

Beijing's "Unavoidable" War: The 21st Century's Total War Has Begun

The new form of "total war" which Beijing has begun is more comprehensive and amorphous than any strategic engagement seen thus far in history. And Beijing has learned from history: direct military engagement is, of necessity, a very secondary component. This is a war which Pres. Xi Jinping had to begin now, or lose his fortunes.

BEIJING MADE IT CLEAR IN 1999 that when it went to war with the US it would be a new kind of war.¹

People's Republic of China (PRC) Pres. Xi Jinping then announced in October 2018 that he had begun a "new 30 Years War" with the US.²

But there seemed to be no "Pearl Harbor" moment, so the rest of the world disregarded the declaration of war. That was a mistake.

It became clear that the 2020 COVID-19-inspired "global fear pandemic" laid out the battlefield terrain and saw the opening shots emerge from the PRC in a variety of strategic formats. To be sure, COVID-19 was not itself the "Pearl Harbor moment"; it was the subsequent *fear pandemic* which drove down the global economy.

Beijing could not wait any longer to begin strategic operations — the new form of "total war" — if it was to survive as a global power and to assume primacy even within his symbolic 30 year timeframe. Shakespeare noted:

*"There is a tide in the affairs of men,
Which taken at the flood, leads on to fortune.
Omitted, all the voyage of their life
is bound in shallows and in miseries.
On such a full sea are we now afloat.
And we must take the current when it serves,
or lose our ventures."*

From Beijing's standpoint, given that the PRC economy was already in massive decline, it was critical that the

economies of its strategic rivals should also be forced into decline. That may or may not have been a planned aspect of the PRC's COVID-19 response strategy, but it certainly was quickly adopted by Beijing.

In other words, if the PRC could not reverse its economic decline, its strategic competitiveness moving forward was critically dependent upon seeing its rivals decline commensurately, or even become crippled. It was not a race to the top; it was a race to avoid being first to the bottom.

And from Beijing's standpoint, too, this was to be a war engaging broad-form population warfare strategies, particularly harnessed to electronic communications, in turn linked to a

If the PRC cannot reverse its economic decline, and it probably cannot, then its strategic competitiveness is critically dependent upon ensuring that its rivals' economies become crippled.

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range of strategic and tactical psychological and psychopolitical operations. That was clear from the benchmark PRC 1999 study, *Unrestricted Warfare*, which has now emerged literally as the textbook of the new "total war" against the US and the West.

It was also all connected, as far as Beijing was concerned, to economic and social warfare, including population warfare, on a variety of levels. And only tangentially — in the short-term — was military force projection a component. Military confrontation involved risk if, for example, the US was to be directly engaged with force. So it was a strategy by which the PRC required the weakening and splitting of what otherwise would be an overwhelming adversary alliance.

► A fundamental tenet of the engagement by Beijing was to split the US away from its traditional allies, exploiting schisms which have been festering and expanding since the end of the Cold War.

► The parallel tenet was — and is — to then split the internal populations of US and its allies by exacerbating and supporting existing societal schisms.

By such means are solid and cohesive adversaries broken down to be challenged piecemeal, and then each of the separate adversaries weakened internally and prevented from achieving unfettered and decisive action even at a national level. If an adversary is fight-

1 Qiao Liang and Wang Xiangsui, Senior Colonels, People's Liberation Army, PRC: *Unrestricted Warfare* (the Mandarin title literally translates as "Warfare Beyond Bounds"). Beijing, February 1999: PLA Literature and Arts Publishing House. Subsequently translated and published by the US Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS) in 1999.

2 See Bodansky, Yossef: "Beijing's 'New thirty Years War'", in *Defense & Foreign Affairs Strategic Policy*, 10/2018. And also: "Is 'The New Thirty Years War' Already Escalating?", *Defense & Foreign Affairs Strategic Policy*, 11-12/2018. See also, Copley, Gregory R.: "The Time of Strategic Choice", in *Defense & Foreign Affairs Strategic Policy*, 10/2018.



