

## Chapter 6

# The United States

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Implementing the “Great Power Competition”  
Strategy

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The National Security Strategy (2017 NSS) expressed that the United States will respond to strategic competitions with its challengers. China and North Korea, alongside Russia, Iran, and transnational threat organizations, were named as the challengers that the United States faces. The Trump administration has strengthened its competitive stance against Beijing not only in the military field but also in economic and social fields. On the other hand, while relations with North Korea, which is continuing its nuclear weapons and missile development, improved from the initial tensions through to the US-North Korea Summit Meeting, this has not led to seeing any specific progress toward “complete denuclearization of North Korea.”

In the National Defense Strategy (NDS) unveiled in January 2018, the Trump administration raised “long-term, strategic competition” with China and Russia as the highest priority, and described a policy of focusing on an approach to force suitable for the age of competition among major powers, especially strengthening force capability including modernization. The fiscal year (FY) 2020 defense budget request shows a stance of mainly investing in the capability highlighted in the NDS, including that in space and cyber domains. On the other hand, the Army and Navy have worked on restoring and expanding force capacity since the beginning of the Trump administration. While the efforts for enhancing force capability are remarkable, further developments should be closely monitored.

In addition, in the era of great power competition, US forward operational bases and other military facilities are to be put in contested environments once a conflict occurs, and thus building operationally credible forward forces, not “presence for its own sake,” is urgently needed. Based on this, the US military is testing concepts that swiftly deploy forces to areas within the range of threats and create strategic and operational dilemmas for adversaries in the western Pacific region.

## 1. The Policies for the Indo-Pacific Region

### **(1) China’s Military and Economic Statecraft and Hardened US Attitude**

A confrontational, competitive view toward China is growing in the Trump administration. The 2017 NSS states that China wants to “shape a world

antithetical to US values and interests” and positions China as a strategic competitor that aims to reorder the Indo-Pacific region in its favor.<sup>1</sup>

The Indo-Pacific Strategy Report issued in June 2019 also expresses a critical view of China, stating that it has exploited the economic benefits of the rules-based international order while eroding its values and principles. The report assesses China’s motives as being to seek “Indo-Pacific regional hegemony in the near-term and, ultimately global preeminence in the long-term” while continuing its economic and military ascendance.<sup>2</sup>

The report specifically raises China’s actions that warrant concern as being (1) strengthening discriminatory treatment of Muslims living in China, (2) China’s cyber theft targeting confidential business and technological information at companies in the United States and other countries, (3) China’s placement of anti-ship cruise missiles and long-range surface-to-air missiles on the Spratly Islands and its militarization of manmade islands in the South China Sea by deploying paramilitary forces, (4) China’s ongoing enhancement of its military capabilities while its forces simultaneously carry out dangerous actions that could cause accidents, and (5) China’s coercive use of non-military methods, including economic methods, in the “gray zone.”<sup>3</sup>

What has garnered attention is the Trump administration’s growing concern about China’s aim to use economic methods and influence public opinion in target countries as ways to alter those countries’ actions to fall in line with China’s agenda. The Indo-Pacific Strategy Report points out that “China is using economic inducements and penalties, influence operations, and implied military threats to persuade other states to comply with its agenda.”<sup>4</sup> This concern is also identified in the Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People’s Republic of China 2019 (Chinese Military Report) issued in May 2019.<sup>5</sup>

In a speech at the Wilson Center on October 24, 2019, Vice President Michael Pence depicted China as a strategic and economic rival of the United States and criticized China’s



President Trump meeting with President Xi Jinping at the G20 Osaka Summit (Reuters/Kyodo)

military expansionism, its diplomacy approach assessed as a “debt trap,” its repression of religion within the country, its construction of a surveillance state including strengthening of monitoring of minorities as well as its overseas transfers of surveillance technology, and China’s many policies inconsistent with free and fair trade as being “harmful to America’s interests and values.”<sup>6</sup>

The speech raises China’s theft of intellectual property as well as military-civilian fusion concerning technology in the form of forced transfers of private companies’ technologies to the military as specific issues. Vice President Pence stated, “To protect intellectual property rights and the privacy of our citizens and our national security, we’ve taken strong steps to curtail illegal behavior of Chinese companies like Huawei and ZTE [telecommunications equipment companies].”

