

NAVY NEWS WEEK 7-3

15 February 2022

HELMOED RÖMER HEITMAN: SA's military is on a downward spiral towards becoming a mere militia

The cabinet is either clueless about what is required, or unwilling to listen to those who do

14 February 2022 - 15:33

Helmoed Römer Heitman

The past few months have starkly illustrated how SA's military capability has declined. The entire Gripen fighter fleet has been grounded for months for lack of a support contract, leaving SA without even air policing or air reconnaissance capability. The navy has been unable to deploy to interdict supplies to guerrillas in Cabo Delgado, Mozambique, because it had lacked the funds to maintain its ships properly. And there were no Rooivalk attack helicopters to cover the hot extraction of a special forces team in Cabo Delgado after it suffered casualties. The decline in capability has long been clear: the army cannot deploy the 22 infantry companies needed for effective border patrol; the navy could not sustain the Mozambique Channel patrol and cannot patrol home waters effectively; and the air force has no maritime surveillance aircraft to monitor our waters or the channel. The Battle of Bangui in the Central African Republic in 2013 rang the alarm. SA's deployed force was too weak, too lightly armed and equipped and lacked air support; the paratroopers and special forces were not relieved by an infantry battalion as should have happened; and when the Seleka rebels attacked there was not enough airlift to reinforce them. Only the outstanding performance of the troops averted catastrophe, but we lost 15 soldiers. That led to a decision that SA troops would not again deploy without air support, hence the Rooivalk attack helicopter presence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). They have played a major role, covering insertion, extraction and casualty evacuation missions and striking guerrilla positions. Despite the lesson of Bangui and the proof of the pudding in the DRC, SA's deployment to Cabo Delgado is, after six months, still short of even the laughably weak level set by the Southern African Development Community (SADC), and sees special forces deployed with no backup, no air support, no follow-on force and no naval force to interdict seaborne supplies to the guerrillas. There is the explanation that the SADC has not authorised the full deployment — and Maputo is probably also dragging its feet — but that is an excuse, and a poor one at that. An operation should be conducted properly or not at all. Leaving special forces out on a limb without support is unprofessional and irresponsible. And SA should be taking the lead, not hiding behind SADC ineptitude.

A large part of the problem is the state of the SA National Defence Force (SANDF). In the air force only two C-130 Hercules transports are operational and reportedly only a third of its Oryx helicopters. With five Oryx in the DRC and two in Cabo Delgado, this suggests seven or fewer available for contingencies. The absence of Rooivalks in Cabo Delgado suggests that those in the DRC may be all the air force can deploy. In addition, it seems support contract problems mean only part of the Hawk fleet is operational, while the Gripens lack a long-range air-to-air missile and stand-off precision weapons, and the Rooivalk has not received the Mokopa missile that was designed for it. And, of course, there are no effective maritime surveillance aircraft. The navy is unable to patrol home waters or deploy to the Mozambique Channel because it lacks the funds to maintain its ships, let alone deploy them. Only one frigate and one submarine have undergone a partial refit in the 17 years since commissioning, with a second submarine's refit stalled over contracting issues. The only support ship is 35 years old and in need of a refit, and the smaller vessels are all well beyond their service lives. The Treasury apparently envisages providing funds to refit the frigates and submarines only around 2033 to 2035. That deserves some analysis to understand what it means: the ships entered service between 2005 and 2007. Properly maintained — with regular dockings and refits, plus modernisation and upgrade of ship systems, sensors and weapons — they would have a service life of 30 years, which could comfortably stretch to 40, perhaps even beyond. Failing proper maintenance, by about 2033 to 2035 they will be in