The PLA Navy's learning-curve aircraft carrier, *Liaoning*, steams into the South China Sea as an instrument of information dominance in the COVID-19 war: Will that do Beijing more harm than good in its strategic race to take advantage of the short-term "power vacuum" created by the economic chaos?

ing within itself or preoccupied with domestic issues it cannot pose a threat.

"Splittist" has long been a particularly vitriolic epithet used by Chinese communists to denigrate those who split away from the Communist Party of China (CPC), or attempted to split the country away from the CPC. Now, splitting strategies are employed against the enemies of the CPC.

BEIJING'S APPROACH was learned from the Western strategy of the Cold War, which was to exacerbate to the point of fracture the People's Republic of China links with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (the USSR).

To drive a wedge into the Sino-Soviet rift.

Beijing understood this when it allowed itself to be part of that Sino-Soviet splitting operation when CPC Chairman Mao Zedong met with US Pres. Richard Nixon on February 21, 1972. At that time, the Soviet-PRC alliance was one of convenience, but it was never an easy match. Indeed, the Russian Federation *modus vivendi* with the PRC by 2020 — it would be difficult to call it an alliance — was fraught with as much mutual suspicion as the Sino-

Soviet link of the Cold War.

Now Beijing has begun to apply that splitting technique against the West itself.

But, as central as that process is to PRC strategy — or, more accurately, to the strategy of the CPC, which is as much aimed at subduing the Chinese people as foreign societies — it is only one component which would enable the PRC, economically in decline³ and militarily no match for even the US let alone the formerly close Western set of alliances, to have a chance at strategic success.

Moreover, it should not be assumed that it is the CPC alone which has moved onto a "war footing" and which saw the new conflict as an amorphous "total war": a total war which has taken on absolutely new dimensions from the shape of "total war" in the 20th Century. US Pres. Donald Trump began moving the US from a passive acceptance of PRC strategic expansionism — which had been underway for two decades at least — in 2017, and then moved into defensive strategic economic policies by late 2019.

Trump knew the PRC was at war with the US the moment his Administration took office in January 2017.

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe was also by that time already aware of the war, and was preparing Japan for it.

The COVID-19-related upheaval meant that, by early 2020, the prime ministers of Australia⁴ and the United Kingdom were also gradually coming aboard with the reality that they had been forced onto a war footing. What is significant is the degree to which public opinion in Africa generally, and in Australia, South-East Asia, the US, parts of Europe, and so on, has moved against the PRC as a result of the way in which Beijing has postured itself during the crisis.

The CPC — or at least Pres. Xi Jinping — does not seem to care. The velvet glove has been removed to some extent. It has begun to take advantage of the cover of the crisis to step up actions against rebellious elements in its autonomous Hong Kong region, for example, and to move its sole operational aircraft carrier, the *Liaoning*, into the South China Sea to highlight the perception that its armed forces have not been constrained by the COVID-19 crisis in the same way that the US and French navies have been.

But nowhere, however, was the extent of the war — the *type* of the war —

3 See, for example, Copley, Gregory R.: "State of the World: Parlous, Transforming, Yet in Some Ways Stabilizing, Optimistic", in *Defense & Foreign Affairs Strategic Policy*, 1/2020. That edition noted: "The year 2020 could emerge as the start of the era of relative global chaos or major upheaval. It is the era we have been anticipating, as the impact of core population decline meets economic dislocation, and security and structural uncertainty." And "[T]he PRC was already on economic life-support by the time the coronavirus pandemic began to become known by the end of January 2020. It was clear that the CPC was already well aware of the reality that the coronavirus had begun its broad contagion — with the consequent impact on the PRC economy — when it signed the 'trade deal' with Pres. Trump."

