



March 7-9, 2023  
GNSI Tampa Summit

# SUMMIT REPORT

Current Rise of the  
Great Powers



UNIVERSITY of  
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## **GNSI Tampa Summit March 7-9, 2023**

*Central and South Asia Directors of Military Intelligence Conference  
7<sup>th</sup> Great Power Competition Conference: Current Rise of Great Powers*

### **Overview**

The inaugural Global and National Security Institute (GNSI) Tampa Summit convened at the University of South Florida campus in Tampa, Florida March 7-9, 2023. The GNSI Tampa Summit is a new platform created to bring together the best strategists, analysts, academics, and policy influencers. The summit consisted of two conferences. First, the Central and South Asia Directors of Military Intelligence Conference focused on the Russian invasion of Ukraine and included representatives of the directors of military intelligence from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Pakistan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. The second event was the 7<sup>th</sup> Great Power Competition Conference: Current Rise of Great Powers focused on China's rise. This report will examine what the experts speaking at the two conferences explored and recommended as policies for future US engagement in Great Power Competition (GPC).

### **Russia and its War in Ukraine**

A year has passed since Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Russian military forces have performed poorly and below all expectations. Before the invasion, Russian forces had conducted exercises but failed to work out logistical and inter-unit coordination issues. As [Brigadier General \(Ret\) Peter Zwack](#) summarized, the Russian military leadership saw the war on a map and failed to train for the conflict they were about to start. He outlined the Russian military did not have the means or training to conduct a four or five axis advance against Ukrainian forces willing to fight. He noted that Russian intelligence misjudged the Ukrainians' will to resist an invasion. Even after the Russian withdrawals from the northern axis of the invasion last year, the stagnated frontlines still stretched some 800 miles. The fighting has seen limited movement in recent months and has come down to firepower. According to Brigadier General (Ret) Zwack the key to success for both sides is ammunition. For Ukraine, this ammunition has come from the West.

The West's reaction beyond military supplies to the invasion has had some effect. Western sanctions have hurt Russia's economy, but ultimately have had limited effect on Russia's military capabilities according to [Dr. Maria Snegovaya](#). Russia managed western sanctions for 10 years prior to the war. They have redirected some of their economy to focus more in the Central and South

Asian Region and to utilize the illegal supply chains flowing through the Eurasian Economic Union. Additionally, [Mr. Dan Blumenthal](#) noted, "It is really hard to have an economic coalition against Russia when they can sell this much oil to China and India, and other countries." Thus, Western sanctions have impacted Russia, but will not cause them to yield or end the war.

When it comes to the Russian public, [Dr. Yoshiko Herrera](#) proposed four tenets that motivate them to support the war and keep President Putin in power. First, the defeat of Nazism in World War II is considered the greatest accomplishment of all time for Russians. The Russian government uses this victory to label any enemy of Russia as a "Nazi." This is exactly what President Putin did in his speech announcing the invasion of Ukraine and calling for its denazification.<sup>i</sup> [Dr. Herrera](#) continued with the second tenet, that the 1990s were a time of embarrassment for Russia. Anti-Westernism and Anti-NATO sentiment in Russia began to grow notability in 1999 with the expansion of NATO to former Warsaw Pact members Poland, Hungary, and Czechia along with NATO's intervention in Kosovo. The third and fourth tenets highlight how Russians see Ukraine as a part of its near abroad and it should be a pro-Russian state, while some Russians even question the idea of Ukrainian nationhood itself.

Despite some of the Russian population supporting the conflict, between 500,000 and a million Russians have fled the country in response to the war, many to avoid conscription.<sup>ii</sup> Overall, the war has not benefited Russia as it continues to execute the war under broad sanctions and heavy military losses.

### **Where does the War go from here?**

[Dr. Nathan Barrick](#) noted that Putin is trying to snatch any sort of victory out of the conflict and that war is worth risking if Russia can get more than Crimea. He outlined that US interests in Ukraine may increase as the 2024 election year comes into focus and the war holds more political value for potential presidential candidates.

As the war drags on and many experts expect major offensives by both sides this summer, some see the conflict intensifying as Russia becomes more desperate for a way out.<sup>iii</sup> [General \(Ret\) Frank McKenzie](#) discussed

how Russia's strategy counterintuitively looks to escalate a situation in order to de-escalate it. This could mean the use of a tactical nuclear weapon. He offered a piece of advice that, "we should take the threat of Russia using a tactical nuclear warhead very seriously." [General \(Ret\) McKenzie](#) supported that comment noting, "The poor performance of Russian conventional forces has made it more likely that they are going to have to do something like this. At the same time, they have very few levers left to pull conventionally, and [that's] a potential problem... the fact of the matter is nuclear weapons are coming back as battlefield weapons."



