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14. ABSTRACT
China's rise is fueling Great Power competition with the US; both sides pursue incompatible national interests, globally, and in the same competitive spaces (the Contact Layer). China is dominating this strategic jousting using indirect methods and without resorting to lethal means. This "gray zone" approach exploits vulnerabilities created by a US system optimized for lethal, armed encounter. The 2018 NDS indicates unwillingness to use any instruments of national power to counter Beijing translated to "strategic atrophy"; NDS, therefore, directs a competitive offensive in the Indo-Pacific Contact Layer to "out-think, out-maneuver, and out-partner" revisionist powers" like China. The Naval Service should be that Contact Force.

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FUTURE WAR PAPER

From Present to Postured: How the Naval Service Competes in the Contact Layer

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Characterizing the Challenge – China’s Competitive Approach to Great Power Politics

China’s rise is fueling a new era of Great Power competition with the United States (US). This contest is unlikely to incite armed conflict. However, the US and its chief challenger will continue pursuing incompatible national interests, globally, and in the same competitive spaces. The 2018 National Defense Strategy (NDS) aggregates these rivalry zones into a worldwide “Contact Layer.”¹ Of particular relevance is China’s pursuit in the Indo-Pacific Contact Layer of its core national interests—countering constraints to strategic freedom of movement, fostering economic development, and diversifying access to natural resources.² These competitive exertions regularly pit China versus the US and/or other regional states. In the main, China is dominating this strategic jousting using indirect methods and without resorting to lethal means, even if some of its actions have run afoul of international law.³

Indeed, China has taken an aggressively “gray zone” approach to competing for many of its previously noted interests. That is to say, Beijing’s foreign policy and security force activities are firmly rooted in space between peace and war, and its efforts are generally ambiguous or blur attribution in going beyond the threshold of ordinary competition. Most significantly, Chinese gray zone activities intentionally avoid direct military conflict.⁴ Beijing shrouds patently aggressive behaviors—for example, demanding Vietnam cease oil exploration in the South China Sea (SCS) under threat of armed force—in claims regarding the Middle Kingdom’s historically transcendent dominance of the SCS’s seabed, landmasses, and fisheries. China employs another well-worn formula to insistently crowd-out other countries contesting islands or fishing havens inside the SCS’s Nine-Dash Line. Its fishing boats saturate an area and establish physical markers in shoals or on atolls; the China Coast Guard or Sea Police then deploys to protect Chinese citizens and interests (inclusive of markers), compelling others to cede to the Chinese the island or fishery in question rather than draw

swords. Scholars characterize this latter sort of coercive intimidation as a form of “passive assertiveness.”⁵

The same insidious assertiveness is at work in Beijing’s economic assistance programs packaged to the world’s developing countries and especially poorer states existing along strategic, maritime lines of communication (LOCs). China’s “debtbook diplomacy” efforts *vis a vis* US partners in Southeast Asia and among Pacific Island nations is most germane to this discussion.⁶ China builds port facilities and other economically important infrastructure, providing capital and know-how; beneficiaries are only required to pay off loans funding the construction. However, these projects often do not deliver on envisioned revenue generation. Leaders are then coaxed to lease these key facilities to the Chinese in exchange for debt forgiveness or otherwise favorable-to-Beijing terms.⁷ China’s military comes away with net strategic gains in terms of bases and access to the south Pacific.⁸

China has skillfully exploited vulnerabilities created by a US system optimized for lethal, conventional armed encounter and wholly unprepared for gray zone conflict; it has effectively avoided US strengths in indirect ways not easily countered by armed forces. Worse, as China grows more powerful, it stands to become more assertive and increasingly less cooperative in its skillful projection of military and economic strength. To date, the US has mildly protested China’s competitive maneuvers, but it has failed to effectively respond. Rather than confront Chinese assertiveness, according to former US Secretary of Defense Ash Carter, US leaders had elected to “step back and let China exercise dominance” at least for a time.⁹ The 2017 National Security Strategy (NSS) asserted American political leadership actually “hid from the challenge” while China “aggressively undermined American interests around the globe.”¹⁰ Lack of political will may have created geopolitical weakness or the perception of vulnerability at the very least.

To be sure, US leaders were unwilling—in any of the examples of Chinese aggressiveness previously cited or alluded to—to use American instruments of power to preserve the rules-based international system from efforts to alter its structure. Reluctance to act in support of partners or to uphold international law or court rulings generated an unhealthy level of strategic ambiguity regarding preserving global order and otherwise defending US interests and allies. Through disuse, US appendages of power and influence slowly became weaker and in some cases, actually shrunk; the NSS maintains “American diplomatic, intelligence, military, and economic agencies did not keep pace”¹¹ as rival Great Powers and especially China literally changed the character of war and interstate conflict. The NDS indicates a disinclination to use any instruments of national power to counter Beijing translated to prolonged “strategic atrophy”¹² and, ironically, moved the US closer to conflict. Indeed, US passivity increased the risk Beijing generates more assertive *fait accompli* actions in the near future, deeds well beyond dredging to create land forms in the SCS or declaring *de facto* control over the entire Spratly Island archipelago.¹³

Competing to Win – A Conceived US Strategic Response to China’s Gray Zone Approach

Going forward, the US intends to reverse the troubling trend. The NSS argues, “An America that successfully competes is the best way to prevent conflict, just as American weakness invites challenge.”¹⁴ Two of the United States’ four vital national interest pillars, as expressed in the NSS, are, in fact, competitively worded—*promoting* peace through strength and *advancing* American influence.¹⁵ Accordingly, to reinvigorate US power, the NDS has directed a competitive offensive in the Indo-Pacific Contact Layer to “out-think, out-maneuver, and out-partner...revisionist powers” like China.¹⁶ In so doing, the NDS avers the US can move China “into unfavorable positions, frustrating its efforts, precluding its options while expanding our own, and forcing it to confront conflict under adverse conditions.”¹⁷

Not insignificantly, the Joint Chiefs of Staff's 2018 *Joint Concept for Integrated Campaigning* (JCIC) indicates the Joint Force Commander (JFC) must actively compete in the Contact Layer to contribute to securing national objectives. The act of competing therein actually readies and positions joint force to—in *extremis*—win armed encounters in a given conflict environment, which the NDS describes, holistically, as the “Blunt Layer”.¹⁸ Competitors in the Contact Layer move, if required, from non-lethal competitive engagement to lethal conflict in the Blunt Layer. Competing effectively in the Contact Layer, then, actually postures US forces to “delay, degrade, or deny adversary aggression” should conditions deteriorate and slide towards kinetic exchange somewhere in the Blunt Layer.¹⁹

