

US Plans for China Blockade Continue Taking Shape

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In 2018, the US Naval War College Review published a [paper](#) titled, “A Maritime Oil Blockade Against China—Tactically Tempting But Strategically Flawed.” It was only one of many over the preceding years discussing the details of implementing a maritime blockade as part of a larger encirclement and containment strategy of China.

At first glance the paper looks like US policy thinking considered, then moved past the idea of blockading China. Instead, the paper merely listed a number of obstacles impeding such a strategy *in 2018*—obstacles that would need to be removed if such a strategy were to be viable in the near or intermediate future—and obstacles US policymakers have been removing ever since.

More contemporary papers published, including those among the pages of the US Naval Institute ([here](#) and [here](#)), have updated and refined not just an emerging strategy to theoretically confront and contain China, but a plan of action taking tangible shape.

Cold War Continuity of Agenda

Throughout the Cold War and ever since its conclusion, the US’ singular foreign policy objective has been to maintain American hegemony over the globe established at the end of the World Wars. A 1992 New York Times [article](#) titled “U.S. Strategy Plan Calls for Insuring no Rivals Develop” made it clear the US would actively prevent the emergence of any nation or groups of nations from contesting American primacy worldwide.

In recent years this has included preventing the reemergence of Russia as well as the rise of China. It also involves surrounding both nations with arcs of chaos and/or confrontation—either through the destruction of neighboring countries through political subversion, or the capture of these nations by the US and their transformation into battering rams to be used against both nations.

Ukraine is an extreme example of this policy in action. The US is also transforming both the Philippines and the Chinese island province of Taiwan into similar proxies vis-à-vis China.

Beyond this, the US seeks to prevent the majority of nations currently outside US dominion from joining with and contributing to the multipolar world order proposed by nations like Russia and China.

This strategy of coercion, destabilization, political capture, proxy war, and outright war has been used to target both Russia and China directly, their neighbors, and a growing list of nations far beyond their near abroad.

Strengths and Weaknesses of American Primacy

Enabling this strategy is America's global-spanning military presence facilitated by its *"alliance network."* This network of obedient client regimes both hosts US military forces and serves as an extension of US military, economic, and increasingly military-industrial power. US *"allies"* often pursue US geopolitical objectives at their own expense.

Again, an explicit example of this is Ukraine, which is locked in a proxy war with Russia, threatening its own self-preservation as a means of—as US policymakers described in a 2019 RAND Corporation paper—["extending Russia."](#)

While conflicts like that unfolding in Ukraine or the US-backed military build-up in the Philippines or on Taiwan has exposed a critical weakness of the United States—its lagging military industrial capacity vis-à-vis either Russia or China, let alone both nations—the US has demonstrated the ability to compensate through geopolitical agility the multipolar world is struggling to address.

This includes the ability of the US to mire a targeted nation in conflict in one location while moving resources across its global-spanning military-logistical networks toward pressure points in other locations, overextending the targeted nation and achieving success in at least one of the multiple pressure points targeted. The US successfully did this through its proxy war against Russia in Ukraine, which tied Russia up sufficiently for the US to finally succeed in the overthrow of the Syrian government, where Russian forces had previously thwarted US-sponsored proxy war and regime change.

It also includes the ability of the US to target partner or potential partner nations of Russia and China through economic, political, or even military means in ways Russia and China are unable to defend against—including through political subversion facilitated through America's near monopoly over global information space.

These advantages the US still possesses also make potential maritime blockades very difficult for Russia and China to defend against.

Russian Energy Shipments as a Beta Test for Blockading China

France [recently](#) announced seizing a ship accused of being part of Russia's *"ghost"* or *"shadow"* fleet—ships refusing to heed unilateral sanctions placed by the US and its client states on Russian energy shipments.

This was just one of several first steps toward what may materialize into a wider and more aggressive interdiction or blockade of Russian energy shipments. This may also be a beta test for implementing a long-desired maritime blockade on China.

A rapid, full-scale blockade would cause energy prices to spike and could blow back to the US as negative economic consequences. By incrementally pressuring Russian energy shipments, the US can slowly adjust energy markets in an incremental manner to cushion a sudden shock the public would immediately notice and potentially react to.

Russia and the rest of the multipolar world's response to this increasingly aggressive targeting of maritime shipping may determine whether or not the US adopts the strategy of maritime blockades on a wider scale.

Setting the Stage for a Blockade of China Has Already Begun

The 2018 US Naval War College Review paper lays out the realities of a potential blockade against China in 2018, noting the various opportunities and risks associated with such a strategy.

The paper notes that

“China’s reliance on seaborne oil supplies has risen steadily over the past decade and could rise further as domestic production declines” and that “the imported oil passes overwhelmingly through the Strait of Malacca and a handful of other passages that the U.S. Navy could seal off effectively.”

It also talks extensively about a “*distant blockade*,” it says would be “*imposed far from the Chinese coast, reducing the threat to U.S. forces from Chinese A2/AD systems.*”

This recognizes China’s growing military capabilities—military capabilities US policymakers admit are being developed and deployed to defend China, not project military power abroad—a fact US policymakers openly seek to exploit through America’s existing, global-spanning network of military power projection.

The paper includes a map marking various maritime chokepoints the US Navy then and today is capable of closing off beyond the reach of Chinese military power, backed by the growing US military footprint in the region, particularly across the Philippines, Japan (as well as its island province of Okinawa), as well as the Chinese island province of Taiwan itself.