Moreover, in his speech, Vice President Pence referenced the efforts by the Chinese Communist Party to influence public debate in the United States by stating that it is “continuing to reward and coerce American businesses, movie studios, universities, think tanks, scholars, journalists, and local, state, and federal officials.” Vice President Pence had also expressed concerns about China’s activities to influence public opinion in the United States before this speech. In a speech at the Hudson Institute on October 4, 2018, he expressed strong wariness about China’s actions not only concerning the United States’ policies and politics, but also China’s “steps to exploit its economic leverage, and the allure of their large marketplace, to advance its influence over American businesses.”<sup>7</sup>

In addition, Vice President Pence criticized that China’s military action “has also remained increasingly provocative,” including creating and militarizing unlawful artificial islands in the South China Sea, deploying maritime militia, and sending Chinese Coast Guard ships into the waters around the Senkaku Islands.

This severe view of China is also affecting policy dialogues between the United States and China as well as military-to-military relations between the two countries. In place of the Strategic and Economic Dialogue, a comprehensive working-level consultation framework of the Obama administration, the Trump administration established four frameworks: (1) the US-China Diplomatic and Security Dialogue (D&SD), (2) the US-China Comprehensive Economic Dialogue, (3) the US-China Law Enforcement and Cybersecurity Dialogue,

and (4) the US-China Social and Cultural Dialogue. Although all of the dialogues were held in 2017, the D&SD was held only once in 2018, and none of the dialogues had been held as of 2019.<sup>8</sup> In regard to military exchanges, through bilateral exchanges in the form of mutual visits by high-level officials of both countries as well as policy dialogues between high-level



The USS *Ronald Reagan* aircraft carrier deployed to the South China Sea (US Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Kaila V. Peters)

officials, the Trump administration aims to prevent international crisis and to build and strengthen processes necessary for control and defense in the event that an international crisis does occur.<sup>9</sup> However, there was a downward trend in exchanges, as the 30 exchanges held in 2016 fell to 19 in 2017, 14 in 2018, and 12 in 2019.<sup>10</sup>

The Trump administration is also strengthening relations with Taiwan. The Indo-Pacific Strategy Report names Taiwan as an important partner alongside Singapore, New Zealand, and Mongolia. The Report also states that the United States “has a vital interest in upholding the rules-based international order, which includes a strong, prosperous, and democratic Taiwan” and specifies that the United States will strengthen relations with Taiwan and faithfully implement the Taiwan Relations Act.<sup>11</sup>

The Report also states that the United States will continue its arms sales to Taiwan with the objective of ensuring that “Taiwan remains secure, confident, free from coercion, and able to peacefully and productively engage the mainland on its own terms.” The report cites as the background for this China’s development and deployment of advanced military capabilities without renouncing the option of the use of military force for unification with Taiwan. As of the end of December 2019, the Trump administration had conducted 11 cases of foreign military sales to Taiwan. A total of four cases were notified to Congress in 2019, including sale of training, maintenance, and logistical support for F-16 pilots in April, sale of 108 M1A2T Abrams battle tanks and anti-aircraft missiles in July, and sale of 66 F-16C/D Block 70 fighter aircraft in August.<sup>12</sup>

## **(2) Response to the North Korea Nuclear Problem**

As North Korea continues its ongoing nuclear weapons and missile development, the Trump administration continues to maintain the goal of “complete denuclearization of North Korea.” Since the inauguration of the administration, “maximum pressure” policies have been raised aiming for denuclearization of North Korea through strengthening economic sanctions implemented by the United States and the United Nations. These policies have had the same direction as the Barack Obama administration’s policies on North Korea that were known as “strategic patience.” However, the Trump administration’s initial stance was characterized by focus on the role of China’s diplomatic and economic pressure on North Korea as well as eliminating the possibility of the use of military force by North Korea.

The focus of the initial policies was economic pressure, and the United Nations’ sanctions and the United States’ independent sanctions served as the two pillars in support of that. The United Nations’ sanctions began with the UN Security Council Resolution 1718 that was adopted in October 2006 in response to the first nuclear test implemented by North Korea. Against the backdrop of North Korea’s repeated nuclear weapon and ballistic missile tests, sanctions have been adopted 10 times through to Resolution 2397 adopted in December 2017. In addition to prohibiting the transfer and procurement of supplies related to nuclear weapons and missiles with North Korea, the United Nations’ sanctions regime freezes the assets of individuals and organizations subject to sanctions, prohibits entry into ports as well as takeoff and landing of North Korea’s ships and aircraft as well as ships and aircraft that are suspected of carrying prohibited goods, prohibits financial transactions, and places an embargo on coal, iron, lead, and marine products. Furthermore, Resolution 2375 and Resolution 2397 respectively adopted in September and December 2017 drastically reduced the upper limit established for the supply volume of refined petroleum products such as gasoline and diesel oil to North Korea.<sup>13</sup>

In addition to these United Nations’ sanctions, the United States also strengthened its sanctions against North Korea. In 2017, the Trump administration returned North Korea to the list of state sponsors of terror. Based on President Trump’s executive order, the US Department of the Treasury announced implementation of sanctions against North Korea’s financial institutions and individuals related to the country’s development of weapons of mass destruction

and ballistic missiles, prohibition of transactions with the Bank of Dandong due to its involvement with money laundering for North Korea, and the freezing of assets under US jurisdiction of North Korean high government officials, among other announcements.

