounds the animosity towards an external great power meddling in China’s historic land. Furthermore, China views this type of conflict as typical in global politics, or through a realist lens. China “knows” it cannot become comfortable in positions of power, and must prepare for challenges to its sovereignty.¹⁴⁹ In previous sections, I discussed the four primary investors to ASEAN being the EU, Japan, the U.S and China. Undoubtedly, the Western and Japanese economic influence within ASEAN is reminiscent of past Chinese humiliation. This historically founded lack of trust for outsiders likely drives the impetus for increased regional economic control. China views non-Chinese powers through insecurity. Publically instigating a major political sensitivity, such as Taiwan, marks the U.S. as a target for Chinese defense preparation. The U.S. should work to diminish inflammatory acts regionally, as much as possible. The challenge is decreasing animosity without ceding strategic advantage.

China sees the geopolitics trapped in a Cold War mentality of zero-sum games, and wishes to lead the world into a period of cooperation – to “forge a new security path”. Chinese rhetoric suggests they are a peace-loving and non-expansionist minded people – a “stirring gentle giant”.¹⁵⁰ China sees themselves as a unifying force within the world. The Chinese elite see their nation as a world leader. Competitors should take cautious note of the self-classification as stirring. China intends to lead completely in a regional capacity and lead even globally to some degree. The aforementioned rhetoric suggests increased frustration with the world, growing concurrently with Chinese power. China’s global outlook may no longer singularly focus on a

149. Kenneth Johnson, “China’s Strategic Culture”, 8-11.

150. Manjari Chatterjee Miller, “China, India, and Their Differing Conceptions,” 86; Andrew Scobell, “Himalayan Standoff: Strategic Culture and the China-India Rivalry,” 171.

tianxia type hierarchy with China at its core. China does recognize the need to operate within the international order, with peer nations. However, as Chinese power increases, their emphasis on more traditional concepts of China-centric order are likely to return.¹⁵¹ Moreover, as Chinese power increases, so does enmity for the U.S. In fact, while more than half of the Chinese population has a favorable view of America, they also see the U.S. as a top threat. Furthermore, the U.S.-backed international order benefits Washington “disproportionately”.¹⁵² Widespread party support and an historical victim mentality allows China to criticize the U.S. while striving to reach parity with it. To the Chinese, the international order comprises of vestiges of Western power. The Chinese believe that the U.S. seeks to contain China and is adopting an ever more-confrontational approach towards them. All U.S. diplomacy and strategy filters through the claims of containment.¹⁵³ If the United States can pause negative rhetoric geared towards China, or forestall sanctions, it may be able to assuage Chinese fears of strategic encirclement. Lessening fear could allow more moderate elite within China to stem traditionalist or nationalist views for imposing Chinese power. The ensuing diminished tensions would allow the U.S. time to strategize or implement new strategy absent targeted Chinese animosity.

President Xi Jinping characterized the international order as transitioning to a multi-polar system of deepened economic integration. China wishes to accelerate this transition for its continued gain.¹⁵⁴ The Chinese worldview is a system increasingly tied to the Chinese economy. This system is also transitioning to allow for greater Chinese influence. These conditions likely emboldened China to assert its Centenary Goals and to begin implementing initiatives like RCEP

151. Ge Zhaoguang and Michael Gibbs Hill, *Territory, Ethnicity, Culture, and History* (Harvard University Press, 2018), 64-121.

152. *Ibid.*, 10, 171.

153. *Military and Security Developments*, 2.

154. *Ibid.*

and BRI. With this type of perception of the international order and Chinese freedom to operate therein, the U.S. must assume that strategic advancements will only continue. Continued advancements would lessen U.S. deterrent efficacy. The U.S. must work to challenge this perception, while also adjusting its strategy to operate within the current perceived reality.

China is mirroring its force around a U.S. triad-based system. It is pursuing deeper civil-sector to military integration, similar to that of the U.S., to better leverage technological innovation in the civilian sector. Its hypersonic weapons will reportedly skirt the lines of our missile defense – a system China believes would deter them after a pre-emptive U.S. counterforce strike. China’s nuclear posture points towards the United States. The U.S. must prepare accordingly. Currently China fields an assured retaliation posture with mega-ton thermonuclear counter value targeting.¹⁵⁵ However, the purpose of Chinese strategic forces is adapting to coincide with the shift in strategic force research and engineering capability. This suggests that China’s current nuclear posture does not reflect their nuclear goals. Their overarching goal of being a world-class super-power by 2049 most likely also includes a strategic deterrent or capability element. This should provide the U.S, policy maker and legislator with a true vigor to execute force advancement and comprehensive strategy revitalization.

Chinese Strategic Culture Overarching Themes and Conclusions

From the above four sections there are a few overarching themes and implications worth reviewing. First, a portion of each section added nuance and depth to what political theorists would characterize as a face-based society. Perception and deference at all levels matter

155. Kenneth Johnson, “China's Strategic Culture”, 9-15.

immensely to China. Second, the U.S. is the focal point of Chinese strategic modeling and animosity. Nuclear/strategic pursuits are likely a critical component of ensuring Chinese designs on an expanded international role. Moreover, China recognizes the U.S. as an obstacle. Next, concessions short of strategic appeasement could have real results for attenuating tensions in favor of the U.S. Conversely, strategic appeasement could greatly weaken the U.S. position. However, status recognition and compromise may achieve beneficial results. Another point to note is that realpolitik underscores all of Chinese SC. You cannot seriously engage Chinese SC without acknowledging the motivations of power and mistrust. Next, Chinese ambitions cannot be stayed until they dissipate. China's historic view of self-importance; coupled with what will soon be the largest global economy cast a foreboding shadow across its competitor's interests. A sixth conclusion is that there may be an opportunity to undermine CCP legitimacy by publically moderating the U.S. stance on China, while provoking China on peripheral issues - with a pre-eminent deterrent and strategy. This interaction would exploit their contradictory altruism and xenophobia to coalesce a coalition to support the U.S. Lastly, a plan seeking direct confrontation with or humiliation of China could easily escalate to warfare.