such a state that discarding them might be the most practical decision. We are allowing national assets that cost about R11bn to acquire and with a replacement cost of perhaps R35bn or more to deteriorate to where we may have to discard them prematurely. There are three inshore patrol vessels of dubious utility in build, as well as a new survey ship. But if the government's approach does not change dramatically, it will not be long before they too are tied up pending unfunded maintenance. The army produced a bright spot last year with the first field training exercise in a quarter of a century; it came close to employing a full brigade, a start towards relearning mobile operations. But its major equipment mostly dates from the 1970s and 1980s, the newest from the 1990s, and like the air force and navy it lacks the funds to maintain it properly, let alone modernise or upgrade it. And it is short of infantry to meet its commitments on the borders or in the DRC and Mozambique. It should have about 23 infantry battalions but has only 14, and not all with a full complement of deployable personnel. The people in uniform in SA are mostly doing "the best they can with what they have", but their best is not going to be enough. The SANDF is in a downward spiral, which if not reversed will reduce it to a militia with limited border protection capability. The blame lies with the cabinet, which either does not give a damn or simply has no grasp of what is required and is unwilling to listen to those who can explain it. The facts have been set out by every defence minister since 1994, by the chiefs of the defence force and by the service chiefs; and every defence debate since 1995 has produced cross-party support for proper defence funding. Yet the cabinet continues to allow the defence force to decline while nevertheless expecting it to do its job: border patrols, support for the police, peacekeeping in the DRC (and in Burundi and Darfur before) and crisis response (in Comoros in 2006, Bangu in 2013 and now in Mozambique). And this is the country with the second-largest economy in Africa, which likes to believe it is a leader and wants to speak for Africa in international bodies — lots of bark but very little bite, and very soon no bite at all.

• Heitman is an independent security and defence analyst.

Source: <https://www.businesslive.co.za>

In the meantime it seems that the top echelons have changed into a cabal, carrying out illegal acts in various fields, and do not regard themselves subject to the SA Constitution.

Russian Navy Warns It Will Fire If Foreign Flagged Ships Intrude

by Maria Kiselyova (Reuters)
February 14, 2022



The Russian Navy Udaloy-class destroyer **RFS Admiral Panteleyev (BPK 548)** arrives at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam to participate in the Rim of the Pacific (**RIMPAC**) exercise 2012. (U.S. Navy photo by Sean Furey)

A senior Russian military official said on Monday that Russia was ready to open fire on foreign flagged ships and submarines that illegally enter its territorial waters, the Interfax news agency reported. Any such decision would, however, be taken only at the "highest level," Stanislav

Gadzhimagomedov, deputy head of the main operational department of the General Staff, was quoted as saying. The comment came two days after Moscow said a Russian naval vessel had [chased away a U.S. submarine](#) in Russian waters in the Pacific. The [United States Navy denied it](#) had carried out military operations in Russian territorial waters. Tensions between the two countries are running high, with Washington warning that Russia could attack Ukraine at any time. Moscow denies any such intention, despite massing more than 100,000 troops near Ukraine's borders, and has accused Western governments of hysteria. Interfax quoted Gadzhimagomedov as saying Russia was able to adequately counter the U.S. fleet in the Black and Baltic Seas but did not have enough ships and plans to do so in the far east at the moment. All of [Russia's military fleets have been carrying out exercises](#) in recent weeks across vast areas including parts of the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans and the Mediterranean.

Source: <https://gcaptain.com>

US Navy Launches Massive Middle East War Games

By [James Stavridis](#) (Bloomberg)

February 14, 2022



Ships from Destroyer Squadron 23 transit the Pacific Ocean Jan. 22, 2020. DESRON 23, part of the Theodore Roosevelt Carrier Strike Group, is on a scheduled deployment to the Indo-Pacific. (U.S. Navy photo by Nicholas V. Huynh)

The U.S. Navy is currently conducting one of the largest maritime [exercises](#) in recent history, with more than 60 nations taking part. Running through Feb. 17, the drills will cover waters off the Middle East, Southwest Asia, and East Africa. Known as both **Cutlass Express 2022** and **International Maritime**

Exercise 2022 — or **IMX-CE22** — the war games will encompass nearly 10,000 personnel, 50 warships, and 80 unmanned systems. The drills will include practicing sea control (the ability to dominate the oceans and deny opponents open access); maritime domain awareness (tracking all contacts on the surface, below the surface, and in the airspace over the seas); mine countermeasures (especially in the narrow waters of the Strait of Hormuz); and anti-air warfare (such as increasing tactical capability against supersonic missiles). Of particular note, the exercises will use a wide-ranging flotilla of unmanned vehicles — surface, subsurface, and air. A drones group created for the multinational drills, Task Force X, will be led by the new U.S. Navy command focused on these emerging technologies, based in Bahrain. Vice Admiral Brad Cooper, the commander of the U.S. Navy's Fifth Fleet, will lead the overall exercises, with deputies provided by the U.K. and Pakistan.