In both securing national objectives and otherwise delaying/degrading/denying adversary aggression, the JFC is directed to execute a series of competition mechanisms: 1) Strengthen alliances and partnerships; 2) create conditions to support securing national interests; 3) preserve or prevent deterioration of stability; 4) weaken or impose a change in a competitor's behavior using physical/information aspects of power; 5) position or increase access/influence/understanding in the space; 6) inform or develop shared perspective with partners and identify areas of cooperation; and 7) persuade or shape competitor behavior.²⁰ US military core competencies—forward positioning, global reach, coalition building, and capacities for multi-domain actions—make the Joint Force an indispensable but supporting player in the competition for strategic political supremacy.²¹

Detractors may characterize current force disposition and scheduled deployment cycles as sufficient to compete offensively. But the JFC's task is inherently different than intensifying what has been termed the forward force presence or deep engagement model.²² In that paradigm, American troops, bases, assistance, and activities with foreign nations were inherently stabilizing in that they largely discouraged, if not prevented interstate conflict. “Presence” deterred regional adversaries, restrained partners from adopting provocative policies, and made it easier for the US to achieve its

aims without the use of force.²³ Of course, Great Powers like China exploited mere presence for significant and still-growing strategic benefits.

Designing a military force competent enough to compete against the preeminent gray zone competitor and accordingly deter *fait accompli* actions requires retaining and leveraging comparative advantages listed previously (i.e. forward positioning, global reach, coalition building, and capacities for multi-domain actions) while developing or acquiring additional competencies. For example, the Contact Layer force will need to organize differently and likely deploy and operate unique to other conventional forces. To wit, this force will effect a firm, forceful posture as the norm in its given area of operations. This force will collect intelligence, persistently, and integrate these efforts with concurrent and offensive cyber and information operations. And this force will confront gray zone activities—preemptively, even—rather than standing by. This troop will need to be able to act, measure in real time those actions’ effectiveness, readjust in-stride, and rapidly institute changes. Again, all along the way, the Indo-Pacific JFC will have to kill the new concept detractor’s impulse to minimize the additional commitment and skill sets required to operate as the NDS directs.

Most significantly, the JFC is now required to cognitively retune the force from a focus on readiness for the next regional contingency to, instead, a concentration on using military power—short of armed conflict—to achieve political goals. Since the end of the Cold War, force structure requirements expected America’s primary security challenges to come from regional powers (e.g. Iran, North Korea) and, later, terrorist groups. These opponents lacked the ability to defeat a US ally rapidly or prevent American forces from sallying forth to defend allies in duress. Force structure investments, consequently, focused on efficiently maintaining a visible presence in important regions, rather than on what would be needed to fight a Great Power. Great Power competition requires the JFC change his force’s operational mindset from relatively *passive to decidedly offensive and day-to-day*.²⁴ Ideally,

according to the NDS, this comprehensive—and more significantly—purposeful effort succeeds in “detering aggression...and defending US interests from challenges below the level of armed conflict” without having to actually go to war.²⁵ Executed skillfully, the US avoids escalation and coerces China to modify its behaviors.²⁶

Designing the Contact Force – The Indo-Pacific JFC’s Operational Approach to Beating China

How, then, should the US military contend for and secure American interests in the Indo-Pacific without resorting to armed conflict? Given the Naval Service’s history of applying non-lethal soft and hard power in the service of political ends and its current operational reach and tactical flexibility, the Indo-Pacific JFC should designate his Naval Service the region’s Contact Force to carry out aforementioned JCIC “competition mechanisms.” With an enduring pedigree as a sometime political instrument and an equally abiding ability to posture anywhere across vast oceans for sustained and varied operations, the Naval Service provides the JFC a resource base and tool kit to act, measure effects, and more intelligently integrate smart power efforts in theater. As the designated Contact Force, the Naval Service could evolve its roles from largely presence tied to deterring overt lethal aggression and enabling peaceful crisis resolution. Hereafter, the Contact Force would posture and execute proactive offensive missions—alternately coercive or purely diplomatic—aimed chiefly at imposing conditions in the Indo-Pacific favorable to achieving US political objectives.

Playing to American Strengths – Employing the Naval Service as the Contact Force

Traditionally, America has employed its Naval Service more than other armed force branches when using the military to secure national interests.²⁷ Ships are easier to move about than land-based military units, and naval forces generally manage their own communication and logistics support. Moreover, Army deployments to a region are inherently disruptive—cognitively and physically—for the receiving population. In contrast, the Naval Service can and often does deploy to a region while

minimizing exposure to local inhabitants, remaining near but concealed from view. Already, American leaders most often dispatch naval forces when projecting forward presence or waving the colors without offending foreign sensibilities. In other words, the Naval Service is well suited to be an arbiter of both hard and soft power.

Hard power is a country wielding carrots and sticks to get what it wants.²⁸ The Naval Service's hard power role is, historically, most associated with Gunboat Diplomacy. British naval strategist James Cable defined Gunboat Diplomacy as "the use or threat of limited naval force...in order to secure advantage, or to avert loss, either in the furtherance of an international dispute or else against foreign nationals within the territory or the jurisdiction of their own state."²⁹ Cable's definition emphasizes the coercive qualities of projected naval power. It often creates a *fait accompli*, requiring an adversary yield to an established condition or else escalate towards conflict. It is also purposeful in threatening consequences forthcoming if the adversary does not yield. Indeed, Cable recognized naval power as decidedly "expressive" in that it demonstrates intent or willingness to take action if a challenger does not give way. In so conveying consequences to come for the adversary that pushes forward, projected naval power is uniquely catalytic, Cable further observed, in that it "drives the adversary to take some action."³⁰

Commodore Perry's multiple, deliberate naval expeditions to Japan in 1853-54, 7th Fleet's deployment to the Gulf of Thailand and deposit of 5,000 US Marines and Soldiers ashore there in May 1962, and the US Navy's deployment of two carrier battle groups to the Taiwan Strait in 1996 are three quintessential examples of naval power coercively altering a challenger's behavior. In one instance (Japan's opening), the US Naval Service compelled the Japanese to eschew isolation and accept association with American and Western trade. In another, the introduction of naval force and ground troops to Thailand serviced several political objectives, including strengthening US-Thai relations,

detering Vietnamese and Laotian Communists from further undermining Thailand’s stability, and dissuading China from providing additional assistance to the Laotian Communist group, Pathet Lao.³¹ President Clinton’s dispatch of naval force to the Strait in March 1996 “discouraged”³² Chinese aggression and reassured Taiwan of US strategic commitment.