With possibilities of the war escalating even to the nuclear level, [Mr. Michael DeMattia](#) explored the concept that the war does not have an end in sight, even if it cools off. He explained Russia's use of 'frozen conflicts' around its near abroad for decades. This frozen conflict concept was used in Ukraine from 2014 until the Russia invasion of 2022. He articulated that if Russia cannot get what it wants it may just freeze the conflict in place and wait it out for years. Russia has used this strategy for decades in other frozen conflicts such as those in Moldova and Georgia.

The overwhelming take away is that the war has no clear end in sight and it may see its heaviest fighting yet this summer. The invasion of Ukraine may have been Putin's gamble to bring Russia back to a great power status, but it has failed. As [Mr. Blumenthal](#) declared, "The Russians are now the junior partner of the Chinese, however this war turns out."

## China's Rise to Power

China has experienced rapid economic growth from the late 1970s until today. This unprecedented 'economic miracle' has elevated China to the world's second largest economy with a massive, but aging population of 1.4 billion people.<sup>iv</sup> [Dr. Hal Brands](#) explains, "The Chinese economic miracle... was the product of five contingent and remarkably serendipitous factors, all of which have now turned around for China. (1) China benefited...from having a demographic surplus in the sense that it had a population that was prime for productivity. It had lots of workers with relatively few elderly parents or little kids to take care of. (2) It had an economic program... characterized as reform and opening basically in increasing the role of market incentives in the economy after the pursuit of autarky... (3) It had a government that, while still brutally autocratic, was somewhat more responsive and meritocratic and...managed the economy and was willing to put guardrails in place to avoid the worst

pathologies of one-man rule...(4) It was relatively self-sufficient in key resources such as energy and (5) it had a welcoming world. The world was rooting for China to develop rapidly, and particularly the United States and other key democracies..."

As Dr. Brand noted, the environment that allowed China to grow has now "turned around for China." The United States is no longer rooting for China to develop. [Mr. Blumenthal](#) agreed, "It [China] cannot sustain the same growth rates that it sustained since 1982... but it's still going to grow, and it's not going to sustain the same growth rates, partly because Xi Jinping doesn't want to sustain [them]. He's cracked down on the tech sector... He has moved, though, to a new economic strategy which he's very clear about once again called Dual Circulation...It substitutes high levels of economic growth and surpassing the United States and wealth for gaining more economic leverage all over the world."

[Dr. June Dreyer](#) agreed that the People's Republic of China (PRC) is holding back its own economic growth through a crackdown in certain sectors. She discussed the anecdote of Jack Ma and other tech leaders that spoke out against the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and were quickly retired. These crackdowns further the point that one of the CCP's primary interests is regime security. Although China's economic growth may be slowing, it will leverage its power to pursue its interests.

## Chinese Interests: At Home and Abroad

The CCP sees China as a rising Great Power with global interests. It seeks to compete with the United States for resources and influence globally. [Dr. Brands](#) outlined his assessment on China's desires. First, the CCP's regime security is paramount. Second, CCP aims to make China whole again through the full integration of places like Taiwan and Hong Kong. He also pointed out additional areas the CCP has pushed for inclusion such as the territorial waters in the South China Sea and parts of India. The third concept, called "Asia for Asians" presented by President Xi Jinping in 2014, promotes the concept that China would act as the dominate power in Asia, pushing the United States out. Fourth, competition has gone global and has become comprehensive in innovation, resources, and international institutions.

[Mr. Daniel Tobin](#) outlined his insight on the CCP's ambitions countering Dr. Dreyer and Dr. Brands on the importance of regime security. He states, "First Beijing's overarching goal...is not now, nor has it ever been primarily to keep the party in power. But it is rather the nationalist project that Xi refers to as the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation...This means transforming China from the weak and impoverished and backward country that emerged after World War II into a modern, powerful country that is recognized as a global leader, not only in terms of power, but also in terms of respect and admiration for its achievements. Here the



overall tone of the Twentieth Party Congress report is not fear of US containment, but triumphalism about how much stronger the PRC has become...”