4 See, Copley, Gregory R.: "Sovereignty in the Age of Beijing: Can the PRC 'Save' Australia? Or Any Nation?". In *Defense & Foreign Affairs Strategic Policy*, 11-12/2019. Based on the author's Geopolitical Address to the Australia-Israel Chamber of Commerce, in Perth, Western Australia, on October 23, 2019.

discussed or understood. It is a global total war; one in which all elements of society, indeed of *all* societies, are conscripted. I have written extensively on this in a new book which will appear in the coming months.

This is not a “black swan event” — there is no such thing — but it is finally a clarification of the dynamic framework which has been emerging for the 21st Century. It is also worth noting that although the Xi strategy may be ambitious and innovative, it does not necessarily involve any real understanding of the US or the world by Pres. Xi, and more than most of the world understands Xi’s personal fusion of “China”. Arguably, Xi’s view of China and its destiny is akin to the mythical view which Hitler had of and for Germany.

But now Xi has committed the PRC to a strategic course of action. That is the physical component. So the planning can begin, by other states, as to how to deal with that PRC action.

1. How Societies Revive

ECONOMIC, SOCIAL, AND strategic recovery in any society beset by major crisis requires clean-sheet approaches and decisive steps to sweep away impediments to revival.

This is impossible — and usually undesirable — in normal conditions, and even in a crisis it is difficult unless societies and government agree that extraordinary steps are permitted. In all of this should be understood the basic concept, angrily refuted by statist, that it is not the job of governments to control societies; it is the job of societies to control government.

But, in the present climate of widespread fear for the future, the fact that societies also fear change means that:

- (a) The appearance of normalcy and continuity of institutions must be maintained as far as possible, and the utilization *and revival* of familiar, iconic, symbols, instruments, language, and faces is desirable; and
- (b) The reality that massive change and threat has already been visited upon society means that substantive, planned, further underlying change is now more possible. In other words, change has already occurred: use it to “Re-mould it

nearer to the Heart’s Desire!”, as Omar Khayyám suggested. But what that desire is, or should be, then becomes the primary question.

In the 2020 context, these factors were true as much for the PRC as for the US, UK, European Union (EU), or any other country. The difference in the application of the necessity to clearly specify what outcome is desired, however, lies in the goals and paths which each government wishes for its society.

Every major conflict tends to allow a government to increase its dominance over a society in order to combat an existential threat. How much that dominance is subsequently relaxed following the threat shows the difference between command economies — essentially socialist autocracies by definition — and classical democracies.

What has been significant in the early response to the fear pandemic which was triggered by the COVID-19 crisis is that many Western nation-states actually began adopting permanent changes which would move their societies closer to the command status normally associated with communist or socialist-fascist autocracies. In this regard, my colleague, Prof. Yuri Maltsev, cites Friedrich Nietzsche: “Whoever fights monsters should see to it that in the process he does not become a monster. And if you gaze long enough into an abyss, the abyss will gaze back into you.”

Apart from the move toward greater control over economies, the move toward cashless societies, toward the implementation of technology-enabled control of individuals (enabling total surveillance and obedience, for example) by definition changes the nature of the societies.

But does greater control over an economy and the minimizing of social freedom lead to the kind of *longer-term* strategic recovery which was ostensibly the declared goal of combating the immediate threat? In other words, like suicide, is it a long-term solution to a short-term problem? Is it a successful operation which kills the patient?

Crisis provides the opportunity for many actions.

Things can be achieved in chaos which could never be accomplished in calm. Positive and negative things. The view of statist, usually, is that the answer to a crisis is more government. That, of course, is antithetical to the free movement and thought of the individual, and therefore alien to entrepreneurship and productivity.

The primary lessons, then, from the 2020 crisis, which has caused virtually all major nations to add unsustainably to their debt burdens, should include:

► (i) **Simplify and open** society rather than legislate and control.

Remove inhibitions to economic and social stimulation which do not require state funding.