Soft power, on the other hand, is attracting people to our side without coercion.³³ The Naval Service’s role as soft power purveyor is often associated with relief of humanitarian crisis³⁴ and with deliberate Security Sector Assistance (SSA). US Pacific Command’s Joint Task Force 536 executed Operation UNIFIED ASSISTANCE in Indonesia in December 2004. In that instance, the Naval Service employed (25) ships—including a carrier, elements of an Amphibious Ready Group (ARG), a Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU), and Guam-based Maritime Prepositioning Ship Squadron assets—and (45) aircraft to support Indonesian relief.³⁵ Traditionally, SSA employs US military forces to mitigate causes of potential crisis. For example, SSA helps partners build and sustain the capacity of legitimate institutions to provide security, safety, and justice for their people. It also enables foreign partners to contribute to efforts that address common security challenges.³⁶ As an example, in June 2018, 7th Fleet personnel embarked on USNS *Millinocket* (T-EPF 3) and visited ports in Singapore, Malaysia, and the Philippines. Leaders executed staff talks, subject matter exchanges, and events for local dignitaries. Personnel interacted with children in orphanages, schools and visited local museums; the band performed at public venues, malls and parks, and conducted workshops with local musicians.³⁷

In sampling the Naval Service’s historic role as power applicator on behalf of the US government, glaringly obvious is the extent to which the Service’s use was associated with positive outcomes related to the behavior desired of other actors. Japan opened up, China relented in two instances from undermining American partners, and Taiwan, Thailand, and other Southeast Asian

states responded to and appreciated US goodwill. Indeed, Hard Power examples were generally successful in dissuading/discouraging/deterring specific actions while Soft Power employment reassured both friends and adversaries of US commitment to an area. Pre-packaged Fleet formations were effectively scaled according to respective purposes in gaining varying levels of influence among targeted states and their leaders. A similar consciousness of political purpose must drive this new effort to organize. The Force is now competing in the Indo-Pacific to influence the Chinese at various locations and on multiple levels, simultaneously. The JFC should build complementary Fleet formations that posture for offensive operations in one or more domains at a given time. In this regard, competing in the Contact Layer entails employing the Service in ways not unlike those exhibited *during* the Cold War where missions were universally designed to demonstratively deter or compel threats and also reassure and induce partners/allies/non-aligned states.³⁸ The JFC's new imperative requires intelligently positioning the right capabilities in the right places at the right time to counter Great Power aggression.³⁹

The foundational elements of posturing the force for timely and sustained competitive action are largely in place. Underwriting the Naval Service's return to its roots as a political-military instrument is the Fleet's current operational reach, defined by several strategically located installations and more capable platforms. Taking locations first, the Navy and Marine Corps is anchored and positioned to contend. Multiple US bases in Hawaii, Guam, and Japan and accessible foreign military installations in Australia, the Philippines, Singapore, and even Vietnam and Malaysia underscore persistent presence. Moreover, the Naval Service's air and sea platforms, Sailors, and Marines annually execute "pre-conflict" security cooperation activities (of the sort alluded to in discussing SSA) with dozens of countries in order to build and integrate allies' capabilities in preparation for conflict/s to come. This forward installation presence and partnering-relationship mentality are certainly fundamental for any proactive, integrated campaign effort. Moreover, the US needs these

same partners and allies to modernize, expand the size of their forces, improve readiness/interoperability, and affirm the political will to win; the Naval Service's current Indo-Pacific force disposition and regular engagement schedule drives that point home.

More capable platforms, and in particular the Fleet's existing amphibious ships, give the Naval Service a unique and postured ability to execute deliberate, multi-faceted, long-duration competition plans. The newest *America* class amphibious assault ship (LHA Replacement or LHA(R)) highlights the point. The ship is meant to be a central part of joint, interagency, and multinational maritime forces, exactly the sort the JCIC envisioned in aligning military and non-military activities. It can plan, host, and provide support to and coordination with US departments and agencies and other partners. The ship's Command, Control, Communications, Computers, Combat Systems, Intelligence (C5ISR) architecture is configured to support landing force elements—including the Marine Corps' ever-expanding Informational-Intelligence-Surveillance-Reconnaissance (I2SR) enterprise—as well as various naval amphibious and interagency command and control and support organizations. Furthermore, a hybrid electric propulsion system gives the ship increased range, endurance, and time on station. *America's* turbines generate fuel efficiencies at higher speeds approaching 20 knots; its least fuel-efficient speeds are found at 12 knots or less, resulting in significant fuel savings.⁴⁰ *America* class ships can service the JFC's emerging areas of concern and influence the given situation in a multitude of ways, with I2SR, several type/model/series of aviation, and Marines able to demonstrate resolve, signal intentions, or otherwise influence the operating environment. LHA(R) provides the JFC a persistent and flexible platform for projecting smart power and staying on to measure the directed power's effects to influence Chinese behavior.⁴¹

As currently configured, the Naval Service is foundationally equipped to work—that is signal, sense, and monitor—across four of five warfighting domains—air, land, sea, and cyberspace—to

contribute to competing in the cognitive realm. Regarding aviation, manned and unmanned aircraft dually collect information from and likewise introduce information into the operational environment. At sea and on land, Marines and Sailors engage partners and allies in traditional TSC/SSA roles aimed at enhancing core relationships and building actual partner capacities.⁴² The newly formed Marine Expeditionary Force's (MEF) Information Group (MIG), when fully engaged, will provide afloat and ashore task organized Information Operation (IO)-ISR competition teams to work with MAGTFs at sea and Marine and Fleet nodes ashore, throughout the Indo-Pacific. These teams will coordinate MIG work with Navy Cyber and Fleet IO.⁴³ Additionally, Navy Cyber Mission Force Teams have achieved full operational capabilities (FOC),⁴⁴ which suggests a Fleet Contact Force would be poised to expand its operational cyber capability well into the gray zone.

Capability exists to link organizations on land with these forces at sea to create conditions favorable to execution of an integrated collection or IO campaign plan designed to influence the cognitive. The Fleet I2SR's forward presence in the Indo-Pacific, capacity to sense the operational environment, and its accumulated familiarity with the Chinese military's composition, disposition, and strength are all competitive advantages in battling for the mind; US analysts understand Chinese military capabilities and intentions and can enable the JFC to overtly (or not) manifest awareness of China's next or likely moves as a means to unsettle Chinese decision-makers. Perhaps as important in the context of strategic competition, though, the I2SR maintains ties with US Department of State and Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) networks ashore and nurtures enduring familiarity with partner military capacities. Fleet units and especially the aforementioned ARG-MEUs, forged these key relations over years of counter-insurgency and traditional presence missions conducted in and with Indo-Pacific nations. These interagency and nation-to-nation relationships place the larger Contact Force on solid footing from the outset of offensive, cognitive engagements.