[Mr. Tobin](#) continued, “Now Beijing also believes it must take the lead, because it is convinced that the nature of its domestic political system makes Washington an implacable foe. This heightened risk of containment that Xi Jinping has been identifying is something Beijing long predicted would occur as its strength grew, owing to the PRC’s status as a socialist country. So, it’s not something that is causing Beijing to feel like it’s in a bunker. It’s actually confirmation of Beijing’s growing strength that it’s precipitating this reaction from the United States... Now, when my first point above about the party’s goal of global leadership is combined with a second point about the party’s commitment to Marxist-Leninist is combined with its perception that an US-led order is hostile to socialism, the result is the PRC’s ambition to shape the international order.”

[Dr. Dreyer](#) echoed, “China’s aim in the Middle East, in fact, worldwide, is to replace the US-led liberal [global] order with one of its own making. One that is more friendly toward autocracies, one that is less concerned with civil liberties and with Beijing as its arbiter and epicenter.” [Lieutenant General Dimitri Henry](#) noted, “The CCP’s goal is to be persistent over time and have the international order shape the way that [they] desire to see it shaped without fighting.” To accomplish this task China launched the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

### China’s Great Power Initiative: The BRI

China launched the BRI in 2013 to develop a global network of infrastructure and trade projects it could influence. Currently, the initiative involves over 100 countries.<sup>v</sup> As the BRI expanded it has allowed China to secure access to external sources of food, energy, and mineral resources. It offers the CCP a multitude of countries to import from and several routes (beyond the Malacca Strait) to get those energy resources to China proper. Projects that China undertakes in the BRI support, to varying degrees, Chinese control of key infrastructure (railroads, ports) and energy supplies (power grids) within the host nations.<sup>vi</sup> To give an idea of the scope of this initiative, Figure 1 displays all the official participants of the BRI in and around the Middle East. Notice that the figure shows most of the countries of the region are participating in the BRI (Countries shaded in orange). The BRI projects in these countries have given China unprecedented influence in them.

The BRI’s concept of “furthering interests” is not new. [Dr. Lawrence Reardon](#) explained, “China has been engaged in overseas development projects since 1949. Between 1949 and 2000, there were over 4,000 such projects set up.” He highlighted a few examples of these projects including the Tazara Railway in Tanzania and the Kinkon hydropower station in Guinea. Dr. Reardon continued the discussion about BRI and the opportunity it provides for for Chinese companies to invest abroad. He noted that the BRI is a convenient tool for private Chinese companies to engage with the international

### Official Participating Nations in the BRI as of 2022



Figure 1: Source Data from the Council of Foreign Affairs’ *China’s Massive Belt and Road Initiative* and the Brookings Institute’s *Signing up or standing aside: Disaggregating participation in China’s Belt and Road Initiative*.



community. China will lend funds no matter what, even when world banks will not. This has made China the first choice for loans among many nations. This lending without regulations has caused repayment issues that China has worked to manage. The impacts of the BRI have yet to be fully felt, but this initiative is just one part of the expanding competition with the US.

## The Beginnings of Competition

Great Power Competition between Russia, China and the United States has evolved since the end of the Cold War. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, its successor, the Russian Federation, took over a decade to recover. The United States and Russia maintained a cooperative relationship into the mid-2000s, but competition began to emerge as Russia's economy grew and the US-led alliance, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), expanded by accepting members bordering Russia. Signs of competition arose between the United States and Russia with Putin's 2007 Munich speech calling out the United States and NATO.<sup>vii</sup> Then with Russia's 2008 invasion of Georgia, the flames of competition had been ignited, slowly burning until the diplomatic explosion of the 2014 Russian annexation of Crimea and war in the Donbas. This left the US-Russian relationship strained for years until it finally collapsed with Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

Coincidentally, China took major actions during the same period, furthering the competition with introduction of the BRI and the construction of artificial islands in the South China Sea in 2013. In the aftermath of the Cold War, China followed a different path than Russia. According to [Mr. Blumenthal](#) the Cold War never really ended for the Chinese and that idea has pushed them into a continual competition with the United States. A few events jolted the Chinese government into action to expand its power, notably the protests on Tiananmen square in 1989 and the quick victory of the United States over Iraq in 1991. In 1993 China decided to undertake a massive military modernization program in response to these events.

[Mr. Blumenthal](#) noted that Chinese strategy has two main legs, "The first leg, capitalist tools must remain in socialist hands, so [the CCP can] use capitalist tools to build up [their] wealth and power. The second leg is military modernization." Through the lens of these two legs, one can see how the CCP has focused on illegally acquiring technology and using free trade to its advantage in setting the stage for competition.