In other words, reduce the emphasis on activities which require taxpayer funds (which add to national debt). These neither stimulate revenue production by their action, nor enable productivity regeneration to occur. It is entrepreneurship which generates employment, taxation, and addresses the needs of national self-sufficiency;

► (ii) **Eliminate or reduce** the penalties, efforts, and cost of both starting economic enterprises or closing them.

This means allowing corporate bankruptcies to occur. Better to endure short-term losses than to lose long-term economic momentum. Governments are now searching, in any event, for ways to write off, re-fute, or inflate out of their debt obligations anyway.

Is it not hypocritical to stop the marketplace from moving forward after the failure or collapse of commercial enterprises when governments routinely do so with impunity, often by printing more unsupported money? And many of the commercial enterprises have

failed, in any event, due to the actions of governments in suppressing normal market activity. Efficient bankruptcy is the key to economic momentum.

► (iii) **Stimulate self-sufficiency** through national and local-level policies which favor the

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local production of necessities and tools of strategic advantage, **and deny that advantage to the adversary.** This does indeed require the application — selectively, carefully, and temporarily — of bans on certain imported products in order to guarantee sovereign viability, and it does involve selective use of tariffs. It also involves the denial of some exports to an adversary. *In the case of the containment of the PRC, the US and other food exporting adversary states would deny supply of food to the PRC, given that food and water shortage is Beijing's critical strategic vulnerability.*

Clearly, the “globalism” philosophy, which grew progressively since the end of the Cold War, had swung the strategic pendulum in favor of great powers which sought to dominate markets for their own purposes.

It was the globalist interpretation of “free trade” which, in fact, made many economies totally dependent on a foreign power.

This has particularly, in the 21st Century, benefited the PRC, which was able to use “free trade” to build strategic control of other societies. Beijing is not unique, historically, in utilizing the battle-cry of “free trade”, which is ultimately not free to the party which allows itself to become strategically dependent. Britain and the United States have themselves done this in the past.

2. Repurposing Alliances

TREATIES AND ALLIANCES are meant to address immediate threats and opportunities. They do not last forever. Nor should they.

Lord Palmerston said, in the 19th Century: “Nations have no permanent friends or allies, they only have permanent interests.” Alliances and treaties are meant to serve specific objectives, and time often vitiates these objectives.

But what is clear at present is that the People's Republic of China in 2020 lacks a viable alliance network. It treats states such as the DPRK (North Korea) as a mere tributary state, and other trading partners as though they should be tributary states. Thus their compli-

ance with Beijing must be forced.

The US, for most of the past seven decades, also treated its allies to greater or lesser degrees as more-or-less tributary states, and, as a result, its alliance structures became greatly reduced by resentments of junior alliance partners. Those partners may return to alliance with the US only through fear of the PRC and, to some extent, Russia.

What occurred in the first decades of the 21st Century, among other things, was that:

- ▶ (a) The original purpose for the North Atlantic Alliance (NATO) withered away, and yet the alliance had developed bureaucratically into one of the most effective strategic tools possible;
- ▶ (b) The European Union (EU) created a layer of governance and control of Western and Central Europe which inhibited the growth, freedom, and security of most of the members of that union; and
- ▶ (c) The United Nations moved from being a forum to mitigate differences into one which exacerbated them.

Bearing in mind the reality that the EU in many ways geopolitically overlaps the NATO membership (obviously excluding Canada and the US, which are in NATO but not the EU), it is clear that NATO now has a new rôle in protecting the physical borders of Europe. Significantly, it has not been deployed to meet this new rôle.

And that rôle is not specifically against an immediate threat of military intrusion by Russia, but very specifically in resisting a multi-faceted strategic physical intrusion by Turkey, or facilitated by Turkey.

How much, for example, has Europe been strategically inhibited by its inability to resist Turkish-sponsored or Turkish-supported population warfare which has weakened the economies and social frameworks of European states for the past decade. Turkey attempted to substantially expand and accelerate this population-political warfare Westwards since the start of the 2020 crisis. Moreover, this has not been constrained merely by the onpassage of refugees from the Syrian civil war, but by “commoditizing” refugees fleeing economic and security challenges in Afghanistan, Pakistan,

Eritrea, and sub-Saharan Africa.