AN EXERCISE IN SPECULATION AND CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Setting the Conditions for Speculation

China's economy will soon overtake that of the U.S. as the world's largest. More importantly, the U.S. strategic elite clearly do not believe that China's global interests align with U.S. interests. This perception makes China the greatest threat to American strategy objectives. The U.S. defense and diplomatic missions currently respond to the growing Chinese threat with aggressive rhetoric and system shocking investments pursuant to pre-eminent technologies. While such a reaction is likely necessary to rejuvenate strategic capabilities, truncating American strategy at technological pursuits will find America unprepared for the future. Below the threshold of conflict, strategic systems provide deterrence and shape much of the security dynamic in great power competition. The U.S. requires a revitalization of the complex and ubiquitous nuclear and strategic policy formulation from the Cold War.

The time is ripe for the United States to redevelop strategy and begin preparing for the growing Chinese defense paradigm. In force posture and capability, the U.S. still has strategic pre-eminence and likely will for the next decade. Certainly, Chinese development programs in strategic systems, policy statements, and pursuits in enabling domains all suggest that this window of superiority will close quickly. The imperative for immediate planning preparation falls to the U.S. defense and diplomatic community.

Moreover, the economic disposition of China will soon seat it as the world's largest economy. However, China faces some significant structural and demographic challenges to its economy before it can begin functioning as an efficient high-income economy. These challenges pull much of the Chinese political focus toward inward development strategies. This period of

internal reform further shifts focus from what could be U.S. strategic preparation to handle the growing interests of China. However, U.S. ability to maintain pre-eminence predicates upon its ability for continued U.S. economic growth.

The call for in depth nuclear policy led to an assessment of the last great period of strategic weapons system competition. The tradition of high-level strategic thought and scenario-based analysis and preparation during the Cold War proved to be of great utility to the U.S. great power strategy of the time. This analysis also seems that it would have some applicability to the current great power competition between the U.S. and China. Some weaknesses of Cold War strategy included the mirror imaging of American cultural analysis upon our adversaries. This discussion seeks to overcome the short falls of Cold War strategic analysis by advocating for an assessment of Chinese strategic culture to go part in parcel with nuclear posture analysis. The analysis of Chinese culture provides a roadmap that we will apply to recommended U.S. actions and preparations for the future. U.S. policy makers should take elements from this analysis and conduct a much broader analysis of their own to ensure that U.S. investment and actions obtain the greatest degree of efficacy.

Below, I will project a scenario-driven analysis for U.S. strategy vis a vis China. To be clear, this is simply a speculative exercise, designed to show the utility of such a model. The U.S. will require much more in-depth and intelligence-informed modeling. Nonetheless, the modeling will combine cultural analysis with a logical progression of economies and force posture to develop policy recommendations for the United States. This exercise will suggest the level of preparation and the type of thought the immediate strategic situation requires. Prior to this exercise, I will discuss scenario-driven analysis revolving around periods of development, and why they provide unique utility in this instance.

Why Periods

The fourth section engaged the utility of periods specifically as part of the broader strategic outlook of the Cold War. This is not the only method of modeling that could prove useful to U.S. strategizing. However, it has merits that make it effective and the targeted recommendation for this paper. Having a time-bound phased approach for scaling and tailoring force posture can serve as a predictive modeling tool. More importantly, it can serve as an intellectual tool to posit possible developments and begin to plan for potential scenarios. The exercise is not necessarily about getting every facet of the future correct. Having an architecture to apply actual developments against allows for an educated interpretation of events, and the quick pivoting of programs, as necessary. For instance, perhaps we predict the Chinese will have widely deployed batteries of hypersonic glide vehicles in three regions in five years. From this assessment, the U.S. plans for rudimentary defenses in place in three years, their own offensive hypersonic system in six, and pluses up regional security in the projected areas of deployment. The Chinese may have the system in place in three years, in different locations than posited. Moreover, the maneuverability of the glide vehicles may render some of the defenses useless. However, adjusted regionally based deterrence strategies through conventional and nuclear forces would still be applicable with minor adjustments. The defense systems would provide a platform upon which to build greater and more applicable capability. The timeline may have been incorrect, but forecasting future actions shortens the potential capability gap. Simply developing hypersonic weapons of our own without the broader architecture provided by time-bound in depth modeling would likely find the U.S. far more unprepared.

The memorandum Mr. Brzezinski drafted for President Carter is evidence of this phenomena. The memo provides an explanation of various iterations of enemy driven analysis

driving phases of force posture. The document shows an understanding that different phases of relative capability necessitate different levels of response.¹⁵⁶ As relative capabilities began to change so did the strategy. The U.S. forces continued to deter the Soviet forces. The grappling with the particulars of force development allowed the U.S. to notice small but significant inaccuracies in our predictions quickly, and adjust as necessary. As nuclear parity approached, the U.S. believed the Soviets would stop their buildup at near U.S. force levels. When they did not and when they introduced new qualitative capabilities, the previous doctrine lost much of its relevance. To revise our doctrine then became a critical although unpopular task in the face of the continuing Soviet buildup during the 1970s. Brzezinski dictates to the President “You have accomplished this through a number of directives which put much more emphasis on objective capabilities to reinforce the psychological and subjective aspects of deterrence.”¹⁵⁷ A series of calculated steps and analysis prepared the way for pivoting the nuclear force. The milieu set by living within the mindset of thorough preparation made the finer components of advanced policy and technology easily conveyable to the highest levels of leadership to attain appropriate policy responses. How much more prepared will the U.S. be for the Chinese threat with the return of sophisticated nuclear culture? Moreover, applying Chinese cultural assessments to strategy projections will help prevent the U.S. force deficiencies that arose in the 1970s from assuming that the Soviets would only pursue an exact mirror image of our forces. Hopefully, the reassertion of strategic modeling will allow for the return of strategic policy proficiency and the corresponding flexible preparedness of the past.