What is driving the timing and agenda of these massive drills?

Former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger once told me, when I was supreme allied commander of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, that “every solution is merely the admission ticket to the next problem.” He meant that another crisis is always right around the corner — and he was right. Today we are seized, appropriately, by Russia and its potential conflict with Ukraine. But next in the queue may be Iran. Indeed, even as the U.S. leads these drills, another trio of nations is conducting [exercises](#) themselves: Iran, China, and Russia. This group is drilling in the northern Indian Ocean, sending a signal to the West about their increasing level of diplomatic and military cooperation. As Iran becomes emboldened by its growing relationship with China and Russia, its aggression in the congested waters of the Gulf and the Indian Ocean will likely increase. Thus one goal of **Cutlass Express** is to tamp down Iranian adventurism at sea. The U.S.-led exercises are also a perfect setting to unleash the new task force focused on unmanned technology. The key will not only be using the most advanced systems without embarked humans but, more important, linking them together through a coherent, internationally accessible command-and-control system. Of all the U.S. Navy commands, the Fifth Fleet is the most experienced in coalition operations, and functions under the aegis of the highly multinational U.S. Central Command. Refining links between the seagoing unmanned systems and the constellation of space assets overhead will be critical as well. The exercises will allow real-world testing on that essential element of facing Iran. Additionally, the exercises can vastly improve the cohesion of U.S. military alliances. With large naval powers such as the U.S. and U.K. operating alongside tiny regional forces like those of Oman and the United Arab Emirates, the opportunities for combat role-playing scenarios are profound. The coalition will practice operational maneuvers designed to thwart potential Iranian activities across the Gulf and in the North Arabian Sea.

Paradoxically, the exercises may help the on-again-off-again [nuclear talks](#) between Iran and the other signatories to the 2015 deal. The negotiations appeared to be dead in the water last fall given the election of the hard-liner Ebrahim Raisi as Iranian president. But over the past month or two, thanks to re-engagement by President Joe Biden's administration, the conversations in Vienna have been looking more promising. Perhaps watching a huge maritime coalition operating on their doorstep may have a focusing effect on the minds of

Iran's leaders. Clearly, these war games are not a panacea for facing a growing Iranian threat. But they are a kind of Olympics at sea for a vital coalition led by the U.S. in one of the most turbulent areas of the world. This column does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the editorial board or Bloomberg LP and its owners.

Source: <https://gcaptain.com>

BAE completes successful test of newest submarine

By [Ambrose Young](#) Digital Reporter

11th February



A MAJOR milestone has been achieved in the life of the fifth Barrow-built Astute-class submarine. Under the control of its Royal Navy crew, Anson completed its first trim dive in the town's Devonshire Dock. The operation saw **Anson** submerge completely beneath the surface of the water while crew tested on-board systems. This successful exercise proved the safety and stability of the 7,400-tonne, 97 metre-long attack submarine. Commanding Officer of **Anson**, Commander David 'Bing' Crosby, said: "The trim and basin

dive is a key step in the commissioning of **HMS Anson**. This period will enable us to set the boat's internal weight, prove her water-tight integrity, test sensors and put some of our systems through their tests ahead of sailing for the first time. "All involved should be very proud. The entire enterprise has again come together to achieve this evolution safely and on time, which is clear evidence of our joint approach and demonstrates what we can achieve when we all pull together." BAE Systems Submarines Astute Programme Director, John Moorby, said: "The successful trim dive of Anson is a significant milestone in the submarine's test and commissioning phase. It demonstrates the continued successful collaboration between BAE Systems, the Submarines Enterprise, and our suppliers on delivering this national endeavour for the UK Royal Navy." A 'trim dive' is done to complete a number of tests. The most important is to help engineers establish the vessel's centre of gravity and precise weight. More than 60 crew members were on board as part of the exercise, which saw tonnes of ballast taken aboard to assist in testing the vessel's stability. **Anson** was officially named in December 2020 and launched in April 2021. **HMS Astute**, **HMS Arful**, **HMS Ambush** and **HMS Audacious** are already in service with the Royal Navy. The sixth and seventh Astute submarines, **Agamemnon** and **Agincourt**, are at different stages of construction at the [Barrow](#) shipyard. As well as the Astute Class, BAE Systems is delivering the Dreadnought submarines for the Royal Navy and undertaking early phase concept design work on the replacement for the Astute class. The Company employs around 10,000 people in its Submarines business, with the majority based at its shipyard in Barrow-in-Furness, accounting for approximately a quarter of the local working population. In 2020, BAE Systems spent over £80 million with more than 100 suppliers in Cumbria, supporting 1,380 jobs in the region's supply chain. The Company's significant UK footprint across more than 50 sites and extensive supply chain mean it supported 143,000 jobs across the country and contributed more than £10 billion to UK GDP, equivalent to 0.5% of the domestic economy. To ensure a robust pipeline of talent for the future, the Company invested £93 million in skills, training and development activities in 2020. That included more than 2,000 apprentices and nearly 600 graduates in training across a wide range of roles from electronics and electrical, structural, software and research engineers, to manufacturing, operations and project management. Continuing its support for young people, this year BAE Systems will recruit almost 1,700 apprentices and graduates.