What has emerged is that NATO remains a viable and efficient military alliance for the protection of Western interests, whereas the EU has not. NATO, in an attempt to repurpose itself with the collapse of the original threat, the Warsaw Treaty *bloc*, has sought an “out-of-area” mission, and was thus employed in the war in Afghanistan, for example in the first two decades of the 21st Century. But there was no real thought given to a broader redefinition of the Alliance, to include Indo-Pacific partners.

It has the potential to be broadened and renamed to include the ANZUS (Australia-New Zealand-US) Alliance, the US-Japan Security Alliance, and so on, to take on a new purpose akin to the World War II alliance against the nazi-fascist-Japanese *bloc*. Similarly, the UKUSA Accords — commonly referred to as the Five-Eyes intelligence exchange between the US, UK, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand — has the capacity to be repurposed with strategic objectives.⁵

Clearly, alliances and treaties need sunset clauses: dates by which they are either retired or repurposed. The various arms limitation treaties have all either expired through mutual disinterest, or they have been consistently and dynamically given ongoing lives. Or they have become tools by one party to inhibit another.

The successive treaties to limit the construction of capital ships by major navies in the first half of the 20th Century was a classical case of how treaties were overtaken either by technological change or by the change in strategic objectives of the major powers. That included the Washington Naval Treaty of 1922; the London Naval Treaty of 1930; the Second London Naval Treaty of 1936 (by which time the process had become more or less meaningless).

Treaties and alliances are meant to give the signatories breathing space. Nothing more. All that is constant is “permanent interests”. And then we need to renegotiate the meaning of “permanent”.

Again, as we discussed in Point 1, above, the COVID-19 interregnum was the ideal time to revisit national goals, and to redefine the means of

5 The possibility of which was suggested in Copley, Gregory R.: “Five Eyes Mark II?”, in *Defense & Foreign Affairs Strategic Policy*, 3/2020.

achieving them in a world in which the strategic context — the terrain — had clarified in new ways.

We will discuss in Point 4 the need to look at alliances within the framework of trade and survival patterns.

3. Repurposing Economies

IT IS TIME TO RE-DESIGNATE the economic framework which existed up until 2020 as the “old economy”.

And that includes the economic prisms through which we viewed science and technology up to that point.

The “new economy” includes some fundamentals, such as:

- 3.1. Global and national economies constrained by unprecedented levels of debt and debt-service;
- 3.2. Declining market size due to economic constraints and to the actual decline in population levels, particularly within key socio-economic market groups;
- 3.3. Polarization, because of economic, political and security factors, of trading networks, leading to greater bilateralization of trade and the need to re-monetize some trade as barter or counter-trade, or define it by creative currency “baskets”;
- 3.4. Reduced availability of funding for a period for research and development, some commercial infrastructure, and for pure science. On the other hand, viable stimulus to re-engage unemployed workers would likely include some public sector infrastructure packages;
- 3.5. Greater ease by armed forces in achieving recruiting targets as commercial jobs fail to take up all available workforce;
- 3.6. Growing distrust of governmental attempts to control the economy by restricting the use of cash as paper currencies lose the “full faith and credit” of governments. This will see a stimulus for the use of alternate forms of “currency”, including cryptocurrencies. All of this will lead to a polarization of societies away from governments (ie: lead to greater distrust in government), which can only be contained for a limited period and which will absolutely lead to a further decline in economic productivity, as the PRC has been discovering for the past eight years. This further

compounds the challenge of global strategic competitiveness.

What, then, is to be done?

The stimulation of national economies is very much linked to seeing economies as just that: national. Or at least best protected within specific geopolitical regions.

