**ABSTRACT (MAXIMUM 200 WORDS)**

The nature of war is unchanged. It is a clash of opposing wills. However, the character of war changes constantly and evolves as human societies evolve, capabilities change, and opportunities present themselves. Thinking of war as something that necessarily involves an armed force limits us to a narrow frame. This construct may lead us down a narrow path in which we may not recognize warfare until it is too late. U.S. supremacy in conventional military arms may lead to conflicts in the future in which our will is broken by a wise enemy who studies and uses indirect means to exploit our vulnerabilities. We should be broader in our study of the character of war in the future and consider how our potential adversaries might examine and exploit our own vulnerabilities. Potential adversaries need not possess offensive capabilities equivalent to the U.S. to defeat us; they need only maintain deterrent and defensive capabilities to thwart our power: Anti-satellite and cyber warfare can deny use of critical technologies upon which we rely to project power. Economic warfare could break the will of national leadership. In combination, these capabilities could be decisive.
MASTER OF OPERATIONAL STUDIES

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THE LIMITS OF POWER:
IMPLICATIONS OF THE INDIRECT APPROACH ON U.S. POLICY

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Executive Summary

Title: The Limits of Power: Implications of the Indirect Approach on U.S. Policy

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Thesis: Current U.S. supremacy in conventional military arms will lead to conflicts in the future in which our will may be broken by a wise enemy who studies and uses indirect means to exploit our vulnerabilities.

Discussion: The nature of war is unchanged. It is a hostile clash of opposing wills. However, the character of war changes constantly and evolves as human societies evolve, capabilities change, and opportunities present themselves. Thinking of war as something that always involves an army to disarm an enemy limits us to a narrow frame and drives our decision making down a dangerous road. Our potential adversaries do not make that same distinction today and will not in the future. This construct may lead us down a narrow path in which we may not be prepared for the next war.

Clausewitz states that the “supreme act of judgment” for a leader and commander is to determine the type of war in which the state is engaged. He makes a distinction between limited and unlimited war. Over the course of the 20th century, the U.S. has consistently trended towards viewing war as unlimited, designed to use military force to disarm and render an enemy state powerless. We should be broader in our study of the character of war in the future and consider how our potential adversaries might examine and exploit our own vulnerabilities. As Sun Tzu notes, “The art of war is of vital importance to the State. It is a matter of life and death, a road either to safety or to ruin. Hence it is a subject of inquiry which can on no account be neglected”.

Conclusion:

Potential adversaries need not possess offensive capabilities equivalent to the U.S. to defeat us; they need only maintain deterrent and defensive capabilities to thwart our power. Anti-satellite and cyber warfare can deny use of critical technologies upon which we rely to project power. Economic warfare can break the will of national leadership prior to any hostilities. Used in combination, these capabilities can be decisive.

Potential adversaries will look to maximize indirect means to dissuade U.S. involvement in disputes. They will likely employ technology to disrupt U.S. actions at the lowest cost possible. These means may not fit our western view of war characterized by use of armed forces to disarm an enemy.
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INTRODUCTION

The First, the supreme, the most far-reaching act of judgment that the statesman and commander have to make is to establish by that test the kind of war on which they are embarking; neither mistaking it for, nor trying to turn it into, something that is alien to its nature. This is the first of all strategic questions and the most comprehensive.1

The nature of war is unchanged. It is a hostile clash of opposing wills. However, the character of war changes constantly and evolves as human societies evolve, capabilities change, and opportunities present themselves. Thinking of war as something that always involves an army to disarm an enemy limits us to a narrow frame. Our potential adversaries do not make that same distinction today and will not in the future. This construct may lead us down a narrow path in which we may not be prepared for the next war.

Carl von Clausewitz states in On War that the “supreme act of judgment” for a leader and commander is to determine the type of war in which the state is engaged. We should be broader in our study of the character of war in the future and consider how our potential adversaries might examine and exploit our own vulnerabilities. As Sun Tzu notes, “The art of war ...is a matter of life and death, a road either to safety or to ruin. Hence it is a subject of inquiry which can on no account be neglected”.