Against the backdrop of North Korea's ICBM tests in 2017 (on July 4 and November 29) as well as its sixth nuclear test (on September 3), US-North Korea relations following the establishment of the Trump administration deteriorated to a situation in which there were fears that the United States might use military force against North Korea. However, entering 2018, tensions eased in US-North Korea relations against the backdrop of North Korea's appeals to the United States as well as the improvement in Republic of Korea (ROK)-North Korea relations.

After receiving North Korea's request for a US-North Korea Summit Meeting to be held, which was conveyed by the ROK's special envoy delegation when it visited Washington DC in early March 2018, President Trump agreed to a meeting with Chairman Kim Jong Un of the Workers' Party of Korea. The first US-North Korea Summit Meeting was held on June 12 in Singapore. The joint statement issued after the meeting indicated that there was agreement (1) to build new US-North Korea relations overcoming tensions and hostilities, (2) to work to build a lasting and stable peace regime on the Korean Peninsula, (3) that North Korea would work toward complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, and (4) that the remains of US soldiers who died in the Korean War would be returned.

Following this, the second US-North Korea Summit Meeting was held in Hanoi in February 2019. However, there were major differences of opinion concerning the terms of agreement, as the United States sought progress in North Korea's efforts toward denuclearization and North Korea sought lifting of economic sanctions. President Trump left his seat midway through the Summit Meeting, and it ended without an agreement. Contrasting with the United States' request for North Korea to abandon all its nuclear weapon programs as a condition for lifting sanctions, North Korea indicated its position of offering to dismantle its Yongbyon nuclear facility as a condition for revoking the specific clauses in the UN Security Council resolutions to impose economic sanctions adopted in 2016 and 2017. Although President Trump and Chairman Kim met again later in Panmunjom on June 30, a specific agreement was not reached toward

denuclearization. A working-level meeting was held between both countries in Stockholm on October 3, but there was no progress.

## 2. Exploring Force Posture in the Age of Great Power Competition

### (1) The National Defense Strategy and Rebalancing Force Capability and Capacity

In the summary of the NDS issued in January 2018 by the Department of Defense (DOD), the Trump administration positioned “long-term, strategic competition” with China and Russia as the highest priority issue and indicated that less priority would be placed on responding to so-called “rogue states,” terrorism, and the like.<sup>14</sup> As pillars of advancing this competition, the NDS raises building a more lethal Joint Force, strengthening alliances and attracting new partners, and reforming the DOD’s business practices for greater performance and affordability. However, as the NDS was formulated at the order of the Trump administration in the context of “rebuilding the military,” the main pillar is the first one of strengthening the Joint Force.

To strengthen the Joint Force, the NDS reconsidered the approach adopted by the US military in the post-Cold War era. During the unipolar age of American primacy from the 1990s to the 2000s, as seen in the Gulf War and the Iraq War, the United States could deploy large-scale forces when and where necessary and execute operations with the necessary means. On the other hand, during the current age of great power competition, the military forces of the “great powers” like China and Russia are highly modernized, and they pose serious challenges to the US military to maintain its overwhelming superiority in all the ground, maritime, air, space, and cyber domains. Such changes in the strategic environment are the background for the need to build a more lethal force.

Accompanying the United States’ defense priority shifting from responding to “rogue states” to “great power competition,” it is also necessary to change the post-Cold War force construct that mainly presumed conflict with “rogue states.” Since the DOD formulated the Bottom-Up Review in 1993, the United States had built up the force based on the force construct of being able to respond to two major theater wars (2MTW) nearly simultaneously, mainly envisioning ones

occurring in the Middle East and the Korean Peninsula. Although the Obama administration's 2012 Defense Strategic Guidance shows a force construct at a so-called "1.5" MTW standard to defeat and deny two invasions by nation states, high officials such as Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta and Deputy Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter suggested that the basic idea of 2MTW would remain unchanged. In short, the basic principle of 2MTW was continued for over 20 years until the latter half of the 2010s.<sup>15</sup> Because of this, more focus was put on ensuring force capacity including personnel and assets to enable 2MTW than on investing in force capability.<sup>16</sup>