Source: <https://www.nwemail.co.uk>

Russia Claims It Chased Away A U.S. Sub From Russian Waters

MOSCOW, Feb 12 (Reuters) –
February 12, 2022

A Russian naval vessel chased away a U.S. submarine in Russian waters in the Pacific after the submarine ignored the ship's orders for it to surface, Interfax news agency cited the defense ministry as saying on Saturday.



A warship of the Russian Black Sea fleet leaves a port during naval drills in Sevastopol, Crimea, in this still image taken from video released February 12, 2022. Russian Defence Ministry/Handout via REUTERS



Russia accused Washington of breaking international law and creating a national security threat over the incident, which came at a time of high tensions between Moscow and Washington over a Russian military build-up near Ukraine. There was no immediate comment from the United States. The crew of the **Marshal Shaposhnikov** frigate used "corresponding means" to make the submarine leave Russian waters, the defense ministry was quoted as saying. It said it had called in the U.S. defense attache over the incident. The submarine was spotted near the Kuril islands early on Saturday as [Russia was conducting naval exercises](#) with its Pacific Fleet and it was ordered to surface immediately, the Russian ministry was quoted as saying. It said the order was ignored by the U.S. submarine's crew, leading the Russian frigate to take unspecified action to make it leave. "The U.S. submarine ... left Russian territorial waters at maximum speed," the defense ministry was quoted as saying. Russia's defense minister spoke by phone with his U.S. counterpart on Saturday as the United States and other Western nations warned that war in Ukraine could ignite at any moment. U.S. President Joe Biden and Russia's Vladimir Putin spoke for an hour by phone later in the day.

Source: <https://gcaptain.com>

My first reaction to this news "highly unlikely in these times". Russian sabre-rattling.

US Navy Denies Submarine Entered Russian Waters

by Vladimir Soldatkin (Reuters)

February 13, 2022



The Virginia-class attack submarine **USS Delaware (SSN 791)** conducts Bravo sea trials in the Atlantic Ocean in 2019. (U.S. Navy photo courtesy of HII by Ashley Cowan/Released)

The United States on Saturday denied that it had carried out military operations in Russian territorial waters, after Moscow [said a Russian naval vessel chased away a U.S. submarine](#) in Russian waters in the Pacific.

Russia accused Washington of breaking international law and creating a national security threat over the incident at a time of

high tensions between Moscow and Washington over a Russian military build-up near Ukraine. Interfax news agency cited the Russian Defence Ministry as saying a Russian naval vessel chased away a U.S. submarine in Russian waters in the Pacific after the submarine ignored the ship's orders to surface. "There is no truth to the Russian claims of our operations in their territorial waters," Captain Kyle Raines, a U.S. military spokesman, said in a statement. "I will not comment on the precise location of our submarines but we do fly, sail, and operate safely in international waters," the statement added. It is common for the United States to monitor military activity being carried out by other countries without having to enter their territorial waters. The crew of the **Marshal Shaposhnikov** frigate used "corresponding means" to make the submarine leave Russian waters, the Russian Defence Ministry was quoted as saying. It said it had called in the U.S. defense attache over the incident. The submarine was spotted near the Kuril Islands early on Saturday as Russia was conducting naval exercises with

its Pacific Fleet and it was ordered to surface immediately, the Russian ministry was quoted as saying. It said the order was ignored by the U.S. submarine's crew, leading the Russian frigate to take unspecified action to make it leave. "The U.S. submarine ... left Russian territorial waters at maximum speed," the Defence Ministry was quoted as saying. It was not clear specifically where Russia claimed the incident took place, but part of the Kuril Islands chain is claimed by Japan and the territorial dispute over some of the islands dates back to the time when the then-Soviet Union seized them at the end of World War Two. Russia's defense minister spoke by telephone with his U.S. counterpart on Saturday as the United States and other Western nations warned that war in Ukraine could ignite at any moment. U.S. President Joe Biden and Russia's Vladimir Putin also spoke for an hour by phone later in the day to discuss Ukraine but according to the Kremlin, the submarine incident was not brought up.