The most important thing for leadership to determine is the type of war in which the state is engaged. Importantly, we must first decide what constitutes war since the character of war changes through time. The western paradigm is based on the concept of warfare as armed conflict. Clausewitz, upon whom the U.S. military bases its doctrine, states that war is an extension of politics by other means. Clausewitz wrote extensively about the other means as armed force, but he did not dwell exclusively in this realm. He made a distinction between limited war and war to disarm an enemy and render him powerless. Western militaries have tended to take a narrow view of Clausewitz in the 20th century, limiting ourselves to the realm of
warfare as the use of armed force to disarm an enemy. We have ignored the concept of limited war for limited objectives using means other than an army. This mistake significantly hampers our intellectual creativity at the national level since a wise enemy will study and use all means available to identify and exploit our vulnerabilities. All wars are asymmetric to some extent, as no two opponents are ever evenly matched. Because of this, it is an axiom of war that one should apply one’s strengths against an enemy’s weaknesses. It is therefore not surprising that potential adversaries will look to maximize indirect means to dissuade U.S. involvement in disputes, employing whatever means they have against our weaknesses at the lowest cost possible. These means may not fit our traditional view of war characterized by use of armed force; nevertheless, we must be prepared to deal with them.

Current U.S. supremacy in conventional military arms will lead to conflicts in the future in which our will may be broken by a wise enemy who studies and uses indirect means to exploit our vulnerabilities. Potential adversaries need not possess offensive capabilities equivalent to the U.S. to defeat us. They need only maintain deterrent and defensive capabilities to thwart our power. Three ways are Anti-Satellite Warfare, Cyber Warfare, and Economic Warfare. Anti-satellite and cyber warfare can deny use of critical technologies upon which we rely to project power. Economic warfare can break the will of national leadership prior to any hostilities. Used in combination, these capabilities can be decisive.

**ANTI - SATELLITE WARFARE**

Satellites save lives, strengthen our economy, and support national security. Without the assured use of satellites, police, fire fighters and first responders would be hampered, financial transactions would be disrupted, and U.S. troops in harm’s way would be less able to defend themselves.²

The first way in which a potential adversary could wage war against us is Anti-Satellite Warfare. Today, satellites dominate how we communicate and receive information. In both the public and private realm, we have come to depend on the services and data this equipment
provides. Television, Cell phones, and the Internet are woven into the fabric of our lives. In a world where a 2 hour disruption of Twitter makes the nightly news, a disruption in essential services would be more than an inconvenience to Americans. If the disruption was serious and more than temporary, it could cause widespread fear and panic.

For the U.S. military, satellites dominate how we build our intelligence picture of a conventional battlefield and help us to dominate conventional formations. While we continue to spend billions to maintain these capabilities, our adversaries will likely resort to low cost methods to counter our dominance. This is not a recent phenomena and one in which we are already falling behind. As early as 1994, Chinese military advisors were advocating Anti-Satellite capabilities as a critical component to national security arguing that “For countries that can never win a war with the U.S. by using the method of tanks and planes, attacking the U.S. space system may be an irresistible and most tempting choice.”

U.S. Air Force Maj. Gen. William Shelton, head of Space Command and the Strategic Command's Joint Functional Component Command for Space, told defense industry newsletter Inside the Pentagon that technologies like the Chinese ASAT capability "aren't dual-use, these are things directly threatening [our] space capability." For the United States, the stakes are high. The U.S. military is highly dependent on satellites for navigation and communications while the private sector is vulnerable to significant disruptions.