## Today's Great Power Competition (GPC)

As Russia and China have focused their energies on GPC for years, the United States has only recently turned its full attention to the matter. [Mr. Gregory Ryckman](#) summarized how the United States is in a different space compared to its competitors in GPC. He warned that Russia and China got a massive head start

in the GPC battle while the United States was focused on the Global War on Terror.

While Russia has used hard power and coercion as its main tools in the current GPC, China has used other means. [Mr. David Lamm](#) noted that, "Chinese strategy is simple. It is ancient. It is Sun Tzu. They intend to defeat us without firing a shot and they will do it through diplomacy, economics, and information." This Chinese strategy is not accomplished through battle tanks and jet fighters, but rather through apps like TikTok and other forms of information engagement aimed at changing US culture. [Mr. Lamm](#) furthered his point and that of Mr. Blumenthal's stating, "culture eats strategy for breakfast. If the American culture has changed due to an information campaign, it really doesn't matter what your national military strategy is."

Complementing Mr. Lamm's analysis, [Lieutenant General Henry](#) argued "Adversaries intend to win without fighting, and again [it's] another use of the phrase 'win without fighting'...It's a true idea



[whose] time has come and it's not just Sun Tzu's idea. If you're an adversary looking at the United States, and seeing what we're capable of doing, whether you watched us in Operation Desert Shield and Desert Storm, or you watched us during the Gulf War in 2003 - it makes you

reflect a lot about your capability versus ours...you probably don't want to face us mano a mano based on what you just saw demonstrated, and it may give you pause as you decide what you want to do going forward. So, you have to look at another approach."

[General \(Ret\) McKenzie](#) explained another of China's approaches to competition, "China's aggressive pursuit of a large and balanced nuclear arsenal. China publicly pushed the position that their arsenal was minimal in nature, designed to deter an attack. Today the Chinese have embarked on a great expansion of their ballistic missile capabilities."

Looking back at the GPC during the Cold War, one could say that the United States won without firing a shot at the Soviet Union. This round of competition between the US and China will differ. [Mr. Lamm](#) pointed out, "[China] is our number one trade partner. That would have been unthinkable...with the Soviet Union." In this same line of thought, [Mr. Blumenthal](#) explained how the United States only has so much leverage over China. Policies that try to contain China economically will be limited by the depth of the US-Chinese trade relationship. The trade between the United States and the Soviet Union never neared the current level of trade between the US and China. Furthermore, he continues by noting that China doesn't have a comparable Warsaw pact alliance.



China's lack of allies or puppet states does offer a point of advantage for the United States. These points differ from the Cold War, but China has observed lessons from that period such as controlling military spending and limiting adventurism, two of the things widely blamed for bankrupting the Soviet Union.

As China's economic growth slows, it will continue to invest in the military, but with caution. [Dr. Dreyer](#) stated, "PRC [is] aware that [the] Soviets pumping money into military bankrupted the Soviets. So, this year we have the [Chinese] growth rate projected at 5% for GDP and the military spending increase projected at 7.2%." She explained that the military spending outpacing GDP growth will cause a concern for CCP leadership.

[Mr. Dean Cheng](#) furthered this point, "We see the Chinese steadily growing the People's Liberation Army (PLA) budget, and indeed, for at least the last 2 to 3 years, the PLA budget has actually grown faster than the national GDP... I would suggest that this is very



worrisome, because it suggests an end to what the Chinese have long termed the period of strategic opportunity. Top Chinese leaders have generally said that they could afford to relatively de-emphasize PLA modernization because we are in a period of strategic opportunity. The prospect of war

is low. The prospect of war involving China is even lower. So, China could afford to focus its investment and development opportunities primarily on growing the national economy, investing in science and technology, investing in education. As we now watch the growth of the PLA's budget faster than the overall national economy is going to grow, it suggests that there is now a shift in emphasis which in turn would suggest a change, a fundamental change in threat assessment."

In terms of modernization of China, [Mr. Tobin](#) commented, "[China] attained its modernization goals for 2020... this is consistent with Xi's accelerating the PRC's modernization timeline by 15 years at the Nineteenth Party Congress in 2017, where he pinned the prior targets for mid-century, now to 2035, and began instead to identify the mid-century target as global leadership."

China has developed other means to reach its aim of global leadership. [Ms. Emily de la Bruyere](#) explored the CCP's concept of [Military-Civil Fusion \(MCF\)](#), "The civilian, the commercial assets that Beijing uses to advance its global power projection, include information, technology, and digital means. This... high-level China strategy... is the integration or the fusion of military and civilian actors, positioning, and resources for the sake of a comprehensive form of strategic power...MCF was elevated by Xi Jinping to national level strategy in 2013."

