

## Are US War Plans with China Taking Shape?

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*The US and its allies continue beating the drums of war in regards to China, but how serious is this? Will it really lead to war, or is it merely posturing meant to give the US the most favorable position on the other side of a fully ascendant China?*

A critical inflection point identified by US war planners for years is approaching, where China’s economic and military might will irreversibly surpass the US and the center of global power will likewise irreversibly shift from West to East creating a global balance of power unseen for centuries. A closing window of opportunity estimated to close between 2025 and 2030 allows the US to carry out a limited war with China, resulting in a favorable outcome for Washington. Beyond that, the US will find itself outmatched and any attempt to curb China’s rise rendered futile.

The propaganda war, and the war itself this propaganda aims to justify and rally support for, is unmistakable, particularly for those who have witnessed similar buildups ahead of the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, or US-led military interventions in nations like Libya and Syria from 2011 onward.

A recent 60 Minutes Australia segment titled, “War with China: Are we closer than we think?,” presented an amalgamation of this ongoing propaganda used to vilify the Chinese government, dehumanize the Chinese people, and create sufficient anger, fear, paranoia, distrust, and hatred in hearts and minds across the planet to justify what would be for the 21st century, an unprecedented war.

For the United States, a war with China would be the first of its kind, a war with a peer or near-peer competitor armed with nuclear weapons.

Yet US war planners are fairly confident that the conflict could be confined to East Asia, remain conventional, and see a favorable outcome for the US that would secure its primacy over Asia for decades to come.

A victory for the US would not be military in nature, but rather hinge on “nonmilitary factors,” and focus on disrupting and setting back China’s economy and thus the power propelling China past the United States at the moment.

### **The 2016 US War Plan Coming to Life**

These conclusions were laid out in a 2016 RAND Corporation [document](#) titled, “War with China: Thinking Through the Unthinkable,” commissioned by the Office of the Undersecretary of the Army and carried out by the RAND Arroyo Center’s Strategy, Doctrine, and Resources Program. The report notes that the RAND Arroyo Center is part of the RAND Corporation and is a federally-funded research and development center sponsored by the United States Army.

The report notes that America’s military advantage is in decline vis-a-vis China, but also lays out several current realities that would favor the US should hostilities unfold.

It states on page 9 of the PDF document:

We postulate that a war would be regional and conventional. It would be waged mainly by ships on and beneath the sea, by aircraft and missiles of many sorts, and in space (against satellites) and cyberspace (against computer systems). We assume that fighting would start and remain in East Asia, where potential Sino-US flash points and nearly all Chinese forces are located.

The RAND document admits that China’s forces are concentrated in Chinese territory and that virtually all flash points that could trigger a conflict are likewise located in the region. This implies that US forces would need to be more or less right up to China’s shores and regional claims, and insist on interfering in regional disputes or intervene in matters between Taiwan and mainland China.

### **The Nuclear Question**

Many assume any war between China and the United States would escalate into a nuclear exchange. However, this is unlikely except under the most extreme conditions.

Regarding nuclear and conventional warfare, the RAND document makes a compelling argument, stating:

It is unlikely that nuclear weapons would be used: Even in an intensely violent conventional conflict, neither side would regard its losses as so serious, its prospects so dire, or the stakes so vital that it would run the risk of devastating nuclear retaliation by using nuclear weapons first. We also assume that China would not attack the US homeland, except via cyberspace, given its minimal capability to do so with conventional weapons. In contrast, US nonnuclear attacks against military targets in China could be extensive.

The report studies a window of opportunity that began in 2015 and stretches to 2025. Current developments seem to indicate the US may see this window extend as far as 2030, including the recent announcement of the “AUKUS” alliance where US-UK-built Australian nuclear-powered submarines would be coming online and ready to participate in such a conflict around the early 2030’s.

## **US May Trade Heavy Military Losses for China's Economic Ruination**

Under a section titled, "The Importance of Nonmilitary Factors," the RAND report notes:

The prospect of a military standoff means that war could eventually be decided by nonmilitary factors. These should favor the United States now and in the future. Although war would harm both economies, damage to China's could be catastrophic and lasting: on the order of a 25-35 percent reduction in Chinese gross domestic product (GDP) in a yearlong war, compared with a reduction in US GDP on the order of 5-10 percent. Even a mild conflict, unless ended promptly, could weaken China's economy. A long and severe war could ravage China's economy, stall its hard-earned development, and cause widespread hardship and dislocation.

Considering the current shape of US-Chinese relations, the emphasis on economics and trade, and the persistent, even desperate attempts by the US to not only inflict as much damage on China's economy ahead of a potential conflict as possible, but also its attempts to "decouple" from China's economy as fast as possible could be interpreted as tying off a limb before amputation.