The Chinese caused a significant stir in 2006 when they launched a missile into orbit to destroy a satellite. Robert Ross, an MIT fellow collaborating with Beijing University has been working on a project examining China's rise to prominence. He says “the ASAT test is part of the country's larger military modernization, which is seen by the Chinese as "simply prudent behavior to improve security against the other great power in the system.” He goes on to make
a critical observation in terms of conventional military power. The Chinese, rather than try to catch up with the U.S., have decided to “erode U.S. war-fighting superiority however it can” and end the U.S. monopoly on space-based C4ISR it has enjoyed for the last two decades.⁶

Jeffrey Kueter, president of the George C. Marshall Institute, a nonprofit space and defense think tank in Washington comments on the strategic significance of the Chinese test. He sees it as more than a routine test, characterizing it as a “strong signal” that “they can hold our space-based, war-fighting capability at risk, and are putting into doubt our ability to challenge them.”⁷ Others see the test as a clear signal to the United States that its hegemony over space is coming to an end. They believe the Chinese have now decided that although space may not be overtly weaponized, area denial could be a key capability in the future; furthermore, that future adversaries will not play by the same rules as the west. Michael Krepon, president emeritus of the Henry L. Stimson Center, explains, calling the Chinese test “a predictable -- and unfortunate -- response to U.S. space policies.”"The Chinese are telling the Pentagon that they don't own space," he said. "We can play this game, too, and we can play it dirtier than you."⁸

Adversaries need not shoot down our satellites to achieve temporary disruption of our operations. They need only ensure that we must focus resources on that which we normally take for granted. A significant degradation through something as simple as space junk could force us to abandon our traditional means for a short period of time, providing a critical operational or strategic advantage.

**CYBER WARFARE**

If cyberspace does become the next battleground, there will be serious implications for the global economy and vital services that rely on the internet.⁹

The first way in which a potential adversary could wage war against us is Cyber Warfare. Networks are the infrastructure of the information age. They are as important as roads and
railways. Networks form the backbone of our lives and play a part in nearly every human activity in the Western world. Although the internet is inherently robust and resistant to destruction, private and public networks can be disrupted for a short period of time by coordinated Denial of Service (DOS) attacks. These attacks are becoming more prevalent and time consuming for the defender. Jim Lewis, director of the Center for Strategic and International Studies describes one recent incident:

Last November, someone was able to get past the firewalls and encryption devices of one of the most sensitive U.S. military computer systems and stay inside for several days. "This was the CENTCOM network," Lewis explained. "The command that's fighting our two wars. And some foreign power was able to get into their networks. And sit there and see everything they did…Asked what he meant by "sit there," Lewis said, "They could see what the traffic was. They could read documents. They could interfere with things. It was like they were part of the American military command." 10

While individual hackers cannot bring down an entire network, they can force drastic action for short periods of time, disrupting not only military and commercial networks but far less secure public networks. As Karen Dearne notes in 2009, local infrastructure, including finance, electricity, power, water and telecommunications is now vulnerable to attack in future war not from bombers but from hackers due to our reliance on computer networks. In fact, the future is happening now. Recently, Georgia experienced a mass DOS attack “just as Russian forces were mounting a ground assault in a dispute over the Georgian province of South Ossetia.” 11 It is reasonable to expect that these attacks will become more sophisticated and better funded as government and non-government hackers become more proficient.

Although the duration of disruptions can be short, the resultant chaos which can be caused can be enormous. Retired Admiral Mike McConnell explains on 60 minutes in November of 2009 that his preferred method of attack as an enemy would be to attack the electrical power grid during the summer or winter hopefully causing a cascading shut down. As he notes, even today “All of those things are in the art of the possible from a sophisticated attacker.” 12
In our current conflicts, we can see that adversaries already have attacked our vulnerabilities and exploited weaknesses in our cyber security using cheap off the shelf software widely available to anyone on the planet with a PC. Defense officials have recently acknowledged that insurgents intercepted drone video feeds by “…taking advantage of an unprotected communications link in some of the remotely flown planes' systems. In addition, Shiite fighters in Iraq used software programs such as SkyGrabber -- available for as little as $25.95 on the Internet -- to regularly capture drone video feeds…”