The first decades of the 21st Century (indeed, the period since the end of the Cold War) saw most countries out-source much of their manufacturing to the PRC. The crash of 2020 saw, then, most countries exposed to an existential dependency on the PRC for vital supplies across all sectors of society.

This resulted in the biggest single event in history highlighting the destruction of the sovereignty and independence of action of most nation-states in the world. The PRC, in order to capitalize on the damage inflicted by the 2020 crisis on most national economies, quickly moved to return to full PRC manufacturing capability to ensure that, as the coronavirus containmentments were lifted on most economies, the PRC could then dump manufactured goods onto the world market.

This was designed to ensure that national manufacturing in other countries would be disincentivized from being re-established to end dependency on the PRC. The PRC manufacturing base had already begun to out-price itself during the past five years at least (to 2020), and the PRC had to do something to regain its position as the “sole source” for manufacturing.

This meant that the PRC had a vested interest, too, in ensuring that those rising economies which had been beginning to take over the global manufacturing rôles from the PRC were themselves set back. That included the manufacturing sectors of Thailand, Vietnam, and so on.

Hence the need for those nation-states wishing to re-assert a measure of sovereign independence to consider restrictions and tariffs on imported goods as a means to protect the re-start of local industries. The question, then, was how to do this in a way which did not allow also the re-building of workforce complacency and revived union opportunism, knowing that domestic markets were protected.

A variety of actions, then, would need to be considered by those “advanced” societies which had thought

themselves somehow in the post-industrial phase, but now found it necessary to revive domestic manufacturing. These could include:

- Eliminating constraints on small to medium businesses by (i) minimizing the burden of tax reporting bureaucracy; (ii) creating a simplified tax structure for small to medium business; and (iii) creating freedoms from heavy unionization for small to medium businesses.
- Repurposing education away from the “pseudo-post-industrial” model which focused on university degrees of questionable value either to liberal, contextual thinking, or to education in spheres of practical value to manufacturing. This would mean reversing the demeaning and paternalistic view of academia toward “blue collar” workforces, and instead providing technical school educations, and structured trade apprenticeships. This could and should enable many people to enter the workforce at a younger age, thus stimulating the economy by removing them from society-supported dependency. Moreover, it could also include apprenticeship-like skills acquisition in the armed services.
- Eliminating most of the punitive elements of bankruptcy laws, and lower the barrier to the creation of new corporations to stimulate the creation of entrepreneurial enterprises. Even the US has, in recent years, made aspects of its bankruptcy laws more punitive, but the US still provides the best model in this regard. Australia, for example, has corporate start-up and wind-up practices which are draconian and Dickensian. The more that the state is removed from the process, the more that enterprise and productivity will be stimulated.
- Eliminating or reducing the size of centralized governmental structures. Government employment is a burden for any economy. Some of it is vital to ensuring a viable state; most of it is not. Reducing governmental bureaucracies by enforcing a wave of mandatory retirements and a selective freeze on hiring is a far better use of state funds than financing an unproductive economy.
- Eliminating legislative constraints

on agricultural efficiency and encourage programs which help restore soil balance. Ensuring adequate farmer control over water sources, and also reversing the negative impact of the use of chemical fertilizers over the past century.

4. Repurposing Trading Blocs

TRADER IS AN ESSENTIAL TOOL of society. It is assumed that free trade is the vital aspect of a prospering society. But the reality is that trade *in essentials* is an existential underpinning of sovereignty.

The control of trade and trading patterns is also, therefore, a decisive tool in national security strategy. World Wars I and II made clear how control of global sea lanes determined the outcome of those conflicts.

“Free trade” in a time of confrontation and crisis, then, is axiomatically counterproductive to achieving national survival and in constraining an opponent.

The crisis of 2020 ensured that, for the time being, the age of free trade was now ended. That is not an ideological or philosophical position — concepts of markets determining free trade can endure — but rather a position of ensuring national survival, and minimizing the advantage of a competitor. Apart from the major power which wishes to dominate its trading partners, only those who do not recognize that a war has begun will continue to insist on “free trade”.