### **Preparations Already Underway to Exploit China's Economic Damage**

The report notes the follow-on effects of the economic damage such a conflict would inflict on China. It would open the door for already on-going US machinations to undermine China's social and political stability to expand and do tremendous damage, perhaps even threatening the cohesion of Chinese society.

It states specifically:

Such economic damage could in turn aggravate political turmoil and embolden separatists in China. Although the regime and its security forces presumably could withstand such challenges, doing so might necessitate increased oppressiveness, tax the capacity, and undermine the legitimacy of the Chinese regime in the midst of a very difficult war. In contrast, US domestic partisan skirmishing could handicap the war effort but not endanger societal stability, much less the survival of the state, no matter how long and harsh the conflict, so long as it remains conventional. Escalating cyberwarfare, while injurious to both sides, could worsen China's economic problems and impede the government's ability to control a restive population.

The mention of "separatists in China" is particularly important. These groups, often made up of armed extremists, are supported by an extensive international network funded by the US government itself.

Separatism in China's Xinjiang and Tibetan regions is openly supported by the US government and has been sponsored by Washington for decades. The US National Endowment for Democracy's official website lists [its programs for Xinjiang](#), China as, "Xinjiang/East Turkestan," "East Turkestan" being the separatist name for Xinjiang. The organizations listed, including the Uyghur Human Rights Project and the World Uyghur Congress openly admit on their respective websites that they view Xinjiang - contrary to international law - as "occupied" by China rather than a territory of China.

In a move that could very likely be a warning of just how close to a US-provoked conflict with China we may be, the US State Department de-listed the East Turkestan Islamic

Movement (ETIM) in 2020 claiming it had not been active for over a decade.

Yet by the US' own admission US military forces struck ETIM targets in Afghanistan as recently as 2018, and just this year ETIM representatives gave [an interview](#) with US-based Newsweek magazine.

ETIM is still listed by a number of nations as well as [the UN itself](#) as a terrorist organization.

Economic turmoil, armed insurrection, and socio-political instability are factors the US has openly attempted to impose on China for decades and is still placing pieces on the gameboard toward this objective. If a conflict were to break out, those pieces would clearly already be in place to maximize Washington's ability to exploit economic damage inflicted by the conflict.

### **Targeting China's Trade Lanes at Sea**

The RAND paper notes specifically the impact on Chinese trade a conventional conflict confined to East Asia would have. The report notes:

...while the United States has sophisticated sensors to distinguish military from nonmilitary targets, during war it will focus on finding and tracking the former; moreover, Chinese ISR is less sophisticated and discriminating, especially at a distance. This suggests very hazardous airspace and sea space, perhaps ranging from the Yellow Sea to the South China Sea. Assuming that non-Chinese commercial enterprises would rather lose revenue than ships or planes, the United States would not need to use force to stop trade to and from China.<sup>16</sup> China would lose a substantial amount of trade that would be required to transit the war zone. The United States expressly threatening commercial shipping would be provocative, hazardous, and largely unnecessary. So we posit no US blockade, as such.

Of course, the US has a variety of tools at its disposal that it regularly uses upon the international stage to impede free commerce. It is an irony since Washington often accuses Beijing of "threatening" such commerce in regions like the South China Sea while Washington is actually impeding it on a global scale.

NPR in its 2020 [article](#), "US Seizes Iranian Fuel From 4 Tankers Bound For Venezuela," would note:

According to The Associated Press, quoting unnamed US officials, no military force was used in the seizure of the cargo, and none of the ships was physically impounded. Instead, US officials threatened ship owners, insurers and captains with sanctions to force them to hand over their cargo, the AP reported.

Because of America's still formidable grip over international media, it would be extremely easy to sink vessels engaged in commerce and blame it on China or claim it was accidental. A total blockade would not be necessary to deter the majority of commerce in the region, only a few examples would be needed for the self-preservation of shipping companies to de facto cut off trade.

Another concerning warning sign was the Pentagon restructuring an entire branch of the US armed forces, the US Marine Corps, to specifically fight a single nation (China), in a very specific region (East Asia), with very specific tactics (shutting down straits used for

commercial shipping).

Defense News in a 2020 [article](#) titled, “Here’s the US Marine Corps’ plan for sinking Chinese ships with drone missile launchers,” would claim:

The US Marine Corps is getting into the ship-killing business, and a new project in development is aimed at making their dreams of harrying the People’s Liberation Army Navy a reality.

The article also noted:

Marine Corps requirements and development chief Lt. Gen. Eric Smith told reporters last year during the Expeditionary Warfare Conference that the Marines want to fight on ground of their choosing and then maneuver before forces can concentrate against them.