Again, the nation that seems to be rising the fastest in this area is China. The Chinese have continued to explore new ways to leverage indirect means against potential opponents at the lowest cost. These means do not fit our traditional definition of war, making them even more dangerous to ignore. In addition to the danger of posed by the means, the ways in which some potential adversaries choose to employ these means are troublesome. The Chinese use both official and unofficial government and civilian agents to conduct probing attacks. China extensively uses loosely affiliated civilian “proxies” to conduct cyber operations. Almost impossible to trace, these means can be effectively denied by the Chinese. Over time, these state sponsored and non-state sponsored attacks are becoming more sophisticated. They can be seen as continuous probing attacks to determine weaknesses and develop ways to counter the American technological advantage. The U.S. is heavily reliant on unmanned drones for reconnaissance and strike. Cyber warriors have shown that these platforms are not invulnerable to attack and that the U.S. faces “adversaries continue to find simple ways of counteracting sophisticated American military technologies.”

The U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission reviewed China’s rise, and issued a report on their likely strategies going forward, noting that an emphasis on cyber warfare is part of the Chinese vision for defeating the U.S in any future conflict. The Chinese continue to emphasize indirect means of exploiting U.S. technological dependence. “For China's generals,
though, of all the asymmetrical methods of attack available to them, cyberwar presents a uniquely effective — and cost-effective — means of neutralizing the U.S advantage.”16 Most importantly, one cannot be sure that any weaknesses found will be exploited immediately. A wise enemy will find a weakness, make note of it, and use it at a time of maximum advantage to gain a temporary or permanent operational advantage.

ECONOMIC Warrens

We see, therefore, that war is not merely an act of policy but a true political instrument, a continuation of political intercourse, carried on with other means.17

In 1956, Colonel Gamal Abdel Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal. This came in response to the United States and Great Britain refusing to follow through with negotiations for loan arrangements to fund the Aswan dam. Great Britain was horrified at the possibility of Nasser having control of all oil supplies coming from the Middle East, and began arrangements for military attack.18 France, whose Suez Canal Company Nasser nationalized, did the same; however, France’s plans included Israel. U.S. Secretary of State Dulles advanced the American position, held by President Eisenhower, that the issue should be settled by negotiation. A legally and morally unjustified aggressive war could turn the entire Middle East against the West.19 The matter came before the U.N. Security Council with the United States urging patience. France and Great Britain continued their planning for a military option, Operation Musketeer, in which Israel attacked and the two great powers moved into the Canal Zone ostensibly to keep the warring nations apart. With troops in the zone, France and Great Britain would present the Security Council with a fait accompli and be left in control of the zone permanently. Unfortunately for the French and British, they kept the United States in the dark over the entire operation, and its initiation left the U.S. furious. In addition, in order to keep the façade of no
prior coordination with the Israelis, the planned military operation did not succeed in occupying the entire Canal Zone by the time the political will ran out.\textsuperscript{20}

Though international condemnation was not enough to the French and British, lack of support from the United States could not be ignored. President Eisenhower demanded withdrawal and the United States entered a resolution to that effect in the U.N. More importantly than a U.N. resolution, the United States used coercive economic power to back up the President’s fury. While Great Britain faced currency collapse as foreigners depleted their sterling holdings, the United States refused to help calm the markets\textsuperscript{21}. Simultaneously, President Eisenhower ordered Secretary of the Treasury Humphrey to begin preparations to sell vast U.S. British Sterling Bond holdings and opposed British efforts to withdraw capital from the International Monetary Fund.\textsuperscript{22}

\begin{quote}
Suez was a watershed in the process of differentiating between superpowers and the old great powers like Britain and France, now in the second rank. They had to accept their dependence and adjust painfully to their inability any longer to pursue global imperial policies on their own.\textsuperscript{23}
\end{quote}

Strong (not hostile) economic coercion in this case was remarkably decisive. And the Suez crisis was a dispute among friends! The British and French were forced to either accept a U.S. solution to the crisis, or face economic ruin. Indeed, with friends like these, who needs enemies? Like the British and the French, we have created weaknesses that competitors or potential adversaries can exploit.