However, as seen in the Third Offset Strategy that laid out conventional deterrence against China and Russia from around 2014 by the Obama administration, the DOD had gradually begun to explore optimizing the capability of the US military in the era of great power competition. The 2018 NDS specifies the shift from the 2MTW concept to prioritizing capability of "defeating aggression by a major power" and "deterring opportunistic aggression elsewhere."<sup>17</sup> Accompanying this, Secretary of Defense James Mattis specified that building capability would be given priority over force capacity.<sup>18</sup>

In regard to specific capabilities to be strengthened, the NDS raises eight fields: nuclear forces; space and cyberspace capabilities; command, control, communications, computers and intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (C4ISR); missile defense; joint lethality; forward force maneuver and posture resilience; autonomous systems; and resilient and agile logistics. The DOD placed importance on these priority fields in the FY2020 defense budget proposal which requests \$718.3 billion (4.9% higher than the previous fiscal year). Above all, the budget request asks for \$14.1 billion (19.5% higher than the previous fiscal year) and \$9.6 billion (12.9% higher than the previous fiscal year) for the unclassified space and cyberspace programs, respectively.<sup>19</sup> In addition, if one looks at FY2020 acquisition programs, the funding for all categories of missiles and ammunitions (including strategic missiles), space systems, C4I systems (including cyberspace capabilities), and missile defense—each of which can be classified in the first four (nuclear, space and cyberspace, C4ISR, missile defense) of the above eight priorities—maintains or exceeds the level of FY2019. They marked an even more drastic increase compared to the FY2016 defense budget proposal under the Obama administration (Table 6.1).

Table 6.1. Main weapon systems procurement in the Obama and Trump administrations (Unit: \$ Billion, nominal values)

Weapon System	Obama Administration	Trump Administration		
	FY2016	FY2019	FY2020	Growth Rate Compared to FY2016
Missiles and Munitions	11.9	20.7	21.6	+81.5%
Strategic Missiles	2.4	3.3	3.5	+45.8%
Space Systems	7.1	9.3	11.9	+67.6%
C4I Systems	7.4	10.0	10.2	+37.8%
Cyber Capability	n/a	2.6	2.8	n/a
Missile Defense	8.8	12.0	11.6	+31.8%

Source: Compiled from the FY2016, 2019, and 2020 editions of the *Program Acquisition Cost by Weapon System* by the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller)/CFO.

In recent years, there has been steady progress in improvement of standoff missiles, whose utility is widely recognized. In the testimony at the Senate Committee on Armed Services in January 2019, Elbridge Colby, who led the NDS as Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Strategy and Force Development, raised specific munitions names such as Joint Air-to-Surface Standoff Missile-Extended Range (JASSM-ER) and Long-Range Anti-Ship Missiles (LRASM), and asserted that these types of munitions are essential for building a combat-credible force.<sup>20</sup> The DOD has indicated that it will produce these two types of missiles at maximum capacity in the same production line, in order to acquire as quickly as possible the capabilities needed in the severe strategic environment.<sup>21</sup>

On the other hand, balancing capability and capacity in each service is crucial for executing the NDS within the budget limits. Although President Trump has promoted “rebuilding our military” since his inauguration, this has meant quantitative increases in force in many settings. The Army, which had planned a reduction of active duty military personnel to 440,000-450,000 people due to the reduced budget under the Obama administration, was one of the services that has received the largest benefit under the Trump administration’s plan to increase force capacity.

In regard to active duty personnel, the Army requested 476,000 people in the FY2018 budget and 487,500 in FY2019, and the FY2019 Future Years Defense Program (FYDP) presented a plan for 495,500 by FY2023. The logic behind the increase was that the Army’s operational tempo in areas like the Middle East outpaced the force capacity, which made it difficult to maintain a sufficient level of readiness. Nevertheless, from the viewpoint of the NDS or that of great power competition, an emphasis is placed more on strengthening force capability, including modernization, than on simply expanding capacity.

In that sense, the FY2020 budget request indicates that the Army is gradually in line with the NDS. According to Undersecretary of the Army Ryan McCarthy, the ratio between modernization and legacy systems in the Army will improve from the current 20:80 to 50:50 by FY2024.<sup>22</sup> In 2017, the Army put Long Range Precision Fires (LRPF) on the top of the list in its “Modernization Priorities.” The Army reflected this priority in the FY2020 proposal asking for \$164.2 million (a 3% increase over the previous year) as well as \$848.7 million as part of the FYDP for research, development, testing and evaluation (RDT&E) of LRPF.