“They are mobile and small, they are not looking to grab a piece of ground and sit on it,” Smith said of his Marine units. “I’m not looking to block a strait permanently. I’m looking to maneuver. The German concept is ‘Schwerpunkt,’ which is applying the appropriate amount of pressure and force at the time and place of your choosing to get maximum effect.”

The US Marine Corps has already decommissioned all of their main battle tanks as part of this restructuring which took [less than a year](#) – signifying the urgency of US preparations.

The US taking ships out in busy commerce straits and creating an environment that would cripple trade between China and the rest of the world would have a heavy impact on China’s economy.

On page 67 of the PDF document, RAND includes a graphic depiction of China’s projected GDP losses versus the US, giving us a compelling motive for the US to wage a war it knows it will suffer heavy military losses amidst, but emerge economically stronger than a China that will otherwise, barring such a conflict, surpass the US within this window of opportunity.

### **China Knows, But Can China Beat the Clock?**

It is very obvious that China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is an attempt for China to diversify away from Asia-Pacific trade routes the US is clearly making preparations to attack and disrupt.

Pipelines running through Pakistan as part of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and through Myanmar to Kunming in Yunnan Province would help move hydrocarbons bound for China from the Middle East without passing through waters the US could disrupt in the conflict it is clearly preparing for.

However, these alternative routes are already under attack.

US-sponsored separatists operating in Pakistan’s southwest province of Baluchistan regularly attack and kill Chinese engineers and the infrastructure itself.

Protests organized by US-sponsored opposition groups target Gwadar Port, CPEC’s terminal.

Just this year alone, France 24 would [report](#) in April a bombing targeting a hotel the Chinese

ambassador to Pakistan was staying at but who luckily wasn't at the hotel at the time of the bombing. In July, the BBC [reported](#) that 9 Chinese engineers working on CPEC projects were killed in a targeted attack. And according to [Reuters](#), in August, 2 children were killed during a suicide bombing targeting Chinese engineers in Baluchistan.

US-backed opposition groups have been attacking Chinese investments in Myanmar since the military ousted the US client regime headed by Aung San Suu Kyi and her National League for Democracy (NDL). CNN would [report](#) in March, just a month after the military took over, that the opposition was lighting Chinese factories ablaze.

US government-funded Myanmar opposition media outlet, The Irrawaddy, published an [article](#) in May titled, "Deadly Attack on Pipeline Station Spotlights China's High Stakes in Myanmar," claiming:

The importance of the project was highlighted in February when Chinese officials held an emergency meeting with Myanmar officials, at which they urged the military regime to tighten security measures for the pipelines. They said the project is a crucial part of Beijing's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in Myanmar and insisted that "any damage to the pipelines would cause huge losses for both countries." The request came amid growing anti-China sentiment in Myanmar, where protesters—angered by Beijing's blocking of the UN Security Council (UNSC)'s efforts to take action against the coup leaders—have threatened to blow up the pipelines.

The article concludes by quoting a Swedish journalist claiming:

It would come as no surprise if attacks were carried out against, for instance, the pipelines, he said. "And attitudes will not change unless the Chinese government stops its support for the Myanmar military. That should be a real concern."

Xinjiang, China, also serves as a critical juncture for China's BRI and we can clearly see the US promoting separatism there. The recent "Uyghur Tribunal" organized by the abovementioned US-funded World Uyghur Congress aims at further undermining Beijing's efforts to counter US-sponsored armed separatism in Xinjiang by placing additional international pressure on China for implementing necessary security measures to prevent it.

The continued US-sponsored attacks on China's BRI, the US-led military build-up along China's coasts, and the propaganda war the US is waging to control the narratives surrounding both, represents a race against time for both Washington and Beijing.

For Washington, it is attempting to create the conditions in which RAND predictions of China's economic devastation following a conventional conflict confined to East Asia can be transformed into reality.

For Beijing, it is attempting to run out the clock and assume the economic, military, and political power it needs to fully deter any such conflict, and assume its position as the largest, most powerful economy on Earth.

All things being equal, China has the world's largest population – a population that is hardworking and well-educated. China's educational institutions are producing millions more science, technology, engineering, and mathematics graduates than the US per year. China's massive trade networks ensure its economy has plenty of resources. It should become the largest economy. And only a war of aggression, chosen to be waged by Washington will stop



this from coming to pass.

US foreign policy in the 21st century has demonstrated in action the true nature of its foreign policy versus what Washington's politicians say with words from behind podiums or its media says in front of cameras about a "rules-based international order." The only rule we can see demonstrably upheld is "might makes right." Only time will tell whether or not the US "makes right" its smaller nation with its smaller economy clinging to primacy over China for decades to come before it no longer has the "might" to do so.

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