Our own debt has real consequences for national security. Government expansion in the last decade has taken on unfathomable proportions creating a growing weakness. Crushing debt and massive government expansion will weaken United States economic power by slowing growth and squeezing military budgets.

\begin{quote}
A central component of America’s global military posture is its massive economic power…Should this central feature of American power be weakened, it is highly likely that military capabilities will be diminished or otherwise degraded as a result.\textsuperscript{24}
\end{quote}
The Federal Government FY2009 budget spent $3.1 trillion. The United States now has over $12 trillion in debt and shows no sign of reigning in that figure. Remarkably, our national debt has increased $3 trillion in the time it took to write this paper, as the president requested and the Congress approved a debt ceiling increase of $1.9 trillion dollars. Within the next decade, debt will likely top 80% of GDP with debt passing an unsustainable 113% of GDP by 2026. This is all excluding President Obama’s 2010 massive federal health care expansion program. As the government borrows and spends more, it reduces the capital available to the private sector. Continued borrowing leads to higher interest rates as the bond market becomes skeptical of ability to pay off the debt over the long term. Massive borrowing, coupled with government spending crowding out the private sector is a recipe for weak long term economic growth. As the Soviets and almost all of Western Europe have learned, a weak economy cannot sustain a large military.

Since World War II and especially from the 1960s, Europe has built elaborate domestic income-maintenance programs, with government-run health care, pensions and jobless benefits. These are hugely expensive, requiring high taxes and government spending that is a huge proportion of GDP…One consequence has been slower growth in Europe, relative to the U.S. and China, with less tax revenue to spend on everything.

Assumption of massive debt and resulting economic weakness creates opportunities for those who seek to improve their leverage in a global system or wage war against us in ways for which we are unprepared. “As of September 2008, China’s Treasury securities holdings were $585 billion, accounting for 20.5% of total foreign ownership of U.S. Treasury securities and, for the first time, making it the largest foreign holder of U.S. Treasuries.” As of June 2009, China held $765 billion in U.S. treasuries. This however, may tell half the story though as total U.S. assets owned by China could be as much as twice that number. Debt is leverage in both senses of the word. Governments, like individuals, are answerable to their debt holders and China is our banker. The question becomes how will our banker use this leverage in the future?
IMPLICATIONS

Potential adversaries will look to maximize indirect means to dissuade U.S. involvement in disputes. These means may not fit our view of unlimited war characterized by use of armed force to disarm an enemy. Eastern philosophy takes a broader view of warfare. Sun Tzu argues that the greatest achievement in war is to subdue an enemy without fighting by finding an enemy’s weakness and attacking the enemy’s strategy, causing his collapse prior to battle. This philosophy emphasizes using deception and unexpected action to accomplish goals. Potential adversaries may leverage their economic influence in a battle of hostile wills in which conventional military power may be irrelevant. They may exploit vulnerabilities in our infrastructure, creating disruptions, and using those disruptions to mask their actions or deceive us as to their true intentions.

If China signifies that U.S. debt is not a valuable as it once was, or if it decides to begin selling rather than buying debt, interest rates will rise. This may have a cascading effect on the economy. In the worst case scenario, China could use this leverage in combination with other activities to impose its will on the United States.

In the past, some Chinese officials reportedly suggested that China could dump (or threaten to dump) a large share of its holdings to prevent the United States from imposing trade sanctions against China over its currency policy. Other Chinese officials reportedly stated that China should diversify its investments of its foreign exchange reserves away from dollar-denominated assets to those that offer higher rates of returns.30

Our lives have been forever altered by the internet and satellites. These two components of our infrastructure affect nearly everything in our lives in the private and public sphere. Minor disruptions in these systems have significant effects on the public and our capabilities. Longer and more serious disruptions could cause major temporary weakness which could be exploited strategically and operationally by a wise adversary.
While the U.S. Military has spent trillions of dollars developing and fielding traditional weapons systems for a war of maneuver, our potential adversaries have not done the same. They have in fact embarked upon an altogether different strategy designed to counter our conventional advantages with unconventional or asymmetric means at the lowest possible cost. Their plan is to use indirect methods to exploit our weaknesses at a critical moment of their choosing. Frans P.B. Osinga, in his analysis of John Boyd, explains this eastern approach to warfare.