Additionally, the Army also emphasizes tactical air and missile defense that protects ground targets including command posts, supply bases, and airfields. In particular, the Army’s RDT&E requests for the mobile short-range air

Table 6.2. The US Army’s six modernization priorities and major efforts

Modernization Fields	Major Efforts
Long Range Precision Fires (LRPF)	Strategic Fires, Precision Strike Missiles, Extended Range Cannon Artillery
Next Generation Combat Vehicles	Optionally Manned Fighting Vehicles, Armored Multi-Purpose Vehicles, Mobile Protected Firepower, Robotic Combat Vehicles
Future Vertical Lift	Future Attack Reconnaissance Aircraft, Future Long Range Assault Aircraft, Future UAS, Modular Open Systems Architecture
Network	Unified Network, Command Post Common Environment, Joint Interoperability/Coalition Accessible, Command Post Mobility/Survivability
Air and Missile Defense	Army Integrated Air and Missile Defense, M-SHORAD, IFPC, LTAMDS
Soldier Lethality	Next Generation Automatic Rifle, Next Generation Rifle, Enhanced Night Vision Goggles, Integrated Vision Augmentation System

Source: US Army, *2019 Army Modernization Strategy: Investing in the Future*, October 2019, p. 7.

defense (M-SHORAD) missiles and lower tier air and missile defense sensors (LTAMDS) were \$262.1 million and \$427.8 million, which were respectively about double and quadruple the amounts in the previous fiscal year's request. The service is also planning to reach the operational capability of Indirect Fire Protection Capability (IFPC) by FY2023, and requested Israel's Iron Dome air defense system as an interim measure to keep up air defense capabilities until that year. The IFPC is a system capable of dealing with an extensive range of aerial threats from rockets, artillery and mortar (RAM) to unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) to cruise missiles. However, some experts point out that the more the M-SHORAD addresses threats from aircraft, UAS, and RAM, the more available the IFPC is to deal with higher-end threats such as cruise missiles.

Another characteristic of the Army's FY2020 budget proposal is the deceleration of expansion of force capacity. The budget's request for 480,000 active duty military members was a reduction of 7,500 people compared to the previous request. In addition, the Army's goal is 488,000 soldiers for FYDP through FY2024, setting a lower number compared to the FY2019's goal of 495,500 soldiers by FY2023. Although this change can be perceived positively as a sign of the Army shifting its focus to modernization, whether this purely stems from such a shift needs to be dug deeper.

According to the Army, financial problems and the worsening employment environment due to factors such as the low unemployment rate are principal reasons for the slowing pace of expansion of Army personnel. Particularly in regard to the latter reason, it has become difficult to achieve the targeted end strength while maintaining hiring standards. This is mainly due to the newly-introduced deployability policy started in October 2018, which discharges officers who have not been deployed for over one year due to such reasons as illness, injury, or imprisonment.

In fact, the Army has been facing a challenge to recruit people who sufficiently meet employment standards. It became difficult for the Army to achieve the end strength of 487,500 active soldiers indicated in FY2019, and the estimated number of personnel (as of the FY2020 budget request in March) was revised downward to 478,000 people. It is highly likely that the Army, taking into consideration the severe employment condition, adjusted the target number of personnel to a more realistic one. It is thus too hasty to conclude that the slowing pace of the personnel expansion came from the Army's focus on capability.

From the perspective of balancing the force, the Navy's structure is also an important issue. The Force Structure Assessment (FSA) unveiled by the Navy in December 2016 raised the target number of battle force ships from 308 to 355. Thereafter this 355-ship fleet became an indicator for Navy shipbuilding. However, the outlook on when this will be achieved has changed. The Navy formulated its accelerated fleet plan in 2017 and reported that the number would be reached by 2030 by extending the service life of vessels in conjunction with accelerating the pace of construction. However, the 30-year shipbuilding plan (FY2019-FY2048) submitted to Congress in February 2018 estimated the figure of 355 ships to be reached in the first half of the 2050s. The 30-year shipbuilding plan (FY2020-FY2049) issued in March 2019 now reveals an ambitious plan, in which the 355-ship force-level goal is to be achieved by 2034, about 20 years earlier than the report from the previous year.<sup>23</sup>

However, there are challenges with the Navy's new shipbuilding plan. The latest FY2020 plan shows that even after the 355-ship architecture is achieved, some types of ships, including attack submarines, will not reach the number that was targeted in the 2016 FSA. In addition, although the FY2020 shipbuilding plan aims to achieve the 355-ship goal up to 20 years earlier than the FY2019 plan, there is only a slight increase of three ships in the actual number of ships to be constructed under the 30-year shipbuilding plan, with 301 ships in the FY2019 plan and 304 ships in the FY2020 plan.

The main reason for the drastic acceleration of shipbuilding pace in the FY2020 plan is the service life extensions for certain ships. Above all, the service life of all Arleigh Burke-class destroyers was extended from the normal 35–40 years to 45 years. Although this greatly contributes to maintaining and expanding the total number of ships, it does not necessarily help promote force modernization. The Navy under the Trump administration has placed an emphasis on quickly reaching the target number of ships and focused on expanding force capacity. The Navy faces a conundrum of promoting a more lethal and modernized fleet suitable for great power competition while simultaneously expanding capacity.