A passive approach to the rising Chinese strategic threat will likely prove insufficient, “What China does with its military and nuclear power in the future will be determined without

156. Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Carter Transformation*.

157. Ibid.

the influence of countervailing institutions ... the emerging cool war with China deserves the utmost attention in this respect.”¹⁵⁸ Maintaining the relative cultural taboo within the U.S. of crisis mitigation and diminishing the reliance on strategic forces will not prepare the U.S. for the next great power competition. The normative forces of the international community will not affect the pursuit of Chinese goals. Pursuant to reaching their Centenary goals, China is investing in RCEPs, the BRI, BRICS bank, and other such endeavors. The growth of China’s strategic capabilities require a proactive U.S. policy response. Modeling Chinese specific interests, developments, and decision dynamics will provide the requisite kind of proactivity.

China is pursuing a hedging strategy that aims at minimizing strategic risks, increasing freedom of action, diversifying strategic options, and shaping U.S. preferences and choices.¹⁵⁹ Chinese policy is extremely proactive regarding diminishing the interests of its greatest competitor. They are attempting to increase their influence in international institutions, create their own institutions, and develop a nuclear triad while designing unconventional weapon systems. Dong Wang suggests above all China recognizes the imperative for a comprehensive strategy in great power competition. China is assessing U.S. strategic culture, policy, and capabilities to achieve their regional objectives across the next three decades (2049 is the target of their second Centenary goal). The U.S. cannot afford a passive approach to strategic risks and coercion when their primary competitor actively partakes in this type of analysis.

If the U.S. enters a nuclear contest with the Chinese, devoid of complex strategy and preparation, they will be out-maneuvered. Further passivity or even appeasement in East Asia in the face of Chinese complex strategy will only diminish the role of the U.S. A combative approach that refuses any reasonable concessions or reduction of resources in one area so that the

158. Thérèse Delpech, *Nuclear Deterrence*, 162-163.

159. Dong Wang, “Is China Trying to Push the U.S. out of East Asia?,” pp. 59-84.

U.S. might flex them to a better course of action, is untenable. This practice will lead to war when China crosses one of a dozen “red-lines”. Or, this practice will cause the U.S. to spend itself into bankruptcy as it attempts to out-produce and out-design the Chinese in every facet of their strategic arsenal. War is probable with China not because of reductionist great power transition theories. War is likely because we are careening down more broad academically viable paths to war. This is due to the self-fulfilling momentum of realism.¹⁶⁰ The U.S. and China are sovereign states that do not trust each other. They are competing for power and security regionally and globally. At the moment, the rhetoric of U.S. political leaders makes all Chinese actions a transgression against our national security and a call to arms. Many of our regional actions fail to take into account the way China will perceive them, and often seem more inflammatory than necessary.

China attaining all of its historic claims on regional hegemony ignores the status quo of U.S. and Western regional interests. The U.S. desire to retain the status quo of the last 30 years of absolute pre-eminence and as the primary arbiter of regional matters is equally unrealistic. The status quo is approaching a catastrophic war. The strategic modeling attempted below could both help to relieve the political tension between the U.S. and China while simultaneously preparing the U.S. once again for the potential of great power conflict.

160. John A. Vasquez, “Whether and How Global Leadership Transitions Will Result in War: Some Long-Term Predictions from the Steps-to-War Explanation,” *Systemic Transitions*, 2009, pp. 131-160, https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230618381_7.

Addressing Alternate Viewpoints

This paper's assertion does not exist within a bi-polar world, but a multi-polar international order. Discussing the dynamic of strategic weapon systems amongst only two nations may be a narrow perspective to take.

This is true in the first place among the major powers, particularly the United States, Russia, and China, since one cannot exclude the possibility of a conflict involving any two or all three of them. Managing a triangular nuclear situation would be far more difficult than stabilizing a bipolar one. What, for example, would be the nature of any delicate balance of terror" among three parties?¹⁶¹

Discussing the strategic dynamic in Asia and certainly should include Russia, and easily could include India – the second largest nation with one of the fastest growing economies in Asia. Japan, should it feel particular under threat from China could increase its defense spending from somewhere around 2% to 10%. This Japanese war state would certainly complicate matters for the Chinese and change regional dynamics. A complete analytical framework requires further research along these lines, particularly how other nations will alter the nuclear relationship between China and the U.S. This extensive vein of analysis is far beyond the scope of this paper and perhaps any single work. Despite the added complexities, the limiting of this conversation to China and the U.S. does not diminish its relevance. Russia is not going to surpass or even come close to the United States in economic output any time soon. Their lack of global economic leadership will likely leave them as a critical regional actor, and a global strategic agitator, but not as a global rival of the United States on the scale of the Soviet Union, or of China, presently. Japan in most scenarios will fall within U.S. policy and strategy. To a lesser degree, India will likely align with the U.S. more closely than China. Even so, India's economic growth remains uncertain, and domestic and regional ethnic tensions abound. Taken together these dynamics

161. Thérèse Delpech, *Nuclear Deterrence*, 20, 37.

leave India external to this somewhat bi-lateral conversation regarding shrinking U.S. strategic interests. However, the United States would do well to keep India close, as a regional counterweight to China politically and hopefully economically.