Whenever possible, ‘victory’ should be achieved through diplomatic coercion, thwarting an enemy’s plans and alliances and frustrating his strategy. Only when a state is threatened by an enemy with military action or refuses to give in to demands otherwise, should the government resort to armed conflict. And even then, a clash of arms is not preferred. 31

He goes on to describe what a leader should constantly focus on, that is the relative power position of the state. It is this shih which drives action. For a state in a conventionally weaker position, this activity is vital.

A crucial activity for a ruler to keep a constant eye on one’s relative power position or what we would perhaps call the state of national security, or shih. An ambiguous concept, it is used at all levels, not just the grand strategic level, and has a cluster of meanings such as situation, outward shape, force, influence, authority, latent energy, tactical power, positional advantage, and strategic advantage. The shih constantly shifts according to what is happening in the internal and external environment of the state. 32

In other words, the balance of power is constantly changing according to circumstances. These circumstances do not remain static. We would be wise to focus our efforts not on building newer and better aircraft carriers and bombers but on studying our adversaries’ efforts to counter our technological edge. Though we believe we have the resources to do both, history has shown that debtors cannot spend freely forever. Sooner or later, the budget squeeze will hit the military.

We have seen that nations that possess power will use it to further their interests. In the case of the Suez, the United States used this power as leverage against its allies. Another nation, in another circumstance, could easily do the same to the United States. This may be combined with other indirect means. Are these then acts of war? If we agree they are, then the character of war has changed again and we would be wise to study and prepare for those events.
RED STAR RISING: COMBINING INDIRECT CAPABILITIES

Consider the following scenario in which debt, and leverage it provides, could play a key role in determining the outcome of a hostile battle of wills. It is the year 2025 and the once fragile Government of Sudan is in disarray. Third world status is now only a fond memory. Over the last decade, rival power brokers within the oligarchy split revenue from oil deposits and foreign contracts. At the same time, the country has become awash in Chinese made weapons and equipment purchased through oil money. No real free market exists and little government money has been spent on anything outside of oil production. Repeated attempts to form a lasting government have failed. Brutal ethnic cleansing has been replaced with outright civil war throughout the countryside as each group, now armed, has sought protection. The government can do little outside the capital to control this fighting.

The United Nations has proposed that the country be managed by a post World War I style protectorate using peacekeeping forces from the United States and the African Union. China, however, has vetoed this proposal in the Security Council on the grounds that this may negatively affect its national security. Natural resources agreements such as these around the world are critical to China’s continued growth. Foreign troops, backing a new government, could limit its access to oil rights since a new government could void or renegotiate the deals. In addition, China has supported the current government in the past with weapons, training, and equipment in exchange for favorable terms for oil export. As the United Nations debates and dithers, human rights groups in the United States rally to pressure the government to act to prevent a looming humanitarian crisis. The U.S. Secretary of State issues a strong condemnation of Chinese obstruction at the U.N. calling for leadership from the world’s other economic power. The U.S. President calls for China to put “the basic human right to peace
"above economic growth”, while members of Congress introduce severe tariff legislation on Chinese imports.

The Chinese do not wait for events to overtake them and seize the initiative. The Chinese Ambassador to the United Nations decries “American interference in its national security decisions.” Simultaneously, China begins to mobilize an amphibious task force within view of Taiwan. That same day, the Chinese announce that they will reschedule two “routine satellite booster rocket tests”. They immediately launch these missiles into the upper atmosphere and self destruct then in the path of passing U.S. satellites. The Chinese release a statement calling this an unfortunate navigation error which will be resolved in future tests. Though the debris does not damage the U.S. satellites, it does force the U.S. Space Command to take action to divert them causing a 6 hour delay in coverage. At the same time, the U.S. Consulate in Sudan experiences massive DOS attacks on its communications networks originating from individuals in Europe and Asia. Late that same day, the Chinese announce they have landed an air contingency brigade in Sudan to stabilize the situation themselves. What is left of the Sudanese government issues a statement saying the Chinese arrived at their request to help stabilize the situation between warring factions and protect vital Sudanese economic exports. The Chinese will stay in the country until these conditions are met. Because of the delay in satellite coverage and the disruption of contact with Sudan, the U.S. will not know exactly where the Chinese landed or where they have established themselves for the next 48 hours.