Amidst this, the Navy is revising the 2016 FSA (as of the end of December 2019). The surface combatant force architecture is considered to be one of the main components of this revision. In the 2016 FSA objective, there are to be 104 large surface combatants (LSC) such as cruisers and destroyers and 52 small surface combatants (SSC) such as littoral combat ships and frigates (a 2:1 ratio),

without taking into consideration the number of unmanned surface vehicles. This architecture would be reversed in a new FSA, resulting in a 1:2 ratio of LSC to SSC, plus a larger number of large- and medium-sized unmanned surface vehicles.<sup>24</sup>

The rationale behind this potential fleet architecture is that it would enable the Navy to maximize the efficacy of operations particularly in the western Pacific region at a lower cost than that of the existing composition. Deploying more relatively inexpensive SSC rather than utilizing a small number of expensive LSC, for example, is expected to complicate the enemy's targeting process, to minimize the effect of loss of one ship on entire fleet capability, and to help deploy (unmanned) surface combatants to highly risky theaters during conflict. The Navy's new FSA based on a series of strategic documents formulated under the Trump administration will play a pivotal role in showing size and composition of the force as well as capacity-capability balance that the Navy demands for great power competition.

In this way, the efforts to strengthen US military force qualitatively are remarkable. In addition to these efforts, the establishment of the Space Force in December 2019 initiated by President Trump reflects the administration's awareness of the changing nature of military threat. On the other hand, the administration has another important project to recover and expand force capacity. Unless the current US financial condition dramatically improves, the issue of tradeoff between capacity and capability will continue to be discussed.

## **(2) Efforts for Building a More Effective Forward Force**

Important components for strengthening the capabilities of the US forces comprehensively and maintaining effective deterrence and war-fighting capability include not only force modernization and substantive reinforcement, but also force deployment, training, and employment in accordance with the strategic environment. Although the US forces deployed in the western Pacific region play an important role for deterrence and defense in the region, there is also a dilemma faced by the forward-deployed forces.<sup>25</sup> Namely, although the visible forward presence of the US armed forces as a symbol of deterring regional conflicts and commitment since the Cold War continues to have vital importance, China's so-called anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) system has the potential to pose a threat to military assets such as bases, harbor facilities, and surface vessels

within the first island chain especially from Kyushu to Okinawa, and to Taiwan, the Philippines, and Borneo Island (Kalimantan Island). This issue, which is also known as the visibility-vulnerability dilemma, imposes challenges that are impossible to ignore for the forward-deployed US forces.

The Trump administration stipulates policies of enhancing force quality while maintaining a forward military presence, including maintenance of a favorable balance of power as well as a forward military presence in order to deter and defend against conflicts as outlined in the NSS, and the strengthening of forward posture of US forces accompanying the rise of great power competition as outlined in the NDS. As concepts concerning more specific employment, the NDS describes dynamic force employment in order to enhance flexibility and unpredictability of force employment, and a Global Operating Model comprising four layers (contact, blunt, surge, and homeland) concerning the ideal force posture.

As shown in Table 6.3, forward force plays important roles for everything from competition and deterrence in peacetime to actual war fighting. In other words, what is needed is not simply a symbolic “presence for its own sake” by the US forward forces (former Deputy Assistant Secretary Colby). On the contrary, it is presumed that forward base facilities and other military assets will be placed in contested environments in the event of armed conflict, and it is necessary to have a forward posture that can deny enemy military actions while swiftly deploying troops.<sup>26</sup>

The Army’s efforts in recent years are noteworthy for denying enemy forces on the front lines. In particular, Multi-Domain Operations (MDO) continuously tested and revised under the Army’s initiative is one of the most important concepts for responding to the future strategic environment. MDO deters military escalation while competing from an advantageous standpoint with mainly Russia and China, and, if deterrence fails, implements operations nearly simultaneously in multiple domains, namely land, sea, air, space, cyberspace, and electromagnetic spectrum. This concept is designed to provide diverse options to the United States and also create operational dilemmas for enemy operations.<sup>27</sup>

The Army plans to realize MDO by 2028. In 2017, the Multi-Domain Task Force (MDTF) was introduced centered on the 17th Field Artillery Brigade that possesses a High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS). Through the MDTF, the US Army has tested the necessary specific components of the concept