She said, "MCF is often understood primarily through the lens of China utilizing commercial technologies and then applying them to their military for the sake of military modernization...But there's another element...China using civilian assets and positioning [them] for a strategic effect. This would include a military effect, in terms of turning supply chain positioning into coercive power, leveraging China's market access or market access to China or deploying a new global system of information technology, information, infrastructures, and the hardware that supports their supply chains...China has a history of working to build leverage at key nodes in strategic supply chains... So, in 2010, in a well-worn case involving a territorial dispute with Japan, China cut off rare earth exports to the island in order to force Tokyo's hand, using supply chain dependencies."

Going beyond the impacts of the MCF strategy, [Mr. Peter Mattis](#) clarified the political strategy (known as the United Front) of the CCP, "There's been an idea emphasized that United Front is the work of the whole party, that every single party Cadre has a role in trying to mobilize people outside the party to support its objectives. You know, Mao described it as an effort to mobilize our friends to strike at our enemies. The CIA ...back in 1957...said, it's the effort and activities to mobilize, monitor, and otherwise use non CCP individuals or non-party individuals for the purposes of the party... Post Mao, it's particularly important as a party activity, because it helps the party solve the problem of how to mobilize people without Mao's charisma, without the ideological fervor."

### ***Where the Greater Middle East Fits in to Competition***

With all these aspects of global competition considered, how does it play out in the Greater Middle East region? [Mr. Grant Rumley](#) explains this is a new era for the Middle East. The countries of the region see China as an economic opportunity and not a threat, despite growing Chinese military presence in the region. [He highlighted](#) the point that, "China is the number one trading partner for... every country in the Middle East, except for Lebanon..." None of these nations want to pick sides between the United States and China. Mr. Rumley explained that the United States is not necessarily doing a good job in its messaging. Regime survival is oftentimes the countries in the region first and foremost objective. Yet, when the United States transfer weapons, technology, and provides training, it does not keep this fact in mind. Unsurprisingly, China is more attuned to the interests of the autocratic regimes.

[Dr. Dawn Murphy](#) stated, "China uses the BRI to pursue all its interests in the Middle East, and those interests are [the pursuit of] domestic and economic growth through access to resources and markets in the Middle East and fostering support for China in the international arena. [In] an era of either emerging multipolarity or bipolarity...China is wanting international support from



countries in the Middle East, in the United Nations (UN) and in other organizations. China also wants to ensure



its own domestic stability by preventing support for Uighurs within Xinjiang. China also has a desire to advocate for developing country causes [as] these tie in with the Mao-era initiatives that have already been described.” Dr. Murphy continued, “It [China] also wants

to safeguard its citizens and businesses abroad, [particularly] in the Middle East. If you think about [the situation] in Libya, in 2011, China had to evacuate 35,000 citizens. [It also had to] in Yemen, in Syria...”

[Dr. Brands](#) described China’s interests in the region as the need to secure access to energy markets and resources while it develops a blue water navy to defend its trade routes. He supported suggestions from other speakers about the possibility of countries in the region reaching solidarity on policies and humanitarian issues in the PRC’s interest when voting at the UN. Additionally, he examined how US partners see PRC as providing valuable leverage to play these two great powers off each other. In the region there is a growing perception that the US is no longer reliable, especially as more and more US leaders have talked about withdrawing from the region. However, the PRC’s efforts to build ties can go only so far in the region because of its close relationship with Iran. Lastly, Dr. Brands highlighted that the Middle East is vital in this current round of GPC, because of the energy, location, and trade involved in the region.

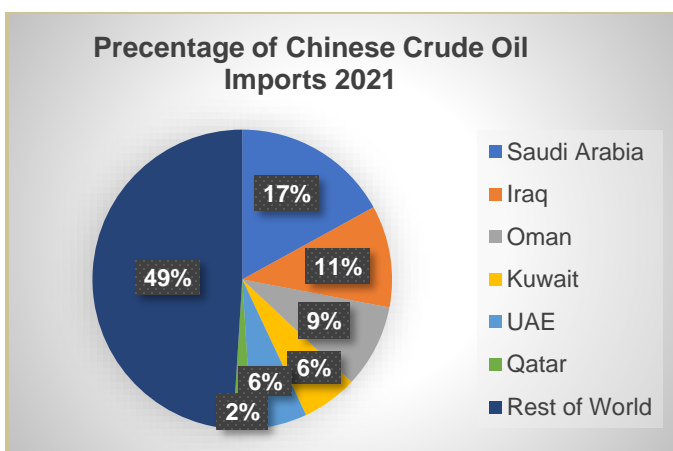


Figure 2: Chinese Crude Oil Imports from the Middle East 2021.  
Source Data: [US Energy Information Administration](#).