For two primary reasons, the exclusion of these and other states does not diminish the relevance of our conversation. First, the two largest militaries, economies, and soon to be strategic forces belong to the United States and China. They are the two most powerful countries in the world and within the new great power competition. Neither is likely to quickly lose international position based on domestic issues. Second, the inclusion of these actors and how they will enhance or harm U.S. security considerations, should and likely will be part of the strategizing posited here. They just remain largely within the political poles of the China and U.S. rivalry.

Strategic Periods from a U.S. Perspective

Below is a description of three sample periods projecting U.S. and China strategic interaction. Surely further analysis could lengthen, shorten, or even combine some of this assessment. However, I stopped at the implications of the third due to the increasing speculative nature of each section and further assessment likely requiring classified material to make viable assertions. The analysis covers characteristics with a few caveats provided; economic, diplomatic, and research and engineering implications, and supposed Chinese actions melded with an interjection of the conclusions from the assessment of Chinese strategic culture.

Period 1. U.S. Superiority: Chinese Preoccupation and Nascence. Depending on the ability of the Chinese economy to overcome its internal challenges and the pace of advancement of its nuclear force, the first period will last between 5 and 10 years. This means that starting in 2020, this period could last until 2025 or 2030.

Characteristics. The U.S. maintains complete strategic superiority, enough to neutralize the Chinese nuclear/strategic threat. The U.S. maintains a high degree of damage limitation levels to prevent significant follow on effect and actions. Chinese force neutralization, target hardening and dispersal, and missile defense all help to limit damage. The U.S. maintains global, and more relevantly, regional conventional superiority. This force superiority serves as a supplement or condition setter for strategic-like weapon effects and deterrence. The U.S. also maintains superiority in cyber and space domain enablers discussed above. This is a period of U.S. opportunity and nuclear revitalization, and Chinese development and internal focus.

However, the U.S. nuclear architecture is “aged” with dire need for revitalization. They must maintain the research and engineering imperatives discussed in the 2001 and 2018 NPRs regarding revitalizing nuclear support architecture, nuclear proficiency within the military, and nuclear weapon systems. Without leveraging this period of opportunity to develop and plan for a future competing with a more capable China, this could be the last period where the U.S. has a prominent voice in determining its East Asian agenda. Without maintaining a strategic deterrent and supporting policy, the U.S. will not easily impose its will so far from its shores.

Economic Implications. The U.S. economy remains larger than the Chinese economy. This statistic helps fuel advanced development projects and calculated force posture increases and preparations. The Chinese economy is combating the hardship of overcoming the so-called middle-income trap with its own brand of unique demographics. While Chinese growth slows, it still exceeds that of the U.S.

Current Chinese military spending is reported around 2%. Experts suspect this is closer to 3%.¹⁶² While this statistic can be misleading because their 6% annual economic growth does not

162. Jared McKinney, (Lecture, Washington DC, August 26, 2019).

make this a static number, nonetheless, it represents the lack of Chinese preparation for a conventional conflict with the United States. Most economies preparing for the eventuality of war spend upwards of 5% on defense. Moreover, conquest-bent war-states spend closer to 10%. The above suggests the viability and high probability of success for a swift U.S. led or backed military operation during this period.

Diplomatic Implications. The U.S. should coalesce as much regional support as possible while it still has a big enough relative economic stick to pull influence from China. Partnerships with India or RCEP nations may help the U.S. benefit from future Asian-Pacific economic growth and initiatives. This could prevent the U.S. economy from dramatically trailing the Asian economic leader in the region that does the most business, globally. The U.S. should also take this time to impose joint force advancements or development projects and lasting security agreements. Strategically, the U.S. retains the greatest coercive force. Leveraging this for future strength while China is somewhat otherwise occupied, is essential for keeping at least part of the region aligned with the U.S. In the future, when the U.S. has relatively less to offer, agreements may be more difficult to levy. During this period, it is unlikely that China could construct its own alliance system to rival that of the U.S. based on its negative world image and lack of established far-reaching alliances.¹⁶³ The U.S. should therefore seek to leverage its alliance network while deepening it to ensure longevity. The United States should also cool tensions with China by moderating its rhetoric, and halting provocative presence patrols. (Particularly the U.S. should halt the patrols within 12 nautical miles of Chinese territory; as well as those through the Taiwan Strait). Despite their intentions, we now know that the Chinese will not be able to ignore such provocations. These actions will only cement tensions and animosity towards the U.S. The U.S.

163. Dong Wang, "Is China Trying to Push the U.S. out of East Asia?," pp. 59-84.

should use this period to exhaustively analyze and develop a plan to implement in the next period. This plan will describe concessions (with strategic implications) they are willing to make right away to the Chinese. The plan would include concessions they are ultimately willing to make but that they would prefer to not – and what conditions would lead to such circumstances. Lastly, the U.S. must decide upon so-called strategic hard lines or areas where if China counters their interests or ignores their policy, it would warrant certain coercive responses.

Simple rhetoric could go a long way to alleviating costly political animosity. For example, a lack of discourse has allowed misunderstanding and polarization to be a self-fulfilling prophesy for realist power dynamics and impending conflict in the East China Sea (ECS).¹⁶⁴ Without moderating their position, the U.S. should attempt to limit the amount of anti-Chinese rhetoric with regard to the ECS. Political positions have not changed regarding the ECS islets recently. However, this dispute became one of the most contentious regional issues, largely through reciprocal inflammatory gestures. Moreover, “Risks of inadvertent and accidental escalation are further elevated by the absence of substantive nuclear and general defense dialogue.”¹⁶⁵ In this case, the authors are discussing the critical lack of dialogue across the Indo-Pacific regarding strategic postures. Such absence creates ambiguous policy and skewed interpretation with potentially tragic results. The United States could still increase power projection assets in the region to support our allies, but seek informed diplomatic dialogue to diffuse the situation and set clear boundaries in the pursuit of more stable regional relationships. Recognizing China through dialogue may help mask the antagonistic nature of force increases. Beijing has explicitly acknowledged the U.S. predominance in the international system. China to some degree

164. Ryoko Nakano, “The Sino–Japanese Territorial Dispute and Threat Perception in Power Transition,” *The Pacific Review* 29, no. 2 (2015): pp. 165-186, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09512748.2015.1013493>.