To put a finer point on the matter, the Naval Service I2SR enterprise is ready to translate its well-developed intelligence collection-processing-exploitation-dissemination (C-PED) model from largely tactical purposes to decidedly operational and strategic levels of competition to service the JFC and larger, national imperatives. Consider, tactical UAVs can gather more information regarding China’s construction of artificial islands in the Spratly Islands and broadcast video feeds to users at every level. And military human intelligence collectors can grab desired information on China’s commercial and business efforts in island nations Palau, Tonga, Vanuatu and on Beijing’s larger “debtbook diplomacy” initiatives and commercial influences in the Philippines, for example. Military collectors, like CIA case officers, are trained and certified to conduct screening and human source contact operations (SCOs) of the sort required to first penetrate and then exploit to better characterize the role Chinese businesses and other benign surrogates are playing to establish Beijing’s influence in various countries.⁴⁵ Already-mature signals and human intelligence capabilities, matched with developing Fleet IO and cyber proficiencies would service the JFC with quantity and quality of information to execute IO and accurately measure effects of these cognitive competition efforts.

The key variable in this integration equation is whether the JFC and CIA and even the National Security Agency (NSA) see Great Power competition in the Contact Layer—and the concomitant imperative to collect intelligence—in the same light. That is, do they embrace as a “new norm” the imperative of C-PED interoperability between the military and national intelligence community, rather than a construct valid only in the context of prosecuting the global war on terror? Although the military-intelligence community relationship has grown and evolved the last two decades, there remain legal authority and organizational mission issues to harmonize, the substance of which far exceeds the scope of this paper. Suffice to say, to compete in the Indo-Pacific Contact Layer, the military commander’s operators (under United States Code (U.S.C.) - Title 10) and intelligence community collectors (under U.S.C. Title 50) will necessarily shoot on the same targets and will alternately

support one another's operations. Both organizations will utilize practitioners and collectors wearing any uniform or carrying varied credentials and then digest reports and disseminate analysis and assessment over the same networks.⁴⁶ Perhaps the competition paradigm into which we are moving requires a joint review of all intelligence and intelligence-related activities in the Tactical Intelligence and Related Activities (TIARA) programs and the National Foreign Intelligence Program (NFIP). And in fact, buried in U.S.C. Title 50, under the sub-heading "REVISION OF PRIORITIES AND CONSOLIDATION OF FUNCTIONS," is the requirement for the Secretary of Defense and the Director of National Intelligence (DNI) to adapt TIARA and NFIP "to reflect changes in the international security environment" or "to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the conduct of those intelligence activities or programs."⁴⁷ That provision applies to times such as these, when national leadership directs the military to compete globally and especially in the Indo-Pacific.

Bringing the Contact Force to Bear and Achieving Desired Effects – Influencing for US Interests

Given ships, vast operational reach, long duration on station, and integration with other government agencies, the JFC should organize three "Influencing Fleets," as a resource base and tool kit to act, measure effects, and more intelligently integrate smart power efforts in theater.⁴⁸ These Influencing Fleets should operate in three distinct areas of operation in the Indo-Pacific, all of which are east of the Strait of Malacca. These would provide a much needed, day-to-day competitor force to materially strengthen key Indo-Pacific allies and partners' efforts to counter applied Chinese economic, political, and military pressure. Accordingly, Influencing Fleets would each build around an LHA/LHD from an associated ARG augmented with two small-deck amphibious ships, a guided-missile destroyer, and a multi-mission guided-missile frigates (FFG (X)). The latter would include an auxiliary command and control suite and an onboard medium-altitude long-endurance UAV (MALE UAV) to act as a directional communications relay to reduce the risk of counter-detection and provide

tactical signals intelligence collection. The US Navy's rotary wing MQ-8C Fire Scout UAV flies from frigates and littoral combat ships and could provide an Influencing Force's initial, multi-role, long-range reconnaissance and surveillance needs.⁴⁹ MQ-8C can range 1200 nm, fly for 12-hours, and carry an array of ISR sensors.⁵⁰

The South Pacific Influencing Force (SPIF) would base out of Guam and Hawaii, orient south and compete with the Chinese in the Second Island Chain and beyond, from French Polynesia, west to the Fiji-Tuvalu-Nauru arc and then north to the Marshalls and further northwest to the Marianas. In lieu of more specific political direction, this Contact Force would work directly with New Zealand, France, and Australia to intensify engagement with island nations and support ongoing defense, disaster relief, and regional maritime surveillance; the latter is concerned largely with preserving respective countries' economic exclusion zones (EEZ). If the US moves beyond observer status in the South Pacific Defence Ministers forum, SPIF forces should expand material contributions to key exercises in the region such as SOUTHERN KATIPO⁵¹ and in support of the larger Povai Endeavour regional security framework.⁵²

A Western Pacific Influencing Force (WPIF) would foray from Darwin and Townsville, Australia and Subic Bay and Oyster Bay, Philippines and look east towards the Solomon Islands, west to the Strait of Malacca, and north to the SCS, Hainan Island, and Luzon Strait. The WPIF would support ongoing Australian-led security initiatives in the southwest Pacific, which includes the Pacific Maritime Security Program.⁵³ The WPIF would also tangibly expand the Naval Service's role west of Guam from a transiting force striving to avoid provoking China in and around the SCS, to, instead, a force, which regularly demonstrates capabilities in the SCS. Ideally, these demonstrations, done initially as part of an enhanced Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training (CARAT) schedule,

materially aid/enable/support partners (Malaysia, Vietnam, Singapore, Indonesia) and ally (Philippines and Australia) asserting their rights to navigation, exploration, and general sea control in the SCS.