Source: <https://gcaptain.com>

It is highly unlikely that the US submarine would have been seen.

More Than 30 Russian Ships Start Drills Near Crimea Peninsula

MOSCOW, Feb 12 (Reuters) –
February 12, 2022



The Russian Navy's guided missile cruiser **Moskva** and frigate **Admiral Grigorovich** are seen ahead of the Navy Day parade in the Black Sea port of Sevastopol, Crimea July 23, 2021. REUTERS/Alexey Pavlishak



More than 30 ships from the Russian Black Sea fleet have started [training exercises](#)

near the Crimea peninsula as part of wider navy drills, RIA news agency reported on Saturday citing the fleet, as Western nations warned that a war in Ukraine could ignite at any moment. Russia's military moves are being closely scrutinized as its massing of troops near Ukraine and a volley of hawkish rhetoric have rattled the West and sparked concern it plans to invade Ukraine. Moscow denies any plan to invade, saying it is maintaining its own security against aggression by NATO allies. RIA said that [more than 30 Russian ships have left the ports](#) of Sevastopol and Novorossiisk "in accordance to the plans of the drills" near Crimea, which Russia annexed from Ukraine in 2014. RIA said the aim of the drills was the defense of the coast of Crimea, the outposts of the Black Sea fleet as well as the economy sector and naval communications. Russia announced last month its navy would stage a sweeping set of exercises involving all its fleets this month and next, from the Pacific to the Atlantic, the latest show of strength in a surge of military activity during the standoff with the West.

Source: <https://gcaptain.com>

Royal Navy in the News

Royal Marines' helicopters complete 1,800-mile epic journey ready for Arctic training



The wings of the Royal Marines have arrived in the High North ready to support their commando brethren on the ground after an epic five-day journey.

Engineers conduct dawn checks at Bronnoysund Photos: Crown copyright/MoD

Aircrews spent 20 hours in their aircraft, dodging storms, flying through snow showers and squalls, over forbidding mountainous terrain and contending with temperatures well below zero

on the ground and in the air as they covered 1,800 miles from Somerset to deep inside the Arctic Circle. From their base at Yeovilton, the helicopters hopped via military and civilian airfields across England, Scotland, the North Sea, then up the Norwegian west coast to their final destination at Bardufoss – the hub of Royal Marines' Arctic training. Three troop-carrying Merlin helicopters of 845 Naval Air Squadron and four battlefield Wildcats from 847 NAS are supporting the commandos' initial winter training, followed by the largest military exercise in Norway in more than 30 years, **Cold Response**, which begins next month. Now acclimatizing in Bardufoss, the helicopters will remain in Norway until April working with the Royal Marines, Apaches of the Army Air Corps, the host nation and, from next month, international participants of **Exercise Cold Response**.

The Royal Navy launches Race Diversity Network

Earlier this week, a new network was launched to act as a central point of contact for – and champion of – all issues relating to race and racial diversity across the Navy. The Royal Navy Race Diversity Network will be able to support its diverse membership and promote an inclusive culture across the Service. The network brings together the entire Royal Navy family – sailors, Royal Marines, civil servants, RFA – and pushes this agenda with a single united voice. Existing groups such as the Commonwealth Network will continue dealing with issues which affect RN personnel from overseas, such as visas, immigration and family matters while the Race Diversity Network will concentrate on race issues which affect people from the UK and elsewhere. The network is supported by partner organisations such as the RN Commonwealth Network, RAF BAME Network and Army Multicultural Network.