165. Yogesh Joshi and Frank O'Donnell, *India and Nuclear Asia*, 110.

acknowledges that, for a more peaceful future to emerge in East Asia, the United States and China, as an incumbent power and a rising power, will have to accommodate each other.¹⁶⁶ This will require negotiations and renegotiations regarding the boundaries of their relative power, as well as their respective roles in the future regional order. This dialogue must start with simple status recognition, and calming of anti-Chinese political rhetoric on the part of the U.S.

Research and Engineering Implications. Technological pursuits for the U.S. must revolve around modernizing the U.S. nuclear force. This modernization should include advanced delivery systems, as well as quantum computing capabilities (advanced machine learning), and proactive space domain defense measures. The new systems should be flexible to multiple uses and regular upgrades, in keeping with the 2018 NPR.

Adversary Actions and Strategic Culture Assessment. China will likely seek to further their own force modifications in pursuit of greater regional strategic pre-eminence. However, it should maintain a strong internal investment and focus. Moderating “humiliating language” will help deter China from combativeness, providing a greater period of opportunity for US strategic preparations. “A minimalist US approach – one that avoids getting deeply involved in regional issues where the U.S. has no direct stake – is more likely to promote stability than a maximalist one that blunders in and hopes to perpetuate US primacy for its own sake”.¹⁶⁷ Preparing a more visibly minimalist and verbally appeasing approach will resonate with the face-based society of China. This should help to lessen the view of the U.S. as the primary strategic enemy. This is a good faith step toward future concession to attenuate tensions. Official Chinese policy remains purposefully ambiguous with a willingness to use force if the U.S. “directly challenges its

166. Dong Wang, “Is China Trying to Push the U.S. out of East Asia?,” pp. 59-84.

167. David C. Kang, *American Grand Strategy and East Asian Security in the 21st Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 358.

sovereignty” (You 1-21).¹⁶⁸ The U.S. must assume that China does not trust Western diplomacy, and that the image of China as regional leader is not a fleeting conception. Knowing this, the U.S. can assume that China will interpret public maximalist proclamations as violations of and intent to violate its sovereignty.

Period 2. Transition of Regional Security Influence. Again, depending on when or if the Chinese overcome their internal economic challenges; and when they fully refocus strategy toward nuclear posture – this discussion allows for a five-year delta regarding the start of this period. This places the second period beginning between 2025 and 2030, and ending around 2035.

Characteristics. During this period, China will be transitioning from nascent strategic forces and posture to a more robust model. Chinese strategic asset survivability and nuclear force organization competency will greatly increase. This will effectively lower the threshold for Chinese nuclear posturing and provocation because the potential for grave cost to the U.S. will increase. Chinese force posture will reduce U.S. damage limitation mechanisms, acting as a further deterrent against U.S. coercion. U.S. conventional superiority will remain, but to a lesser degree due to an increase in Chinese power projection assets. The diminished advantage will further constrain U.S. freedom of maneuver regionally. However, the revitalized U.S. nuclear architecture and corresponding systems will maintain U.S. nuclear pre-eminence. Joint U.S. conventional assets and precision guided munitions will still menace Chinese policy-makers. U.S. space and cyber advantages, barring a major breakthrough in a game changing technology, will maintain an ever-narrowing advantage. China will remain cautious in the face of a still more

168. Ji You, “Xi Jinping and PLA Centrality in Beijing’s South China Sea Dispute Management,” *China: An International Journal* 15, no. 2 (June 2017): pp. 1-21.

powerful United States; however, they will begin to test the boundaries of that power in scenarios where they believe they are willing to risk more than the U.S.

If the United States enters [a] ... state of mutual nuclear vulnerability with China—meaning that China can inflict unacceptable damage on U.S. cities, even in the aftermath of a U.S. first strike—then U.S. policymakers may worry that U.S. nuclear weapons will be much less likely to deter China from engaging in conventional or sub-conventional aggression.¹⁶⁹

The advancing Chinese strategic deterrent amidst their growing confidence will require the U.S. to moderate beyond rhetoric. The U.S. should be prepared to make a series of calculated concessions to alleviate tensions without losing real or conceptual “key terrain”.

However, if the U.S. becomes inert in strategic research or policy planning, it will likely be at a disadvantage. This situation will allow the Chinese to take broader liberties regionally despite our staying conventional superiority. The Chinese will be more likely to wield their power, especially if this is pursuant to a goal the Chinese see directly aligned with their manifest identity. A weakened deterrent or the lack of a firm but conciliatory strategy will create a tenuous environment. War or proxy war between the U.S. and China will then be likely.

The downside to a conflict at this time is that our potentially swift victory from superior conventional and allied forces will likely humiliate China. China is a face-based culture still writhing from the humiliation at the hands of the West during the 19th and early 20th century. Humiliating a powerful state, particularly so close to its territory typically strengthens the chances for future conflict. When Germany was humiliated at the end of WWI, this led to a nationalist rise and a German war state that was much more menacing than ever before. If the second largest and soon to be largest economy in the world mobilizes for war, future U.S. strategic advantages could greatly diminish.