[Major General David Doyle](#) bolstered Dr. Brands’ point about the importance of the Middle East to China saying, “50% of China’s petroleum reserves coming from the region, and 40% of their commerce traversing through the region. It’s no surprise that Chinese interests include the Belt and Road Initiative, which is setting a stage for their more aggressive military presence...” To further support this point, China has led the world in crude oil

imports since 2017. In 2021, China has imported around 50% of all its crude oil from the Middle East as shown in Figure 2. Outside of the Middle East, Russia supplied the largest amount of crude oil to China making up around 15% of all Chinese imports.<sup>viii</sup> China has focused on further exploration of its own oil resources while securing the shipping lanes for import.

[Dr. Dreyer](#) presented her thoughts on China and the Middle East, “...China’s interest in the region [goes] far beyond oil, and [those interests] extend into infrastructure and technology and influencing hearts and minds in ways that have profound strategic implications.” She further added that China is also heavily embedded in the Israeli tech sector. The Chinese support for the upgrade of the port of Haifa, which provides repair and supply facilities for the US Sixth Fleet, should concern US leaders. Additionally, Saudi Arabia and China announced a 5-year plan for a security cooperation on science and technology and on counterterrorism.

[Mr. Rumley’s](#) remarks on the region expand on Dr. Dreyer’s point that, “part of the reason that the Israelis signed the agreement over Haifa Bayport with the Chinese firm was that there wasn’t a bid from an American firm, and so we are inherently going to be at a disadvantage there if we are not competing economically. I also think our big sort of sales pitch to the region is our security presence, architecture, our arms sales, and our commitment. While we measure that in terms of operations, and planning and intel sharing. [We] view that as something that we can do with a modest presence on the ground. This is in my experience a region that measures US commitment by the number of troops that are on the ground, and that number has dwindled since it’s heyday, and I don’t think there’s going to be [going back up] absent a crisis.” Finally, [Dr. Murphy](#) furthered this line of thought by explaining the impact of the [China-Arab States Cooperation Forum](#). This body meets every two years providing China with a multilateral mechanism to interact with the region and deepen its influence.

[Major General Kevin Leahy](#) outlined that China may be making inroads into the region, but the United States still enjoys a key advantage: its regional partners. He said, “the PRC hates that we have partners.” Hence, part of the strength of the US lies in its allies and partners.

### **Actionable Solutions for US Policy** **Increasing the US’s Nuclear Options and Capabilities across Domains**

[General \(Ret\) McKenzie](#) warned of the need to prepare for the possible use of nuclear weapons, “The United States has always considered nuclear weapons tools of the last resort. Our thinking about employing them has tended to focus on the political effects that would obtain from nuclear use. The Russians, and particularly the Chinese, are not burdened by these considerations, and



they have thought deeper and harder and actually more clearly about how to use nuclear weapons on the battlefield... Fact of the matter is nuclear weapons are coming back as battlefield weapons. We can't ignore this fact, and we need to take practical steps to be able to prevail in a nuclear battlefield. This includes pursuing real tactical nuclear capabilities of our own..."

As nuclear weapons may ravage future battlefields, other less tangible domains are gaining influence. [Mr. Cheng](#) noted about the PLA's work in other domains, "Their missions encompass...assuring CCP rule...given that the PLA is a party army. It safeguards conditions for national economic development, generally interpreted as 'be prepared to retake Taiwan.' But here, in particular, [it] is defending Chinese interests in new domains, and the key domains that were identified as part of the PLA's key responsibilities [include] the maritime, outer space, cyberspace, and electromagnetic domains. That reflects the reality that from the Chinese perspective we have shifted from the industrial age [to] the information age... [hence] political warfare in the Chinese view...is the hardest form of soft power. It is the effort at the strategic level to manipulate information, including the interpretation of information, in order to achieve strategic benefit for the PRC." Mr. Cheng's insights harken back to Mr. Lamm's comments about culture trumping strategy. The US has to aggressively expand its capabilities to counter Chinese advances in the domains of cyberspace, electromagnetic, and information.