Source: www.navybooks.com

BAE Systems completes Hunter Class engineering review

10 February 2022

By: Charbel Kadib



The prime has concluded a year-long engineering assessment to help inform the design of the Hunter Class frigates. [BAE Systems](http://www.bae.com) has completed a System Definition Review (SDR), aimed at establishing a baseline design for the Royal Australian Navy's next-generation Hunter Class frigates and informing the construction process at South Australia's Osborne Naval Shipyard. The SDR, which was undertaken by engineering teams in

both Australia and the UK, is the second major evaluation of the ship's design since BAE Systems secured the \$45 billion SEA 5000 contract. The review assessed the feasibility of a range of capabilities required by the Commonwealth government, including the Aegis and Australian Interface Combat Management Systems, the CEAFA2 phased array radar and integration of the Seahawk Romeo Maritime Combat Helicopter. According to BAE Systems Maritime Australia managing director Craig Lockhart, the SDR has demonstrated the prime's ability to "Australianise" the frigate. *"The selection of the Global Combat Ship for Australia's Hunter Class frigates was based on its digital pedigree, its submarine-hunting capability and its ability to accommodate the changes the Australian Customer requires,"* he said. The completion of the SFDR comes just weeks after the Hunter Class program was scrutinised in a classified '**Engineering Team Assessment**' presented to the Department of Defence.

The report suggested the next-generation anti-submarine vessels would be "substantially" slower than initially anticipated, operating across a shorter range and leaving ships vulnerable to detection. The 36-page report, tabled in November, also raised crew safety concerns, claiming personnel could be trapped below deck by floodwaters in "*credible damage conditions*". But Minister for Defence Peter Dutton dismissed the findings, claiming the issues were "exaggerated" and describing the report as "*low-level*". In reflecting on BAE Systems' latest milestone, Lockhart said the SDR is a strong indicator of a "*successfully established*" functional baseline from which to further develop and integrate the design

against the Mission System Specification set by the Commonwealth government. *"It's taken a lot of hard work and engineering ingenuity to get us to the point where, together with the Royal Australian Navy, we can objectively look at our design and where it sits relative to requirements,"* he said. *"I've been particularly pleased with the level of close collaboration with our customer to work through the engineering challenges."* The Hunter Class program will now progress to the Preliminary Design Review — a technical assessment aimed at ensuring the design is operationally effective, and detailed design and planning can commence. This latest milestone follows the transfer of more than two million digital artefacts from the UK to Australia, and the [completion](#) of the structural manufacture of the first steel prototype unit in October. The 217 square metre steel unit, produced at Osborne Naval Shipyard, was moved from the shipyard's primary manufacturing hall for the next phase of the production process, which involves outfitting and consolidation with three other units as part of the first prototyping block.

Source: <https://www.defenceconnect.com.au>

I think that the RAN will hope that the reports stills some of the criticisms.

Boosting maritime law enforcement in Southeast Asia and the South China Sea

4 Feb 2022

[Michael Heazle](#)



Engineers conduct dawn checks at Bronnoysund

Photos: Crown copyright/MoD

Five and a half years on from the international arbitral tribunal's rejection of China's expansive South China Sea claims in July 2016, the international maritime order in East Asia clearly is in trouble. China is continuing to consolidate its control over the Paracel Islands and most

of the Spratleys group and is increasing its encroachments on the recognised exclusive economic zones of most of the South China Sea's littoral states with relative impunity. The Philippines and Vietnam in particular have suffered numerous Chinese incursions, and Indonesia's Natuna Islands and more recently Malaysia's EEZ have been targeted in China's bid to control the southern waters of the first island chain. The region's maritime order under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea is central to the rules-based order that Australia, India, Japan, the US and other likeminded states hold to be central to regional security and prosperity. Yet China's grey-zone tactics are continuing apace, weakening the authority and relevance of UNCLOS in the absence of a coordinated and unified regional stance supporting its rules and authority both in principle and in practice. The wider regional implications of China continuing to unilaterally impose its own maritime laws on other states, denying them fishing and other maritime rights, provide compelling reasons for the Quad states, and others, to work harder to ensure that the rights and entitlements of all South China Sea littoral states under UNCLOS are protected. The threats include not only the further erosion of the rules-based order's authority and legitimacy, perhaps to an irreparable degree, but also a major increase in Beijing's political and economic leverage over the many Southeast Asian states that continue to depend on the fishing, energy and other sovereign rights China seeks to control. Allowing Beijing to further expand its already significant presence and influence in the South China Sea would make it much more difficult for Australia, Japan and the US to build regional diplomatic support against China's actions in the South China Sea and elsewhere, making great-power military conflict in the region more likely. ASEAN's role in the disputes remains hamstrung by internal divisions over its responsibility as a regional institution for protecting individual state maritime rights, despite its various statements [affirming UNCLOS](#) as the basis for resolving maritime entitlement disputes. Many in ASEAN are fearful of the consequences of being forced to choose between the US