The Northern Pacific Influencing Force (NPIF) would work from Sasebo, Japan and White Beach, Okinawa, Japan and focus west on the East China Sea and north to the Korean Peninsula. In light of the April 2015 US-Japanese Collective Self-Defense (CSD) agreement, which expanded the Japanese Self Defense Force's (JSDF) ability to respond to crises beyond Japan's home waters, NPIF would help further mature the JSDF role as an American security partner. The JSDF would evolve into an active, day-to-day member of the Contact Force, rather than primarily a participant in annual bi-lateral exercises such as Keen Sword.⁵⁴

Each Influencing Force would execute lines of operation (LOO) linked to the JCIC's seven competition mechanisms, which might be considered general lines of effort (LOEs). Take, for example, the competition mechanisms "strengthen alliances and partnerships" and "preserve or prevent deterioration of stability." The SPIF might derive an associated LOO to enhance US forces' interoperability with the fourteen Pacific Island countries currently party to the Australia-led Pacific Patrol Boat Program (PPBP). SPIF ships and small boats, plus its Group 3 (RQ-21 Blackjack Integrator) and MALE maritime UAVs (aforementioned MQ-8C and, eventually MAGTF Unmanned Expeditionary Capabilities UAS (MUX)), would visit Tonga's Vuna Wharf and Fiji's Suva Port to conduct exchange and execute table-top planning aboard ship, before performing maritime interdiction exercises to secure Tonga and Fiji's respective EEZs. Both countries are reportedly heavily indebted to China and are pressured to provide permanent naval basing rights to Beijing in order to dismiss at least some associated liabilities.⁵⁵ So, in the process, Contact Force I2SR enterprise elements—signals and human intelligence operating under appropriate Title 10 intelligence collection authorities and from Naval Service platforms and the US Embassy in Suva—gather information on Chinese business

and military activities in each country. A notional collection requirement listing might include observed port improvements, associated enabled military applications at the port in question, indications of state-owned enterprise and PLAN coordination, and security enhancements suggesting a military motive may be at work in port operations. This information is fused, analyzed, and new intelligence then provided to the JFC as a basis for better characterizing the Chinese challenge in the region.

In support of similar LOEs and an interoperability LOO, the WPIF ought to expand and elevate CARAT's purpose from its current effort to "enhance capabilities in a broad spectrum of naval operations including maritime security skills and operational cohesiveness among participating forces."⁵⁶ This will not be easy, given CARAT's traditional role as a benign means of building partner capacity and generally engendering good will. But partner nations are likely more willing to elevate the role and intensity of CARAT given China's aggressive behavior. US Indo-Pacific Command should expand CARAT from bi-lateral, US-led training evolutions, to integrated, multi-lateral interoperability evolutions that make sense, based on geographic proximity of the nine participating CARAT partner nations.⁵⁷ Bringing Vietnam into the CARAT fold, up from its current participation in a "CARAT-like" exercise, would also signal to China the US supports Vietnam's maritime compulsions along and inside the Nine Dash Line. Moreover, ordinarily, CARAT avoids the SCS and generally confines operations to the Gulf of Thailand, the Andaman Sea, or Java Sea. CARAT should execute future "cooperative evolutions" in the SCS, inside Malaysian or Philippine EEZs, and ought to include maritime interdiction and gunnery exercises. These evolutions would serve as a demonstration of capability and of the collective resolve of the rimland of states to address threats—such as illicit trafficking or violent extremist organizations—independent of Chinese prerogatives in the SCS. Eventually, the evolutions would de-sensitize the region to more complex combined maneuvers and ultimately graduate to combined Visit Board Search Seizure (VBSS) operations inside the Nine Dash

Line adjacent to a partner or allied country's territorial SCS holding. Over a multi-year period, these efforts would push back, incrementally, against Chinese claims to retain the predominant prerogatives *vis a vis* the waters and landmasses of the SCS.

Measuring the Influencing Forces' effectiveness is a challenging endeavor and may, ultimately, require the JFC rethink how he organizes and mans his stable of intelligence and operations analysts. Sorting through signals traffic and reporting will, at times, induce chaos and confusion among those tasked to sort and decipher meaning. Indeed, it would be ideal if the utility of using the Contact Force could be discussed unambiguously in terms of "success" or "failure" in achieving the JFC's specific objectives in each case. But success and failure imply clean determination of causation, and as a reminder, the Chinese do their utmost to deny opponents knowledge of capabilities, dispositions, methods, and intentions. Worse still, Beijing may intentionally present the JFC with erroneous or ambiguous information in the wake of deliberately executed American LOOs; when Chinese leadership suspects the US has learned something significant about its intentions or strengths in the Indo-Pacific, it will undertake actions to rapidly change that situation. To be sure, without adequate intelligence, it is improbable analysts will determine relationships between the events along the execution of a competition mechanism LOO and so establish an empirical chain of evidence revealing why China behaved in a certain way. Here, again, is why the JFC's Title 10 intelligence gathering authorities serve as a means to unleash the Naval Service's I2SR collectors to grab timely tactical and operational intelligence to enable understanding.

That said, if US political and JFC operational objectives and associated success criteria are known prior to launching a LOO event, characterizing mission accomplishment or failure of the outcome is less daunting. Additionally, as competition is inherently political, other instruments of power will often work in the same physical and cognitive spaces to achieve the stated objectives.

Properly quantifying their contributions to success or other outcomes is essential in determining what inputs ultimately worked or which items did not generate desired effects. Knowing those two factors—the objectives in sight and the other instruments operating in the space—renders evaluating and measuring effects an inductively analytical process of working towards plausible explanations for Chinese action or inactions. With these two variables known, reaching certitude or establishing causation is more probable, as new events and outcomes are compared and contrasted with old to distill elements common to each event set and the associated outcomes. Moreover, in this new paradigm of aggressively competing for American influence, events should rapidly accumulate and enlarge sample size, thereby increasing the accuracy of analysis and assessment.

In anticipation of this data generation to come, JFCs should establish a Contact Force analytic syndicate within the J-2 and J-3 Directorates. This body would evaluate and interpret reporting to categorize and associate incoming data with competition mechanisms. Ideally, its inferences would focus exclusively on monitoring LOOs and drive collection managers and the JFC to calibrate pressure at different points in the operating environment. The JFC should box off his analytic syndicate from carrying out other normal requirements of military intelligence fusion, such as quantifying order of battle or developing targeting packages or building collection plans. Fleet IO would, ideally, disclose at the unclassified level details of these LOOs, from time to time, to add a measure of transparency and even implicit coercion to the equation.

Ultimately, as the NDS and JCIC both allude, competition in the Contact Layer is more than presence, and it is a definite break from the status quo. It includes but goes beyond “shaping” or cooperating in preparing for the next fight. Competing means day-to-day and pro-actively bending reality towards US ends, rather than reacting to or merely outdoing Chinese performance or behavior. To compete is to generate physical and cognitive events and exploit other incidents in the Indo-Pacific

Contact Layer, with an ability to measure their cumulative effect over time and the intent of “imposing a general framework of order on the disorder.”⁵⁸ Competitive actions must be tied to achieving specific political objectives. And after imposing on—or arranging preferred strategic conditions in the region—the competitor follows through and “maintains the hard-won gains.”⁵⁹ The Naval Service is the organization poised and nimble enough to be the Contact Force in today’s gray zone competitive environment.