The following day, the Chinese Premier summons the U.S. Ambassador for a private meeting. Within 24 hours, the U.S. Secretary of State rushes to Beijing to meet with the Premier. The Premier explains that if the U.S. interferes in its national security affairs in Africa, China may be forced to reevaluate the relationship between the two countries. Actions could include
exchanging a third of U.S. Dollars holdings for Euros or selling off a few hundred billion dollars worth of debt at a loss. Selling this debt would constitute a small sum compared to Chinese total holdings, but would send a definite message to the markets that the Chinese have lost faith in the U.S. government over the current crisis.

Leaks of this meeting (by the Chinese) hit the already jittery Asian markets like a thunderbolt as traders scramble to exchange long-term debt for short-term debt in preparation for Chinese action. Prior to the markets opening in the U.S., the President fields questions at a hastily scheduled press conference. At that conference, the Treasury secretary reaffirms the relationship between the U.S. and China as one of peace and partnership and that the United States is committed to strengthening that partnership into the future. The United States and China then issue a joint statement at the U.N. proclaiming that the Chinese will lead the force to deal with the Sudan Crisis and that U.S. forces are not required.

CONCLUSION

“As Thucydides suggested in the fifth century BC, “the events which happened in the past...(human nature being what it is) will at some time or other and in much the same way be repeated in the future.”

Recognizing what may be happening is the first step towards preparing for future events. As Osinga notes, the indirect approach to war does not limit itself to a clash of arms; therefore, we should study and prepare for warfare characterized by more than direct application of military power. Depending on the circumstances, the indirect approach can be at least as important if not more important than the direct approach.

Sun Tzu does not advocate one above the other, the indirect or the direct, but stresses the novel combination of both. It is from the interaction of the unorthodox and the orthodox that the enemy is confused, demoralized, disorganized, dislocated, looking in the wrong direction, etc. Variation and novel combinations of types of forces, of maneuvers and methods, of deception and deceit are important.

Potential adversaries will look to maximize indirect means to dissuade U.S. involvement in disputes without making neat distinctions. They will likely employ technology to disrupt U.S.
actions at the lowest cost possible. Clausewitz states that the “supreme act of judgment” for a leader and commander is to determine the type of war, i.e. limited or unlimited, in which the state is engaged. We should be broader in our study of the character of war in the future and consider how our potential adversaries might examine and exploit our own vulnerabilities. Sun Tzu, in *The Art of War*, notes, “The art of war is of vital importance to the State...Hence it is a subject of inquiry which can on no account be neglected”.  

Potential adversaries will look to maximize indirect means to dissuade U.S. involvement in disputes. These adversaries need not possess offensive capabilities equivalent to the U.S. to defeat us they need only maintain deterrent and defensive capabilities to thwart our power. As noted in the Department of Defense 2008 annual report to Congress, China is expanding its view of warfare, in line with Sun Tzu’s thinking:

An example of China’s current thinking on asymmetric warfare is encapsulated by a military theory termed ”non-contact” which seeks to attain a political goal by looking for auxiliary means beyond military boundaries or limits. Examples include: cyberwarfare against civilian and military networks – especially against communications and logistics nodes; fifth column attacks, including sabotage and subversion, attacks on financial infrastructure; and, information operations.

Indirect methods of waging a war differ from our current paradigm. We consider them asymmetric or irregular and perhaps not even warfare. This is a mistake. As Clausewitz recognized, they are methods of conducting limited war. If we approach their study with the same seriousness we study modern conventional war, we will be more prepared to deal with their emergence. If not, we set ourselves up for a very rude awakening, finding ourselves in the middle of a debate over what constitutes “war” while our potential adversaries prosecute theirs.
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