Table 6.3. Global Operating Model

Layer [Force]	Main Tasks	Notes
Contact Layer [Forward Force]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Responds to situations in the “gray zone” jointly with allies</li> <li>· Ensures national interests in competitive spaces below the threshold of armed conflict</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Delays, degrades, and denies enemy operations as the blunt layer when competition escalates to conflict</li> </ul>
Blunt Layer [Forward Force]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Prevents achievement of a fait accompli</li> <li>· Endures until arrival of the surge force</li> <li>· Delays, degrades, and denies enemy maneuvers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· “Blunts” enemy operations through stand-off strikes and forward-deployed and combat forces</li> <li>· Essential to have a resilient, dispersed basing posture with sufficient stockpiles of logistics items and a command and control network</li> </ul>
Surge Layer [Homeland Forces and Forward Forces in Other Regions]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Dispatch and deployment of war-winning force</li> <li>· Escalation control</li> <li>· Ends conflict with preferable terms</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Exploits creation of operational and political leverage by the blunt force</li> <li>· Expects to be contested while dispatching and deploying forces</li> <li>· Essential to maintain such capabilities as command and control, artillery, mobility, logistics to penetrate A2/AD systems</li> </ul>
Homeland Layer [Homeland Force]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Deters and defeats attacks on the US homeland</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Maintains consistency with forward operations and manages escalation favorably</li> </ul>

Sources: DOD, *Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy of the United States: Sharpening the American Military’s Competitive Edge*, January 2018, p. 7; Elbridge A. Colby, “Testimony Before the Senate Armed Services Committee,” p. 6; Robert B. Neller, “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 20, 2018, pp. 2-3.

in the western Pacific region. According to US Army Pacific Commander Robert Brown, the MDTF enables penetration of A2/AD multi-layered defenses which had previously proven difficult in training and war games.<sup>28</sup> The Army plans to additionally adopt the first MDTF in Europe and the second MDTF in the Indo-Pacific region going forward.

The MDTF already plays a major role related to testing surface-to-ship missiles. The MDTF implemented sinking exercises (SINKEX) jointly with Japan’s Ground Self-Defense Force using HIMARS during the Rim of the

Pacific Exercise (RIMPAC) in 2018, and surface-to-ship missile exercises using HIMARS during the Japan-US joint military exercise Orient Shield held in September 2019. Through such exercises, the MDTF advanced efforts to enhance not only readiness, but also interoperability with partner countries in joint operations.

The operational advantages of ground-based missiles like HIMARS include the relatively higher survivability—particularly when using a mobile launcher—and higher responsiveness that makes it possible to strike adversary assets, both at sea and on land, from within the theater. While the concept of deploying ground forces on the first island chain and denying enemy maneuvers from land is becoming a mainstream discussion concerning A2/AD, the MDTF initiative embodies this concept.

At the same time, capability strengthening is also being undertaken for so-called “new domains” of MDTF. The Intelligence, Information, Cyber, Electronic Warfare and Space (I2CEWS) battalion launched by the US Army in January 2019 is an important component of MDTF alongside the 17th Field Artillery Brigade. The I2CEWS battalion is composed of four companies each specialized in a respective domain of intelligence; information; cyber and electronic warfare; and space capabilities and signals, and plays a role to ensure US information advantage not only during conflicts but also in the phase of competition. In relation to cooperation with the artillery brigade, the long range sensing section enables precision fires and supports artillery, air and missile defense capabilities. Within the process from targeting to shooting through the adoption of the sensing section, the task force greatly expands domains capable of independent execution. Furthermore, the MDTF first conducted a practical test of methods and capabilities necessary for executing I2CEWS functions during Cyber Blitz 2019. Through this as well, MDTF activities will probably provide important indicators to confirm the extent of progress of MDO going forward.

Movements by the Air Force to actively participate in MDO can also be seen. Chief of Staff of the US Air Force David Goldfein highly evaluates MDO as a concept that “will change the character of modern warfare.”<sup>29</sup> He raises multi-domain command and control (MDC2) as a maximum priority field during his tenure and indicates the objective to enhance capabilities to grasp situations extending over multiple domains, the speed of decision-making, and employment of force. The Air Force sets examination of operational concepts,

adoption of advanced technologies, and training and education as the three pillars of future MDC2-related efforts. The Shadow Operations Center, which examines applications of innovative advanced technology, was established at Nellis Air Force Base in Nevada in 2017, and MDC2 efforts switched from the consideration stage to the execution stage, including starting the “13 Oscar” career field to train human resources in 2019.

In addition, the paper co-written by Commander David Perkins of the US Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) and Commander James Holmes of the Air Combat Command (ACC) in 2018 admitted that various branches of the military had separately examined tactical operations over the past 30 years and indicated that TRADOC and the ACC would work to harmonize their concepts and capabilities while cooperating in order to create multi-domain capabilities.<sup>30</sup> Such progress within the Air Force and with another branch not only polishes operations and detects problem areas, but also has significance as a signal to promote further unification of the US military as a whole.