and China, of ASEAN becoming marginalised by great-power politics in its own backyard, and of the region becoming more militarised and conflict prone. The lack of a unified ASEAN stance and response on China's claims is also explained by fence-sitting among member states that are not directly affected by the South China Sea disputes or whose political and business elites [prioritise the benefits](#) of not antagonising Beijing. The fact that rival maritime claimants in ASEAN hold [conflicting interpretations](#) of UNCLOS's provisions has been an additional obstacle to developing a common ASEAN position. But [signs of greater willingness to cooperate](#) on maritime law enforcement and other maritime issues, encouraged by Beijing's aggressive behaviour, are [beginning to appear](#) among the littoral ASEAN states. An agreement between Indonesia and the Philippines on their overlapping EEZs in the Celebes Sea was ratified by both governments in 2014. Vietnam and Malaysia are planning to sign a [memorandum of understanding](#) on maritime security cooperation addressing several problem areas, including illegal Vietnamese fishing in Malaysian waters. [Vietnam and Indonesia](#), meanwhile, are continuing negotiations to establish provisional boundaries in overlapping areas of their claimed EEZs in the North Natuna Sea; in December last year the two nations [signed a memorandum](#) pledging improved cooperation on maritime security and safety. These bilateral agreements should be read as both an assertion of the parties' maritime rights and a clear rejection of China's illegal 'nine-dash line' claims. Beijing's deployment of militia vessels for maritime fishing exposes them to suspicion of illegal fishing and thus also to legitimate maritime law enforcement action under UNCLOS. The longstanding problem of illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing in the South China Sea therefore may present an [important opportunity](#) for the South China Sea states most at threat from China's illegal maritime claims—the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia and Indonesia—to collectively develop, with greater capacity-building and regulatory support from the Quad states, a UNCLOS based, non-military means of pushing back against China's claims and grey-zone tactics. Doing so will ensure that regional, rather than external, actors take the lead in upholding and affirming maritime rights. It will also provide a broad and unambiguous affirmation of UNCLOS's authority and relevance and place the onus for any military escalation on China by imposing grey-zone dilemmas on China's leadership, especially in terms of its own conflict threshold calculations. Aside from the geostrategic threat that a Chinese takeover of the South China Sea poses, the alternative to cooperative EEZ regulation and better maritime law enforcement is a Chinese-controlled South China Sea. That would extinguish the resource and freedom-of-navigation rights of all other states and make any plans for cooperative or multilateral management (such as through a regional fisheries management organisation) of those resources and rights redundant. The risk of a catastrophic collapse of the region's biggest fisheries resource due to [Chinese mismanagement](#), intensifying competition and conflict, or both, would significantly increase. Such an outcome would very likely mean more illegal fishing in Southeast Asia's already depleted waters, and in the EEZs of other states, including Australia and Japan. By collectively supporting the Philippines, Malaysia, Vietnam and Indonesia in their efforts to more effectively regulate and police fishing and other maritime activities, the Quad states can indirectly push back on China's grey-zone encroachments while also helping the coastal states to better manage a longstanding threat to the region's socioeconomic security and future prosperity.

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Source: <https://www.aspistrategist.org.au>

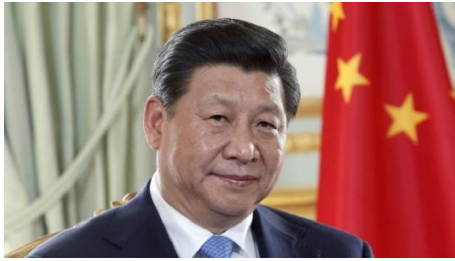
Unpacking China's modern Taiwan strategy