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- ⁴ Belinda Bragg, "Integration Report: Gray Zone Conflicts, Challenges, and Opportunities" (Strategic Multi-Layer Assessment: Gray Zone Conflicts, Challenges, and Opportunities: A Multi-Agency Deep Dive Assessment, National Security Innovations, July 2017), 4, <http://nsiteam.com/social/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Integration-Report-Final-07-13-2017-R.pdf>.
- ⁵ Ashley Townshend and Rory Medcalf. *Shifting Waters: China's New Passive Assertiveness in Asian Maritime Security* (Sydney, Australia: Lowy Institute, April 2016).
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- ⁷ Vanuatu Tourism Office, "New Luganville wharf opened," *vanuatuindependent.com*, August 21, 2017, <https://vanuatuindependent.com/2017/08/21/new-luganville-wharf-opened/>. Note: Beijing invests heavily in the Compact of Free Association (COFA) states (Micronesia, the Marshall Islands, and Palau), Tonga, and Vanuatu. Case in point is the Luganville wharf in Vanuatu, completed in August 2017 at a cost of VT9 billion (\$79.2 billion USD). Since completion, the port is struggling to realize expected revenue, and the Vanuatu government is challenged to pay off loans to the Chinese company that built the facility. History *does* suggest China will offer Vanuatu relief in exchange for Peoples Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) access to the port or a generous multi-decade lease—akin to previous Chinese deals with Djibouti and Sri Lanka—passing port-control to a Chinese state-owned company. Worse Reuters' analysis of the financial books of 11 South Pacific island nations shows China's lending programs have gone from almost zero to over \$1.3 billion currently outstanding in a decade. Visit <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-pacific-debt-china-insight-payment-due-pacific-islands-in-the-red-as-debts-to-china-mount-idUSKBN1K2J4> for details regarding that study. See David Wroe's articles regarding Vanuatu and China dealings written in mid-April 2018 and available at the Sydney Morning Herald online site, <https://www.smh.com.au>. For details on China's previous predatory economic negotiations with countries of less means, see an article at Foreign Policy.com regarding Djibouti - <https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/07/31/will-djibouti-become-latest-country-to-fall-into-chinas-debt-trap/> and another New York times expose pertaining to Sri Lanka - <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/25/world/asia/china-sri-lanka-port.html>.
- ⁸ Note. Admittedly, this is yet to be a wide-spread phenomenon. Djibouti is the single example, to date, where China has translated host-nation debt into a living-breathing Chinese Naval Base at or along a strategic line of communication; in the Djiboutian case, the Chinese opened Doraleh naval base—along the southern Gulf of Tadjura coastline, west of Djibouti's main commercial port—in August 2017. However, with similar port and infrastructure projects ongoing in multiple south Pacific debtor nations (e.g. Tonga, Vanuatu, and Papua New Guinea (PNG)) and in Pakistan, Myanmar, and Sri Lanka, Belt Road Initiative (BRI) efforts are significantly trending towards ensnaring debtors in a scheme which sees China lease or take ownership of key strategic infrastructure in these states.
- ⁹ Ash Carter, "Reflections on American Grand Strategy in Asia" (report, Harvard Kennedy School, Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, October 2018), 15, <https://www.belfercenter.org/publication/reflections-american-grand-strategy-asia#5>.
- ¹⁰ The White House, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, DC, 2017), 1, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf>.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.* 28.
- ¹² US Department of Defense, *Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, DC, 2018), <https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2018-National-Defense-Strategy-Summary.pdf>. 1.
- ¹³ Note. Professors Charles L. Glaser and Chaim Kaufmann, from the University of Chicago and Lehigh University, respectively, have written extensively on the Security Dilemma or Offense-Defense Balance. They point out that in environments where one antagonist is on perennially on the offense, "...the advantage of offense increases, the security dilemma becomes more severe, arms races become more intense, and war becomes more likely." They go on to write, regarding *fait accomplis*, "When offense has the advantage, states negotiate less and use *fait accomplis* tactics more, and states become more secretive, which increases the probability of war by fueling miscalculations of both military capabilities and interests." It is fair to say China's behavior the past roughly ten years suggests the truth of Glaser and Kaufmann's exposition of Offense-Defense Balance. See more in their paper "*What is the Offense-Defense Balance and Can We Measure It?*" in the journal of International Security, Vol. 22, No. 4 (Spring, 1998), pp. 44-82. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/2539240.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3A28bde7cedf8e2505a75249cf52e91785>.
- ¹⁴ The White House, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, DC, 2017), 3, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf>.
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- ¹⁶ Department of Defense, *Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy*, 5.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.* 5.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.* 7.
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.* 7.
- ²⁰ US Department of Defense, *Joint Concept for Integrated Planning* (Washington, DC, March 16, 2018), http://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/concepts/joint_concept_integrated_campaign.pdf?ver=2018-03-28-102833-257. 15-16.
- ²¹ Note. The Commandant of the Marine Corps' thoughts regarding these particular Layers and the role of the Marine Corps therein is instructive in understanding how the Naval Service would transition from the Contact to Blunt Layer. "*To operate within the Contact and Blunt Layers, Marine forces must be combat-credible and oriented on warfighting to provide credible deterrence. Marines who are stationed at and rotate through III Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF) in the Pacific are forward postured, providing expeditionary forward presence. The Blunt Layer requires a resilient, dispersed basing posture with sufficient forward stockpiles of logistics items and a reliable command and control (C2) network to delay, degrade, and deny aggression.*" [Statement Of General Robert B. Neller Commandant of The Marine Corps, as Delivered to Congressional Defense Committees on the Posture of the United States Marine Corps, April 2018. <https://www.hqmc.marines.mil/Portals/142/CMC%20PB19%20Posture%20Written%20Testimony%20vFinal.pdf?ver=2018-04-20-110550-363>].
- ²² Angela O'Mahony, *U.S. Presence and the Incidence of Conflict* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2018), 1, 83. https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR1900/RR1906/RAND_RR1906.pdf.
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²⁴ Note. LtCols Scott Cuomo and Noah Spataro write in their 2019 *Marine Gazette* article entitled “Not Yet Openly at War, But Still Mostly at Peace” (pp 6-19) that the Marine Corps and US Navy lack requisite ships and platforms to execute Joint Forcible Entry Operations (JFEO) in a conflict scenario. The authors posit a “new big idea” for development of an amphibious force capable of responding to Chinese aggression and actually blunting the attack. Theirs’ is a comprehensive “Amphibious Close Combat Unit” (ACCU) package which would be “seamlessly integrated with the Navy as part of Department-wide combined littoral warfare strike force (LWSF) effort.” This LWSF would forward posture the (ACCU) in the Contact Layer and ready to team with Blunt Layer forces to fight aggression, in the event. Indeed, the LWSF’s focus appears to be primarily on being in the ring, so to speak, ready to fight when called, whereas the thrust of this paper focuses on day-to-day, week-to-week competing in the Contact Layer to avoid actual conflict. In this way, LWSF and the Naval Service as the JFC’s Contact Layer competition force are complimentary concepts.