169. Caitlin Talmadge, “The U.S.-China Nuclear Relationship,” 6.

Economic Implications. The Chinese economy will be comparable to that of the U.S. China will invest comparably into area denial and projection forces. This will strengthen the survivability and deterrence of their strategic systems, while weakening the desired effect of U.S. systems. With a more secure force, China will likely no longer shy away from increasing defense spending to match the 4% of GDP the United States spends. This will not bode well for the U.S. in the following period, as it will face the largest global economy.

Diplomatic Implications. The U.S. will need to establish hard policy lines over which they cannot allow the Chinese to transgress – lest it alter regional power dynamics to an unacceptable degree. However, it must also provide China some status recognition and make concessions where possible. The U.S. should also seek partnerships with the Chinese to help alter their perception of the U.S. and increase jointly dependent interests. Interdependence could act to deter conflict as the Chinese transition to the most powerful or at least most militarily present nation in the region. These efforts would also help maintain our regional presence and assure our allies that we remain the regional counterweight to China. Publicly declaring our uncompromising areas of policy while increasing force posture as it relates to China will demonstrate resolve. Simultaneously diminishing our presence and influence in certain regional political matters will depict our actions as reasonable. If China sees U.S. calculated risks and similarly aligned forces, it could prevent them from forcing a scenario where they gamble that the Chinese threshold for conflict within their own region is lower than that of the U.S. Moreover, with the U.S. granting certain public concessions to satiate their strategic appetite, China may not feel compelled to seriously conflict with the U.S.

The U.S. must demonstrate a willingness to accept risk, lest they accept inaction and its fallacies mentioned above. However, zealotry and recklessness in this endeavor could lead to

war or a Chinese war-state. Therefore, candid diplomatic action backed by force will grant the U.S. and its allies their best chance to uphold their interests.¹⁷⁰ Making an immediate potential concession such as accepting a Chinese South China Sea claim, or halting military sales to Taiwan will act as a show of good faith consistent with the Chinese cultural past of kowtowing and the like. This acknowledgement will suggest that the U.S. recognizes, to some extent, the Chinese as a legitimate regional power. Status recognition will empower the politically moderate within China, further diffusing tensions. However, due to the strategic value of the Senkaku islands and of America's Japanese ally in general, the United States needs to take a hard stance on maintaining a forward presence in the ECS. Tension here would be mitigated through some of the aforementioned concessions that the U.S. are in a unique position to provide. "Improving mutual understanding among potential nuclear adversaries is an important part of deterrence. Such is the purpose of ... bilateral strategic dialogues."¹⁷¹ The more frequently the U.S. enters dialogue with China as equals, the more each side will learn the other's peculiarities of conflict resolution.

Research and Engineering. The U.S. will be fielding advanced enabling capabilities in the space and cyber domain, as well as advanced delivery mechanisms for nuclear weapons and strategic ordinance. These advancements maintain U.S. pre-eminence strategically and offer us some operational advantages. Although, any major advantage will likely be quickly parroted and thus short-lived. There will begin to be a role reversal in military investment strategies between the U.S. and China. The anti-access and area denial (A2/AD) tactics that are so effective for

170. Toshi Yoshihara and James Holmes, "Responding to China's Rising Sea Power," *Orbis* 61, no. 1 (2017): pp. 91-100, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.orbis.2016.12.009>.

171. Thérèse Delpech, *Nuclear Deterrence*, 161.

China against the U.S. will work against China with respect to Japan.¹⁷² The Senkakus are well armed with detection mechanisms and Japanese A2/AD and anti-submarine assets. When these capabilities are bolstered by the United States' naval and aerial pre-eminence, China cannot defeat the joint force.¹⁷³ Investments into the advanced A2/AD capabilities of Vietnam, the Philippines, Taiwan, etc. will further check Chinese military power projection. The ultimate efficacy of these A2/AD programs rests with eventual U.S. intervention. If America's allies lose faith the U.S. will support them, their resolve to resist an overwhelming conventionally armed China may dwindle fast. American research and engineering must invest in technologies to assist their allies' defensive strategies, nested within a broader U.S. capability.

Adversary Actions and Strategic Culture Assessment. China will be actively coercing the international community for greater control in international institutions and great significance for the institutions and initiatives it created. "The PLA is devoting considerable effort to developing power projection capabilities, doctrine, and political justifications that would support expeditionary operations well beyond China's land borders".¹⁷⁴ China's future force posture will unapologetically support global expeditions and interests. Unapologetically so, because China is a nation of exceptional heritage and earthly position. Moreover, any strong nation would do the same. However, Chinese animosity toward the U.S. will diminish with status recognition, i.e. meaningful U.S. backed concessions in various disputes. Concessions on disputes central to the identity of China will likely allow the U.S. some operational leeway on issues that are more peripheral. Should the U.S. be able to quietly provoke an over-reaction on a lesser issue, such as Australian or African investment, it would injure the desired image of the altruistic and

172. Michael Beckley, "The Emerging Military Balance in East Asia: How China's Neighbors Can Check Chinese Naval Expansion," *International Security* 42, no. 2 (2017): pp. 78-119, https://doi.org/10.1162/isec_a_00294.

173. Ibid.

174. Arthur Ding, et al, "Chairman Xi Remakes the PLA," 22.

benevolent CCP. These peripheral tactics would be the most effective at undermining the domestic and international efficacy of the CCP. Eventually, along with the other policies mentioned above, this could undermine China's overarching strategy.

Period 3. The Peer Threat. The final period assessed here is the period of parity. This paper estimates the period to occur from 2035 to approximately 2040. Speculating much beyond this period involves too many variables for the scope of this analysis. Perhaps the Chinese will become the clearly superior force. Perhaps they will succumb to internal pressures. Maybe a new power will rise and change the dynamic entirely. Or, perhaps the period of relative power parity will persist for a few decades.