### ***Building Partnerships on Mutual Ground***

The US is in competition with China globally across all domains. The US has a strong alliance structure with NATO in Europe and several key allies in Asia. China only has a beleaguered Russia as a junior partner. This reality led [Dr. Brands](#) to forward a way to drive a wedge between Russia and China, "One of the best ways of straining the Sino-Russian relationship may be turning the screws on Russia and Ukraine." Moreover, as China becomes more ambitious, it will likely create more enemies. India, Vietnam, and the Philippines are watching China's rise and may feel they have to balance against this rise with US support. Paraphrasing Major General Leahy, the US is stronger when it works with international partners. The answer is more partnerships.

[Major General Doyle](#) supported the strength of allies noting, "Our [existing] partnerships and growing [new partnerships] are our best opportunity to out-compete China." [He continued](#), "The Chinese relationships [in the region], we observe, are transactional in nature. They stand in stark contrast to America's relationships [which] are long-term and values-based, and we try to make them mutually, mutually beneficial."



China's expansionist policies, however, attempt to stitch the world together in a Sino-Centric order that undermines the sovereignty of their erstwhile BRI hosts."

When asked what the US could expect from its allies as competition with China continues, [Dr. Brands](#) answered, "Japan is doubling its defense budget over the next 5 years, and is fundamentally rethinking the way that it uses the Southwestern Islands to hem in Chinese naval forces in the event of war. The Philippines, after [a relatively] unhappy 6 years with the US relationship under Duterte, has put back on track this thing called [the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement \(EDCA\)](#) and actually expanded it...[Allowing for] several US rotational locations on the northern island of Luzon, which, is pretty close to Taiwan, not by accident. You look at the investments that Australia is making in nuclear submarines. This is revolutionary [in] how Australia conducts defense, strategy, defense policy [and] in terms of the amount of money they're going to spend...the direction of travel for US relations with key allies is good, even if the speed of travel is perhaps insufficient."

In reference to allied actions [Mr. Rumley](#) noted, "...the US Government needs to standardize what our risk tolerance is on a country-by-country basis, and then communicate that to partners with regards to China...The US has a base in Djibouti, where China also has a base. Where is the threshold here? I don't think the US Government has a squared away opinion on that...Taking into account the context of their relationship with China, and what we are willing to tolerate in terms of our security cooperation. Then [we] need to communicate that with the partner, so that it's very clear to them that if [they] (the partner nation) allow China to build a base, a naval facility, in one of [their] ports, [they] are free to do that...but it will preclude certain deployments of US platforms. It will preclude certain levels of cooperation with the US."

### ***Innovation and Machine Learning***

[Major General Sean Salene](#) emphasized the role of innovation and working with machine learning to keep pace with increasing Chinese capabilities. He noted, "This is a priority...Experiment with them [new technologies], then capitalize upon the talents that we have, and then share them. I will give you a pacing example. We have a task force in the Arabia Gulf called [Task Force 59](#)...This [task force] is linking together uncrewed assets along with our crewed assets to create increased maritime domain awareness and then share this with our allies and partners in order to interdict threats. There's a low barrier to entry, it's commercially operated, and you can iterate faster and faster. The innovative culture that we have is an advantage..."

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**[Dr. Tad Schnauffer](#)**, Analyst / Planner  
[tschnauffer@usf.edu](mailto:tschnauffer@usf.edu)



## Central and South Asia Directors of Military Intelligence Conference

March 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023

### Speakers

[Rear Admiral Nicholas Homan](#), Director of Intelligence, USCENTCOM  
[General \(Ret\) Frank McKenzie](#), Executive Director, Global and National Security Institute and former commander, USCENTCOM  
[Brigadier General \(Ret\) Peter Zwack](#), Global Fellow at The Kennan Institute and former Senior Defense Official/Attaché Moscow  
[Gregory Ryckman](#), Deputy Director for Global Integration, Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA)

### Panel 1: The War in Ukraine - Russian Hybrid Warfare, Lessons Learned and the Future of the Russian Way of War

Moderator: [Jeff Aiton](#), J2 Strategic Competition Director, CENTCOM

- [Dr. Nathan Barrick](#), Deputy Chief of Strategy and Analysis, SOCOM
- [Colonel \(Ret\) Tom Wilhelm](#), Director U.S. Army Foreign Military Studies Officer
- [Brigadier General \(Ret\) Peter Zwack](#), Global Fellow at The Kennan Institute and former Senior Defense Official/Attaché Moscow
- [Dr. Maria Snegovaya](#), Senior Fellow, Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS)

### Panel 2: Strategic Competition – Russia's Future Strategy and Friction Points

Moderator: [Mike Cleary](#), Strategic Competition Director, Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA)