²⁵ Department of Defense, *Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy*, 6.

²⁶ Note. Competing, daily, can be defined by four key elements: 1) Development of a firm/forceful posture as the norm in the Indo-Pacific; 2) Persistent intelligence collection—passive and active, overt and less-so—of PLAN and commercial activities; 3) Conducting information operations to accompany the posturing and intelligence collection efforts; and 4) confronting gray zone actions as, if not when and where, they occur.

²⁷ Barry Blechman, *Force without War: US Armed Forces as a Political Instrument* (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 1978), 38-39.

²⁸ Center for Strategic and International Studies, *CSIS Commission on Smart Power*, 6.

²⁹ James Cable, *Gunboat Diplomacy: Political Applications of Limited Naval Force* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1971), 21.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Barry Blechman, *Force without War: US Armed Forces as a Political Instrument* (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 1978), 156-60.

³² Robert S. Ross, “1995-1996 Taiwan Strait Confrontation: Coercion, Credibility, and the Use of Force.” *International Security* Vol 25, no. 2 (2000): 89, <http://people.duke.edu/~niou/teaching/Ross.pdf>.

³³ Center for Strategic and International Studies, *CSIS Commission on Smart Power*, 6.

³⁴ Headquarters US Marine Corps, *Marine Corps Operations*, MCDP 1-0 (Washington, DC: Headquarters, US Marine Corps, September 27, 2001), 10-8.

³⁵ Naval War College - Joint Military Operations Department, *CNC&S/NSC 2013 Contemporary Operations Examination Case Study: Operation Unified Assistance: 2004 Sumatran Earthquake and Tsunami Humanitarian Relief*, May 2013, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/264153352_Operation_Unified_Assistance_2004_Sumatran_Earthquake_and_Tsunami_Humanitarian_Relief. 8-10.

³⁶ US Department of Defense, *Joint Operations*, Joint Publication 3-0 (Washington, DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff, October 22, 2018), V1-3.

³⁷ Chris Krucke, “U.S. 7th Fleet Completes Theater Security Cooperation Patrol,” *US 7th Fleet Public Affairs*, June 17, 2018, https://www.navy.mil/submit/display.asp?story_id=106031.

³⁸ Barry Blechman, *Force without War: US Armed Forces as a Political Instrument* (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 1978), 71.

³⁹ Bryan Clark, “Restoring American Seapower: A New Fleet Architecture for the United States Navy” (report, Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, January 2017), III, https://csbaonline.org/uploads/documents/CSBA6224-Fleet_Architecture_Study_WEB.pdf.

⁴⁰ *Global Security.org*, “LHA-6 America,” accessed November 14, 2018, <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/systems/ship/lha-6.htm>.

⁴¹ Maritime Sealift Command, “Organization,” accessed November 14, 2018, <https://www.msc.navy.mil/organization/>. Note: The U.S. Navy’s Military Sealift Command (MSC) underwrites Fleet’s capabilities. MSC operates Combat Logistics Force (CLF) ships from MSC Far East (MSCFE) Sembawang Wharves, Singapore and MSC Pacific (MSCPAC) Point Loma, California. These respective fleets of oilers, fast combat support ships, ordnance and dry cargo ships keep the Pacific Fleet at sea and on station for extended periods of time. These ships allow Carrier Strike Groups (CSG), Surface Action Groups (SAG), Amphibious Ready Groups (ARG), and Expeditionary Forces to remain at sea and on station to carry out their tasking. CLF ships use underway replenishment (UNREP) to provide Fleet platforms fuel, food, ordnance, and spare parts. Meanwhile, American naval installations in Korea, mainland Japan, Okinawa, and Guam provide amphibious, multi-role ships reliable terrestrial hubs and launch points for operations. Bases in the Philippines, Australia, Thailand, Singapore, and even Taiwan and Vietnam provide additional, important ports for training, diplomatic exchange, and general access points to advance American interests in said countries. Additionally, the JFC will often direct his Contact Force to operate, visibly, in the littorals and nearer still to coastlines in the course of deterring, compelling, sensing, signaling, or monitoring Chinese activities. Beijing will inevitably observe and, in some way, respond to these types of activities. Appreciating China’s cognitive reading of these force dispatches is essential in luring Beijing into making decisions inimical to its own interests. Indeed, the NDS directs the Contact Force to “out-think, out-maneuver, and out-partner” Beijing and its instruments spread forward, throughout the Indo-Pacific.

⁴² Note. This interpersonal work, especially, generates incidental intelligence reporting. The ARG-MEU combined I2SR enterprise ingests the initial information, filters it, and generates useful intelligence. The enterprise also processes Foreign Military Intelligence Collection Activities (FORMICA) reporting and manages tactical and operational-level ISR assets.

⁴³ Note. US Marine Major Dennis Katolin has taken a crack at designing a concept for MIG employment. This initial attempt is described in his Masters Thesis written at the School of Advanced Warfighting in AY 2018-19. That paper, entitled “Integrating Cyber in the Marine Corps’ Future, argues for a decisive role in the Joint fight for integrated cyber and information operations, and by extension, intelligence elements within the MAGTF. Katolin’s paper illuminates what a MIG or a MIG detachment ought to be able to do for a commander competing in the contact layer.

⁴⁴ Samuel Souvannason, “Navy Cyber Mission Force Teams Achieve Full Operational Capability” *U.S. Fleet Cyber Command/U.S. 10th Fleet*, November 2, 2017, <https://dod.defense.gov/News/Article/Article/1361059/navy-cyber-mission-force-teams-achieve-full-operational-capability/>. Note: This burgeoning cyber capability, though initially defensive in nature, will likely expand to include limited offensive operations. Fleet “information dominance” enterprise efforts straddle and link the I2SR and information operations (IO) spheres, both afloat and ashore.

⁴⁵ Headquarters Department of the Army, *Human Intelligence Collector Operations*, FM 2-22.3 (Washington, DC: Headquarters Department of the Army, September 6, 2006), 1-7, 1-9.