On the other hand, there has also been specific cooperation on operations between the Air Force and Army. One example is HIMARS rapid infiltration (HI-RAIN) implemented mainly between the Army and the Air Force throughout the 2010s. HI-RAIN further extends the strike range of HIMARS by having transport aircraft swiftly carry and deploy this system forward. Usually one or two HIMARS systems as well as personnel needed for operation, command and control vehicles, and the like are embarked on C-17 or C-130 transport aircraft.<sup>31</sup> During the US-Australia joint exercise Talisman Sabre in 2019, there was a transport and deployment exercise for implementing HI-RAIN in which the Marine Corps HIMARS unit embarked on Air Force MC-130J aircraft and the Army MDTF on the Marine Corps KC-130J aircraft. The scale of cooperation based on the concept expanded, including with the conducting of a live-fire exercise under the command and control of the Australian military.

Nonetheless, it must be noted that although air superiority is essential for executing HI-RAIN in conflict situations with airlift to the theater, ensuring air superiority would be a highly-difficult task in the age of great power competition. Therefore, when and how HI-RAIN is in fact to be executed in the face of an opponent’s counter-air capabilities, is a crucial question to further advance this concept.

Furthermore, the Air Force is advancing efforts for continuous employment

of aircraft in the contested environment. Agile combat employment (ACE) is one such concept that the Air Force is focusing on. It entails employment of multiple fighter aircraft packaged with transport aircraft carrying the minimum level needed of maintenance supplies and personnel and aims to quickly execute provision of supplies and maintenance in an austere base environment. ACE follows the basic concept of “Rapid Raptor,” an operational concept for F-22 fighter aircraft unveiled by the US Air Force in 2013. On the other hand, there have been notable developments in ACE from the previous concept. For instance, testing of employment of fighter aircraft besides F-22s, such as F-15s and F-16s, has been carried out



A live-fire demonstration performed during Exercise Talisman Sabre 2019 (US Army Pacific Public Affairs Office; Photo by Senior Airman Ashley Maldonado-Suarez)

in recent years. The US Air Force has also embarked on cooperation with like-minded countries, including by creating opportunities for exchanges of views and explanatory meetings concerning ACE with US allies and partner countries.

The US Air Force tested this concept from various viewpoints in 2019. In April, fighter aircraft such as F-22s, F-15s, and F-16s and transport aircraft such as C-130s and C-17s moved from major bases in the Pacific region to gather at Andersen Air Force Base in Guam, in order to carry out a dispersal exercise in which the aircraft were deployed to various areas throughout Micronesia. This exercise had not only the military aspect of enhancing readiness, but also the more strategic aspect of strengthening partnerships with countries in Micronesia. Also, during the RED FLAG exercise held in August in Alaska, four maintenance personnel completed ammunitions and fuel replenishment for two F-15 fighter aircraft in less than one hour. One of the worst conceivable scenarios in the A2/AD environment is aircraft being unable to land and take off due to strikes on base facilities. However, as seen in the above-mentioned exercise, the US Air Force’s efforts to reduce the operational risks are noteworthy.

The United States is also working on expeditionary advanced base operations (EABO) that quickly seize and sustain land-based forward locations from the

water. The concept, being examined by the Marine Corps, aims to support and complement friendly surface forces by deploying sensors, missiles, and the like to temporarily-secured forward locations, and seize the strategic initiative. According to the Marine Corps, the heart of this concept is to create an opportunity to “turn the sea denial table” on the competitors.<sup>32</sup> EABO are mutually complementary to the Navy’s distributed maritime operations (DMO) concerning operations in littoral areas. Going forward, creating networks of sea-based and land-based sensing and strike capabilities will be an urgent task.

In this way, branches of the US military are testing and advancing operational concepts designed to deal with A2/AD in the Pacific region. Among others, it is worth noting that through the above-mentioned exercises and trainings, the United States seeks not only to enhance the readiness of its forward forces but also to promote interoperability and partnerships with allies and partners in the region. This is fully in line with the United States’ strategic guidelines of building a more effective force posture while maintaining its presence in the Indo-Pacific region. On the other hand, the US forces do not have a joint operational concept at the present point, and how these various operational concepts result in a wider concept of the US Joint Force remains to be seen. In addition, many of the above-mentioned operational concepts seem to focus on forward deployment, that is, deployment within the territory of allies and partner countries of the United States. This makes cooperative relations with regional partners particularly important during peacetime, including in the case of accessing base facilities in these countries.

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