- [Dr. Maria Snegovaya](#), Senior Fellow, Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS)
- [Dr. Nathan Barrick](#), Deputy Chief of Strategy and Analysis, SOCOM
- [Brigadier General \(Ret\) Peter Zwack](#), Global Fellow at The Kennan Institute and former Senior Defense Official/Attaché Moscow
- [Dr. Yoshiko Herrera](#), Professor of Political Science, University of Wisconsin-Madison
- [Michael DeMattia](#), Lead Analyst, Office of Strategic Competition, CENTCOM

## 7<sup>th</sup> Great Power Competition Conference: Current Rise of Great Powers

March 8<sup>th</sup>, 2023 (Conference Video Day 1 available at GNSI YouTube page: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0JYO1NqRmtc>)

### Speakers

[Rhea Law](#), President, University of South Florida  
[David Lamm](#), Acting Director, Near East South Asia Center for Strategic Studies (NESA)  
[General \(Ret\) Frank McKenzie](#), Executive Director, Global and National Security Institute and former commander, USCENTCOM  
[Lieutenant General Dimitri Henry](#), Director for Intelligence, Joint Staff (J2)

### Panel 1: Understanding China's Grand Strategy

Moderator: [Todd Veazie](#), Director of Strategic Multilayer Assessment, The Joint Staff, Pentagon

- [Major General Kevin Leahy](#), Commander, U.S. Special Operations Command Central
- [Dr. Hal Brands](#), Henry A. Kissinger Distinguished Professor of Global Affairs at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS)
- [Dan Blumenthal](#), Director of Asia Studies, American Enterprise Institute
- [Dr. June Teufel Dreyer](#), Professor of Political Science at the University of Miami

### Panel 2: Implications of China's Belt and Road Geoeconomics for U.S. National Security

Moderator: [Quinton DuBose](#), Strategic Competition Program, J2, U.S. Central Command

- [Major General Sean Salene](#), Director, Strategy, Plans and Policy, U.S. Central Command
- [Dr. Dawn Murphy](#), Professor of International Security Studies, U.S. Air War College
- [Grant Rumley](#), Goldberger Fellow at the Washington Institute's Diane and Guilford Glazer Foundation Program on GPC and the Middle East
- [Dr. Lawrence Reardon](#), Professor of Political Science at the University of New Hampshire

March 9<sup>th</sup>, 2023 (Conference Video Day 2 available at GNSI YouTube page: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=18iJzkczfC0>)

### Speakers

[Dr. Eric Eisenberg](#), Senior Vice President University - Community Partnerships, USF  
[Major General David Doyle](#), Chief of Staff, U.S. Central Command

### Panel 3: China's Shaping of International Norms and Regional Security Environment

Moderator: [Matthew McInnis](#), Senior Fellow Institute for the Study of War

- [Daniel Tobin](#), Deputy Director of China Studies, National Intelligence University
- [Emily de la Bruyere](#), Senior Fellow, Foundation for the Defense of Democracy
- [Dean Cheng](#), Senior Research Fellow, Potomac Institute for Policy Studies
- [Peter Mattis](#), Special Competitive Studies Project, U.S. Naval Institute

### Breakout Session: TikTok is now #1 on the U.S. Most Wanted List. Why the push is on to ban China's most dangerous startup.

Session Leader: [Tom Waters](#), Assistant Director of Startups at USF and Former undercover officer on the CIA's Economic and Trade Security team

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<sup>i</sup> [Analysis: Putin's Claim that War on Ukraine is to Target Nazis is Absur. Here's Why](#), PBS 2022

<sup>ii</sup> [Russians Abandon Wartime Russia in Historic Exodus](#), The Washington Post 2023

<sup>iii</sup> [Ukraine, Russia Gird for a Decisive Spring Campaign After a Bloody Winter](#), The Wall Street Journal 2023

<sup>iv</sup> [China Anniversary: How the Country Became the World's 'Economic Miracle'](#), BBC News, 2019

<sup>v</sup> [China's "One Belt, One Road" Initiative: Economic Issues](#), Congressional Research Service 2022

<sup>vi</sup> [China's "One Belt, One Road" Initiative: Economic Issues](#), Congressional Research Service 2022

<sup>vii</sup> [Did Putin's 2007 Munich Speech Predict the Ukraine Crisis?](#), CATO Institute, 2022

<sup>viii</sup> [Country Analysis Executive Summary: China](#), U.S. Energy Information Administration 2022









# *Operating at the Boundary of Technology and Policy*



GNSI will flourish at the nexus of these three strategic areas of focus, bringing together the best thinking of each, creating a unique and valuable extension to traditional think tanks.



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