Characteristics. The Chinese force conventionally and strategically will compare evenly to that of the U.S. and overtake the U.S. in number. Chinese power projection will begin to decisively span outside of the region and will take considerable effort to contain. Cyber conflict will be a routine element of "peacetime" military operations. A somewhat militarized space domain will see its first clashes for pre-eminence, and require a more comprehensive strategy for the U.S. to maintain its freedom of operation. U.S. forces will need to adjust strategic force deployments and redeployments continuously to compete with a now globally proficient strategic adversary. This will harken to the ebbing and flowing of European and Caribbean missile system deployments during the Cold War. U.S. nuclear force investments will lose much of the proactive opportunistic edge and will be equally reactive to Chinese strategic forces. The U.S. will develop new strategy to counter developing Chinese force posture similar to the reassessment of early Cold War nuclear strategy under Presidents Nixon and Carter. While arms control will occur, global dynamics will make its greatest utility a stabilizing bi-lateral dialogue instead of tangible gains.

However, if U.S. economic growth has not sustained, this period will usher in the decisive security advantage of China. If the U.S. failed to undergo rigorous strategic analysis, this period will likely see expansionist Chinese policies with possible conflict and proxy conflicts similar to the Cold War. The U.S. will then hope to keep conflict primarily within China's regional sphere of influence.

Economic Implications. The Chinese economy markedly overcomes the middle-income gap, and overtakes the U.S. in size and productivity. However, their lack of immigration and aging domestic demographics causes growth to slow to levels comparable to that of the U.S. and other developed nations. China invests further into regional initiatives such as BRI to attempt to externally shock its system out of the impending geriatric effects. Due to a steady stream of immigration and resource wealth, the U.S. economy remains productive but continues to struggle with debt. The somewhat volatile future of these two economic giants adds tension to the strategic competition. China will have to maintain economic growth as its newly assumed regional and global security role will require significant and persistent force investments on an unprecedented scale.

Diplomatic Implications. The U.S.'s role in Asia will be primarily to contain Chinese influence regionally. We will lose the support of some of our allies closest to the Chinese juggernaut. Coalitions led by the U.S. and China, respectively, will dominate international relations. Soft lines of strategic import will be tested and transgressed. Hard lines will require reinforcement by showings of force or even small skirmishes. This period requires a new strategic assessment to analyze what the U.S. is willing to go to war over. The Chinese military coalition will grow and their force projection capabilities will drift into areas of traditional U.S. pre-eminence. Arms control will be a prominent characteristic of this period – especially as

China seeks international legitimacy. Refusing to negotiate will no longer be tenable for one of the primary centers of geopolitics. As mentioned above, the likely multi-polar dynamics of this environment would make it unwise to invest overly in the success or fruition of arms control. Arms control will add stability through the forum it creates. Moreover, the hyperrealist dynamics of Chinese SC, along with the lack of legality as a legitimating factor for governance, will lead China to agree to arms control measures without the intention of following many of the terms.

The threshold for coercive force will lower. The most powerful regional actor was the U.S., who passively enforced its foreign will from afar. This period will see the most powerful regional actor as a state whose immediate economic and security zone are amidst policy disagreements. However, the U.S. will retain its regional counterbalance role. Nations will still seek its protective shield to balance Chinese interests. Although, those nations will have to deal with China regardless of political discrepancies. China's local power and economic reach will be too great to ignore entirely for the pursuit of U.S. patronage.

First, U.S. policymakers should acknowledge... the trade-offs inherent in a more competitive nuclear relationship with China. U.S. refusal to acknowledge mutual vulnerability, when combined with continued development of capabilities relevant to damage limitation... makes China relatively more likely to adopt an ambitious nuclear strategy than would otherwise be the case. It could create rational incentives for China to...move away from NFU, for example.¹⁷⁵

Greater competition begets greater trade-offs. The risks in refusing to accept a somewhat transitioning geopolitical game could have nuclear implications. Such reckless strategy could also lead to conventional conflict occurring in the atmosphere of nuclear parity. The goal is to guide China into a passive nuclear strategy and less contentious regional role in general.

Research and Engineering Implications. Expenditure roles will switch from previous U.S. Chinese dynamics. The U.S. will have to invest in strategic deterrent forces that are cost effective

175. Caitlin Talmadge, "The U.S.-China Nuclear Relationship," 8.

and deter the larger Chinese force (barring a game changing defensive technology). Low-level conflict in space will lead to an unprecedented militarized space race. Perpetual cyber domain conflict will necessitate persistent investment in and development of information assurance mechanisms. Nuclear weapon system development will be largely reactive for both nations. For the first time, China will not be able to modernize based largely or partially on more advanced adversaries and existing technology. China will need to innovate its own systems. Additionally, Chinese conventional force investments, to go along with its increased political role, will require a relative lessening of strategic expenditures vis a vis conventional forces.

Adversary Actions and Strategic Culture Assessment. China will no longer seek appeasement of the United States. As discussed, it will halfheartedly enter into arms control. China will likely only seek policy moderation if it is through an international governing body that could affect the perception of legitimate Chinese leadership. Chinese face-based society and hyperrealism will not allow for the benevolent cooperative force its soft power suggests. At best, the Chinese will govern as the benevolent dictator of the Ancient Chinese past. Overtaking the U.S. in number of forces is critically important, as the middle kingdom must assume its rightful role. U.S. attempts to attack CCP legitimacy and covert operations against the Chinese government should increase. However, the strategy behind such actions will be more important than ever as China's leadership will likely require metaphorical kowtowing. Any refusal to "genuflect" let alone subversive actions, if discovered, could lead to conflict.