It also mentions ongoing efforts by China to establish land routes to circumvent these maritime chokepoints, including the Myanmar-China oil pipeline, claiming:

A distant blockade also would need to interdict the Myanmar-China oil pipeline, which eventually could move as much as 440 kbd of crude oil from Kyaukpyu in coastal Myanmar to Yunnan Province in southwest China. Preventing tankers from off-loading at the Kyaukpyu terminal would require few, if any, naval platforms to remain on-site. The area could be declared an exclusion zone for the duration of a conflict, and if the Myanmar authorities failed to comply, the facility could be disabled via air strikes, aerial mining, or other kinetic action. In short, U.S. forces likely would be able to neutralize rapidly China’s overland routes for seaborne oil imports to avoid the Strait of Malacca and other choke points farther east and prevent them from diverting forces needed to seal other maritime ingress routes.

Far from just theoretical war planning, this Myanmar-China oil pipeline has since been targeted by US-backed militants operating inside Myanmar, fighting the central government, and using the conflict as cover to strike at, compromise, and even destroy Chinese investments across the Southeast Asian country.

In February 2022, the US National Endowment for Democracy (NED) funded opposition media organization, The Irrawaddy, reported in its [article](#), “*China-Backed Pipeline Facility Damaged in Myanmar Resistance Attack*,” that:

An off-take station of the China-backed oil and gas pipelines was damaged when a local resistance group attacked regime forces guarding the facility in Mandalay Region...

And that:

Anti-Chinese sentiment swelled in Myanmar following the military coup last February, with many people believing Beijing had a hand in the takeover. At that time, there were calls for a boycott of Chinese products, along with calls to blow up the pipelines if China refused to condemn the regime.

The calls prompted China to urge the regime to increase security for the pipelines. Since March last year, the regime has assigned extra forces to protect them.

Likewise, the US has been backing extremists in southwest Pakistan to target the Chinese-built China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) over the course of several years spanning the Obama, first Trump, Biden, and now second Trump administrations (including [in 2021](#), [2024](#), and [2025](#)).

In other nations, like the Southeast Asian Kingdom of Thailand, US-sponsored opposition leaders like billionaire Thanathorn Juangroongruangkit have [openly campaigned](#) to stop Chinese infrastructure projects like high-speed rail lines as part of slowing down, stopping, or even reversing progress for China's BRI network and thus eliminating the BRI as an alternative to circumvent a US-imposed maritime blockade on Chinese shipping.

The 2018 paper also identifies Russia as a primary alternative source for Chinese energy imports—which is one of the reasons the US is waging its ongoing proxy war against Russia through Ukraine and why the US is [overseeing](#) an expanding campaign to attack and destroy Russian refineries and other forms of energy infrastructure across Russia.

In other words, while US policymakers envisioned an opportunity for using US military power to attack and dismantle China's Belt and Road Initiative infrastructure amid a US-Chinese conflict and other measures to cut China off from crucial energy imports, including from Russia, since then, the US has used armed extremists it funds and backs inside nations hosting Chinese BRI projects to begin attacking these projects *before* any direct US-Chinese conflict commences—together with a dangerously large proxy war being fought against China's ally, Russia, to complicate or cut off significant alternative energy imports.

The paper concludes that any blockade should not be seen as a single, independent solution to eliminating an adversary and that the US must also continue building up the forces necessary to wage war against China as well.

Since the paper was published, the US has pursued both continued preparations for a maritime blockade of China itself, as well as build up a number of regional proxies to wage war against China, as the US wages proxy war against Russia in Ukraine and, increasingly, through the rest of Europe.

While this reality continues to take shape, political [rhetoric](#) in Washington attempts to disarm China and its allies from taking action to prepare for the inevitable confrontation the US is preparing for by creating the impression Washington seeks to "*retreat*" from the "*Indo-Pacific*" region to defend the "*homeland*" in the Western Hemisphere.

While some in the public and even across the alternative media have fallen for this rhetoric, it is unlikely anyone in Beijing, Moscow, or other BRICS capitals could be so naive—especially as these empty words from Washington are overshadowed by the US' continued physical militarization of China's periphery, continued regime change operations

along China’s borders—most recently [in Nepal](#)—and the continued US proxy war against Russia aimed specifically at crippling its energy production capabilities—a key prerequisite for a successful maritime blockade of China.

To understand Washington’s strategy toward China, one should not look to the political rhetoric of “retreat” or “homeland defense” in the Western Hemisphere, but rather to the tangible actions taking place across the Asia-Pacific and beyond—the meticulous encirclement of China’s periphery, the sustained attacks on its critical overland energy and trade links (BRI/CPEC), the calculated incapacitation of Russia as a potential energy supplier, and the establishment of local proxy forces (the Philippines, Japan, separatists on Taiwan) prepared to wage war.

Far from an abstract or “flawed” concept relegated to think-tank papers, the maritime oil blockade—or wider general blockade against China—is being incrementally prepared in real-time. By systematically removing the very obstacles noted in the 2018 Naval War College Review paper, the US is demonstrating a clear, unwavering commitment to a multi-layered strategy of containment, coercion, and confrontation designed not just to prepare for conflict, but to make that conflict both inevitable and successful for the singular goal of maintaining global American hegemony.

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