⁴⁶ Note. United States Code (U.S.C.) Title 50, pp 66 reads, in part: “(i) National Intelligence and Intelligence Related to National Security means all intelligence, regardless of the source from which derived and including information gathered within or outside the United States, that pertains, as determined consistent with any guidance issued by the President, or that is determined for the purpose of access to information by the Director in accordance with section 1.3(a)(1) of this order, to pertain to more than one United States Government agency; and that involves threats to the United States, its people, property, or interests; the development, proliferation, or use of weapons of mass destruction; or any other matter bearing on United States national or homeland security. (j) The National Intelligence Program means all programs, projects, and activities of the Intelligence Community, as well as any other programs of the Intelligence Community designated jointly by the Director and the head of a United States department or agency or by the President. Such term does not include programs, projects, or activities of the military departments to acquire intelligence solely for the planning and conduct of tactical military operations by United States Armed Forces.” This section does not preclude CIA/DoD partnership where operations overlap, but its language limits relationship to areas where common interests arise in pursuit of individual missions. The two organizations can work together and develop command relationship agreements outlining where they can cooperate and even share each organizations’ resources for mutual benefit, but their missions clearly diverge and are not subordinate to the other.

⁴⁷ War and Defense, 50 U.S.C. § 401, pp 56 (1990). Note: In this sub-section, SECDEF and DNI are directed to periodically “take the following actions with respect to those intelligence activities: (1) In cases in which redundancy or fragmentation exist, consolidate functions, programs, organizations, and operations to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the conduct of those intelligence activities or programs. “(2) Revise intelligence collection and analysis priorities and resource allocations to reflect changes in the international security environment. “(3) Strengthen joint intelligence functions, operations, and organizations. “(4) Improve the quality and independence of intelligence support to the weapons acquisition process. “(5) Improve the responsiveness and utility of national intelligence systems and organizations to the needs of the combatant commanders.”

⁴⁸ Note: Seeing as 7th Fleet is arguably mission-saturated, 3rd Fleet could source or manage at least one of these Influencing Fleet roles. Previous PACFLEET Commander, Admiral Swift, embraced the idea of “Third Fleet Forward,” and former Indo-Pacific Commander Adm Harris largely endorsed the idea of 3rd Fleet providing deployer craft and formations west of Hawaii as part of a more concerted effort to patrol and deter adversaries in the western Pacific. However, the current PACFLEET Commander, Adm Aquilino, is not a supporter of the concept. See David B. Larer’s July 12, 2018 article entitled, “New US Pacific Fleet commander backs away from ‘3rd Fleet Forward’” at <https://www.defensenews.com/naval/2018/07/12/new-us-pacific-fleet-commander-backs-away-from-3rd-fleet-forward/>. Additionally, maintaining a west coast ARG-Marine Expeditionary Unit force in the Pacific, east of the Strait of Malacca rather than in the Middle East and with 5th Fleet, underwrites generation of one of the Influencing Forces.

⁴⁹ Note. The USMC and US Navy are pursuing multiple long-endurance, Group 4/5 UAV solutions to augment/complement the Fire Scout and replace Boeing Insitu’s RQ-21 Black Jack Integrator, which is currently employed from ARG-MEU LPDs. That system’s short-range (50 nm) and insufficient loiter time (6-12 hours depending on payload) limit its employment options. Therefore, the Naval Service is pursuing the MAGTF Unmanned Expeditionary Capabilities UAS (MUX) will be the first STOVL capable Group 5 / Tier 3 UAS to provide the MAGTF with a network-enabled, digitally interoperable, and built to execute responsive, persistent, lethal, and adaptive full-spectrum operations from the sea base. [See General Service Administration’s https://www.fbo.gov/index?s=opportunity&mode=form&id=88af98588950e41d38b5e41ccc33619b&tab=core&_cview=1 for details regarding NavAir’s initial request to know commercial awareness of and interest in MUX technologies. Additionally, USMC LtCol Scott Cuomo penned an article at the online site *War on the Rocks* regarding the promise of Warbot-enabling autonomous aircraft ranging out 500 mi from base stations in the maritime environment. Cuomo describes these platforms as employed at a company level from remote sites in the Pacific and even from ships. Studying viability of the Warbot system configured to support competition in the Contact Layer and, if need be, Warbots’ role in destroying Chinese surface craft at the outset of a transition to Blunt Layer conflict is very promising and ongoing. [see the article in question—“Marine Warbot Companies: Where Naval Warfare, The U.S. National Defense Strategy, And Close Combat Lethality Task Force Intersect.” <https://Warontherocks.Com/2018/06/Marine-Warbot-Companies-Where-Naval-Warfare-The-U-S-National-Defense-Strategy-And-Close-Combat-Lethality-Task-Force-Intersect/>]

⁵⁰ Northrup Grumman, “Fire Scout: Unprecedented Persistent Situational Awareness,” accessed 24 April, 2019, http://www.northropgrumman.com/Capabilities/FireScout/Pages/default.aspx?utm_source=PrintAd&utm_medium=Redirect&utm_campaign=FireScout+Redirect.

⁵¹ New Zealand Army. *About Us – What We Do* (Wellington, NZ, 2018). <http://www.army.mil.nz/about-us/what-we-do/exercises/default.htm>.

⁵² Australian Department of Defence, *Minister for Defence - Minister reinforces Pacific relationships at second Pacific Defence Ministers' meeting in Papua New Guinea*, (Canberra, Australia, 2015). <https://www.minister.defence.gov.au/minister/kevin-andrews/media-releases/minister-defence-minister-reinforces-pacific-relationships>.

⁵³ Australian Department of Defence, *Pacific Maritime Security Program-Annual Report 2017-18*, (Canberra, Australia, 2018). <http://www.defence.gov.au/annualreports/17-18/features/maritime.asp>.

⁵⁴ Franz-Stefan Gady, “US, Japan Kick off Military Exercise Involving 57,000 Personnel: The U.S. and Japan began the biennial Keen Sword exercise at military installations throughout Japan and surrounding waters,” *Diplomat.com*, October 30, 2018, <https://thediplomat.com/2018/10/us-japan-kick-off-military-exercise-involving-57000-personnel/>.

⁵⁵ Sam Parker and Gabrielle Chefitz, “Debtbook Diplomacy: China’s Strategic Leveraging of its Newfound Economic Influence and the Consequences for US Foreign Policy” (policy analysis exercise, Harvard Kennedy School, Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, May 2018), 42-43, <https://www.belfercenter.org/publication/debtbook-diplomacy>.

⁵⁶ Commander, Naval Surface Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet, *Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training (CARAT) 2018*, (San Diego, CA, November 2018), https://www.public.navy.mil/surfor/Pages/CARAT_2018.aspx.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Headquarters US Marine Corps, *Warfighting*, MCDP 1 (Washington, DC: Headquarters, US Marine Corps, June 30, 1991), 11.

⁵⁹ Department of Defense, *Joint Concept for Integrated Planning*, 2.