Periodic Conclusions

The particulars of the time-bound strategic framework above are less critical than the overarching approach. In a few pages, the dialogue assessed real potential force posture dynamics and all of the implications therein. The speculative exercise tailored U.S. responses to projected Chinese activity and culture. A more in depth analysis, with better, classified sources of information regarding the Chinese state could prove even more useful in modeling the strategic environment for U.S. decision makers. However, without properly understanding the security dynamic over time between the U.S. and China, it is difficult to discern whether planned force modifications are adequate. Without understanding if a familiar template for strategizing will resonate with a current situation, analysis may lack proper direction. Finally, prior to implementation, any analysis requires input regarding tailored strategies to help predict competitor reactions and establish the most effective methods of communication with that competitor. This paper sought to provide understanding, direction, and applicability in just this way to better color the periodic assessment.

Our model described a phase of U.S. strategic superiority, a period of transition and near peer threat, and a period of total parity with an upward trend of Chinese growth. Ultimately, the United States should use a similar framework to provide guidance to their impetus for rapid nuclear revitalization, prototyping, and system fielding. China is advancing. Their interests often counter those of the United States. The bi-lateral dynamic allows for an uncommon period of opportunity to prepare not only force modernization, but policy stimulation and follow-on force modification. Well-formulated policy will be key to ensuring that the U.S. adequately and deftly use strategic assets to deter an unacceptable lack of security regionally and globally.

This concept is not particularly novel. The Chinese used just this type of long-term, phased analysis to grow to their current economic and military strength. China's leaders characterize the first two decades of this century as the "period of strategic opportunity" whereby China expanded its "comprehensive national power." Pursuant of their 2049 Centenary Goal, China is now focused on "realizing a powerful and prosperous China" consisting of a "world-class" military. The improved Chinese military will secure China's great power status with the specific objective of China becoming "the preeminent power" in the Indo-Pacific region.¹⁷⁶ The U.S. must now set the agenda for the next 20 years to be that of U.S. advancement. China serves as proof that tailored, specific, and time-bound strategy has a high probability of providing much momentum to national objectives. The policy imperative for the United States is to take the opportunity to develop a comprehensive strategy to deter and defeat the Chinese Strategic threat.

Furthermore, the future of U.S. – China relations need not be so volatile. Perhaps there is room for great power competition, mutual understanding, and stability. If the U.S. better manages and prepares for competition with China, they may avoid actual conflict with the Chinese. Total appeasement could reduce U.S. interests to an unacceptable threshold requiring our allies or future leaders to attempt to reset relations with warfare. Without an institutional check, China may decide conflict is in fact in its best interest. If the U.S. attempts to combat and counter every policy decision and development of the Chinese state, then bold rhetoric and strategic tensions will likely lead to a Sino-American conflict. Currently the world rests firmly within the unfortunate but steady march toward the second scenario.

However, a United States ready to serve as a reasonable, informed, and prepared counter-weight to China in East Asia could allow for a stable environment of concessions and deterrence.

176. *Military and Security Developments.*

Informed decision-making processes on each side will help the nations navigate policy concerns without resorting to arms for resolution. Tensions will persist between the U.S. and China. Their interests will not align. However, perhaps a slightly contentious status quo could become the way of the future. As we prepare to enter what this paper frequently seems to suggest could be a new Cold War, it is important to note some differences between China and the Soviet Union. The Chinese are a much more economically integrated power to the West and the liberal international order than the Soviets were. They do not maintain a stranglehold on power in their region, as did the U.S.'s former adversary. Lastly, their significant impending demographic issues provide more immediate impediments to Chinese long-term growth than faced the early Soviet Union.¹⁷⁷ China and the U.S. have the opportunity for normalized relations amidst the tensions. Yet, without proper U.S. strategic preparation, America will soon not have a firm foundation from which to negotiate as equals. This platform is critical to maintaining stability between the U.S. and China whether it be amid U.S. power projection or Chinese designs on political expansion.

“Effective global governance in the twenty-first century will inevitably be determined by the interests and willingness of great powers to share their responsibilities for providing public good and addressing challenges in the international system.”¹⁷⁸ Perhaps global governance is not so much united bodies democratically driving uniform policy. Maybe global governance is a balancing of interests between great powers. These powers will need to share in the pursuits of their interest and the advancement of society. To this author, successful governance will be if the United States can maintain an effective strategic deterrent against China in order to prevent the tumultuous remaking of the international system and the contentious divesting of power or rights from current actors.

177. Barry Naughton, “Is China Socialist?,” 3-24.

178. Feng, Liu, “China-India Engagement in Institutions,” 231-232.

Kenneth Waltz views the international order as essentially existing in a near constant cycle of war preparation. For this reason, war preparation is reasonable. Making concessions outside of one's ideal political interests is not only unlikely, it is largely unnecessary in the scheme of geopolitical trajectory.¹⁷⁹ I am oversimplifying, but if we took Waltz's advice, the U.S. could continue large-scale tech investments and conflict pursuing rhetoric. To divert would only forestall the inevitable. Thucydides believed that hubris was not worth war. He suggested that the fear of the future could be put to good use if we do not succumb to its menacing control. He appealed to a higher rationality. His recommendation was to make all reasonable concessions and appeasements in order to avoid war: because one never can know the course of such conflict, or its consequences.¹⁸⁰ U.S. strategy must meld Waltz's call to prepare for war with Thucydides' desire to avoid conflict. Ultimately, the United States must make some concessions to avoid war. Yet unlike Thucydides, this cannot come at any cost. We must have a realistic understanding and acceptance of China and Chinese power to clearly define a productive balance. Stabilizing the U.S. – Chinese relationship in this way currently requires revitalizing the U.S.'s history of sophisticated strategy.

179. Kenneth Neal Waltz, *Man, the State and War: a Theoretical Analysis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018).

180. Thucydides and Charles Forster Smith, *Thucydides: History of the Peloponnesian War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996).

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