Building a Purposeful Research Agenda

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In this second installment of the CLSC Director’s Corner, Joshua Arostegui, the Center’s research director and chair of China studies, and I discuss the Center’s research agenda. Previously, I outlined the center’s mission and how the research agenda answers large campaign questions across the perspectives of the People’s Republic of China (PRC), the United States, and US allies and partners.

To advance the Center’s research plan, we hosted a daylong roundtable for our counterparts from the Department of Defense China-focused research centers. These government think tanks, located within the other senior professional military education schools, have done a fantastic job researching the strategy, jointness, weapons, and modernization of key components of the People’s Liberation Army (PLA), including the PLA Navy, the PLA Air Force, and the PLA Rocket Force. Their work, however, does not assess how the People’s Liberation Army views and applies Landpower. Thus, the CLSC research team focuses on the PRC’s strategy, government, and military to determine whether military deterrence activity will buy the trade space required for economic, diplomatic, and informational activity that maintains the rules-based international order.

Our research plan explores the necessity for strategic Landpower and develops a different perspective on the capabilities and the limitations of a protracted conflict that the US military has not had to deal with since the end of World War II. Its goals are to:
Understand the strategic and operational environment from the Chinese Communist Party and the People’s Liberation Army viewpoint not as a mirror of ourselves but from the perspective of a Marxist-Leninist state that thinks historically as a land-centric power.

Assess how the PLA Army and other PLA services’ ground components, the People’s Armed Police, and the Ministry of Public Security participate in military diplomacy and support the PRC’s multiple global economic and security initiatives.

Determine how the PRC’s ground forces are refining their strategies as part of the joint force by using Chinese language–enabled research to discover how China views the application of Landpower from the strategic to the operational level (or the “campaign level,” according to Beijing).

Collaborate with our expert affiliates to understand better the all-domain operations the People’s Liberation Army is already conducting in the Sino-Indian border region.

Tailor our research to assess People’s Republic of China ground-force leadership and decision making from the Central Military Commission to the joint theater command and military districts to gain insights into the Chinese Communist Party’s use of the military instrument of power.

Analyze the growing collaboration in the Indo-Pacific between the People’s Republic of China, Russia, and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea.

Illuminate where US Landpower plays an outsized role in balancing deterrence in favor of maintaining a free and open Indo-Pacific. Stated another way, is coercion theory being applied appropriately in the Indo-Pacific?

Outline crisis and wartime options for using strategic Landpower to deny initial adversary objectives and to provide options throughout a potential war to avoid culmination and end the conflict on favorable terms.

Explore great-power conflict, including potentially protracted war, as a norm between great powers.
Advise stakeholders, including overseas counterparts, on the lessons to be learned from historic or current conflicts and how foreign nations can integrate their visions of multidomain operations via strategic engagement, exercises, training, posture changes, and foreign military sales or finance into that which US Army Pacific Command coordinates on behalf of United States Indo-Pacific Command as the Theater Joint Force Land Component Command.

The CLSC research team works on these efforts simultaneously by focusing and prioritizing research goals annually. These annual themes form the building blocks of a long-term education plan that will help our stakeholders better understand the interactions among the military ends, ways, means, and risks associated with maintaining the rules-based international order as China continues to rise. Each themed year culminates at the annual Carlisle Conference on the People’s Liberation Army, which will study how to deter and prepare better for war, how day-to-day campaigning should change, and what reforms the defense establishment may need. The fall 2024 conference will focus on “protracted war” and the character of peer conflict.

To participate in the center’s research, analysis, and educational process, please e-mail us at CLSC@armywarcollege.edu.

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