So if trade is to be emphasized between trusted partners, then that would assume that trade pacts would need to include security provisions to ensure the delivery of that trade. This re-emphasizes, of course, the security of sea lanes, straits and waterways, and air traffic routes. The assumption of a continuation of the old “rules-based world order” is no longer valid.

The PRC, in announcing (in October 2018) its “new Thirty Years War” indicated that at the end of that war (in 2049) it would have in place a “new Treaty of Westphalia” — by some new name — to emplace a Beijing-dominated “rules-based world order”. Saying it does not make it so, but the intention was clear: the PRC does not accept the pre-2020 order of theoretically-equal nation-states to be valid.

The new trading objectives of post-2020 governments, then, need to be defined, because it is clear that they have not been defined up until this point. These objectives would need to define national goals, needs, and methods of achieving the desired ends.

It means that trading patterns must overlay security patterns. In other words, if trade is critical, the means must be there to ensure that it can be achieved. Trade, then, becomes not merely about commodities, but about the means and routes of delivering them, and the security to guarantee that pattern.

5. Repurposing Strategies

HOW CAN STRATEGIES designed for different times be applied in the post-2020 world?

Economic, geopolitical, and trade dependency factors changed with the crisis of 2020. Yes, much business will continue as usual, but the underlying strategic inflection has changed, and the global debt position has transformed economic capabilities.

More to the point, the People’s Republic of China has made it clear that it has already embarked on a war — an amorphous total war of the 21st Century kind — from which it cannot resile. That war, for the PRC, as noted, is dominated by a strong interactive pattern of population, sociological, economic, technological, and information dominance factors, quite apart from military factors.

Indeed, the PRC hopes that the war would be won before any resort to military confrontation of a formal kind.

Does that mean that one response would be to force the PRC to fight its war on terms it considers disadvantageous? Because that would indeed be a military aspect of the “total war”.

So, at present, the PRC is embarked on a defensive military strategy *vis-à-vis* the United States, while posturing with symbolic military actions in some areas, such as the South and East China Seas. But Beijing is highly aggressive in its power projection by diplomatic and non-military means against other targets. And it only has economic levers to sustain that attempted use of “overwhelming force” on its trading and diplomatic partners.

And these are levers from a declining

PRC economy. As noted, the PRC approach is to minimize resistance to its strategic offensive by minimizing the economic strength and independence of its targets.

Where have we seen a comparable model of strategic projection in history? Nothing appears to be immediately comparable. This is very much a grand strategy of bluff, deception, and audacity. It has, for Beijing, been effective to this point, but the 2020 crisis did polarize much thinking against the PRC.

6. Repurposing Defense

WHAT MILITARY STRUCTURES and doctrine will survive the 2020 inflection point?

Clearly, for the first time in many years, most governments will need to force their defense planners to harmonize defense strategic plans with national grand strategic goals and options. That will be difficult, because defense structures are heavily dependent on legacy capital items, legacy doctrine, and inherited postures. And government leaders are notoriously resistant to giving long-term goals.

Governments are revisiting their situations, but to what extent can long-term capital defense programs be recalibrated for the new strategic environment? Even more significantly, how can defense forces even sustain operational capabilities when declining national economic outlooks will likely constrain defense spending growth, if growth is even feasible in the coming few years?

To a significant degree, because the “new total war” is likely to be less kinetic and less formal than in the 20th Century, improvements in efficiency will likely emerge from more interdisciplinary cooperation than has been historically achieved. This is the most difficult aspect. In “war” situations, the military assumes it must lead.

The Russian Government recently gave warfighting leadership authority, even in non-kinetic frameworks, to the Russian General Staff on the basis that “non-military actions comprised 80 percent of contemporary conflict”. But can careers of military discipline, logic, and chain of command adapt to the new, fluid, amorphous social face of “total war of the 21st Century”? ★