14 February 2022

By: Reporter

Last year, US General John Hyten explained that China's rate of military innovation was "stunning". Despite closing the gap on the United States' uncertain qualitative military advantage, analysts nevertheless believe that China will continue to use grey zone and hybrid operations to extend influence into Taiwan as part of the country's objective to reunify China. Throughout eight years of unrest in Ukraine, modern spectators have observed the

efficacy of hybrid and grey zone activities in real time. From political coercion in Crimea, to SOF-intelligence operations conducted by Russia's *little green men* and concerted media campaigns to elicit behavioural responses from a target population – such concepts of irregular warfare have been evidenced as an effective tool to exert competitive control over



the battlefield and wider body politic. It has been a lesson in winning a war without (notionally) firing a shot. Australia is no stranger to such concepts of grey zone and hybrid warfare, with economic coercion forming an essential tool in China's non-kinetic arsenal. Few countries have been on the receiving end of Beijing's economic warfare more than Australia, with restrictions placed on Australian barley, wine, timber, coal and

lobsters. Some media outlets have reported that the restrictions have gone even further, with some Chinese companies refusing to work with Australian sellers. With a poorly diversified export market, such restrictions not only shudder individual sectors to a halt, but also force the hand of Canberra as Australia's economic ecosystem slows. Such examples were evidenced in 2017 when China restricted trade and tourism to South Korea in response to its installation of the US Terminal High Altitude Area Defense missile interceptor (THAAD), which reportedly gave radar intelligence deep into China's interior. South Korean industry was dealt a devastating blow by the Chinese sanctions with sources suggesting that the sanctions cost the South Korean economy 8.5 trillion won (an estimated \$9.9 billion in today's AUD). Writing in the ***Small Wars Journal***, Professor of society computing at Carnegie Mellon University Kathleen Carley and PhD candidate Charity Jacobs explain how China's contemporary strategy to extend influence in Taiwan rests firmly in such grey zone activities, rather than solely via conventional warfare. According to the pair, this proclivity to grey zone operations was a learned behaviour from the United States, with China observing how the US symbiotically used both kinetic and non-kinetic means to exert competitive control across the world. *"The two US-coalition Gulf Wars played a critical part in modernising the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) doctrine. Desert Storm in 1991 would renew international thinking on the notion of revolution in military affairs (RMA) theory and was a significant wake-up call for the PLA that modernisation efforts were necessary if China was to become a world power capable of fighting wars of the future,"* the pair notes. While learning about US military capabilities throughout the engagement, Beijing further observed the beneficial application of information warfare disseminated via both traditional and non-traditional outlets to generate support for the United States and their coalition partners throughout the conflict. *"Although Beijing sharply criticised the legality of US military interventions abroad after the first Gulf War, Chinese analysts observed with great interest the way US leaders manipulated foreign and domestic public opinion,"* the pair argues. In fact, Carley and Jacobs argue that CNN and NBC were so vociferously supportive of military action in the region that many Chinese analysts believed the outlets to be controlled by the US government and Department of Defense, spurring China's desire for large-scale outlets to legitimise potential Chinese military activities via the information vector. *"The PLA introduced **Three Warfares doctrine** in 2003, centred around psychological warfare, public opinion warfare, and legal warfare in response to the effective psychological operations and effective use of media executed in the Iraq War and other recent conflicts,"* the pair argues. *"Base 311 or Unit 61716 is China's premier psychological warfare unit under its Strategic Support Force, the PLA's branch with cyber, cyber and electronic warfare capabilities (Costello and McReynolds, 2018)."* The pair argues that this **Three Warfares doctrine** was designed to enable China to undertake military operations during peacetime, resulting in *"peacetime-warfare integration"*. As such, falling below the threshold of armed conflict, China could undertake military actions and compel nations to their political end goal through behavioural influence. Carley and Jacobs cite China's *"cognitive domain operations"* as an example of this. *"PLA theorist Zeng Huafeng defined tactics to win mind superiority: 1) "perception manipulation" through propaganda narratives; 2) "cutting off historical memory" so that targets will be open to new values; 3) "changing the paradigm of thinking" by targeting elites to change their ideology; and 4) "deconstructing symbols" to*

challenge national identity (Kunlun, 2014)," they note. The pair notes that these grey zone activities are currently being employed to place pressure on Taiwan and influence the government, military, businesses and population. Such legally grey "peacetime-wartime integration" activities include the dissemination of disinformation to foment division and distrust to the government, continued economic integration between the two countries as well as the continued threat of military invasion.

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