**Strategic Catastrophe: War with China**

[Harlan Ullman](https://dailytimes.com.pk/writer/harlan-ullman/)

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The United States too often suffers from historical amnesia and technological hubris. One striking example proves this point. Since World War II ended, America has lost every war it started. Yes, America has lost every war it started-Vietnam, Afghanistan and the second Iraq War. And it won the Cold War it did not start.

Saddam Hussein’s 1990 invasion of Kuwait provoked an overwhelming response by a large international coalition led by the US. After September 11th, the US did not have to invade Afghanistan to destroy al Qaeda or kill Osama bin Laden. After all, where was Osama killed? In Pakistan, not Afghanistan.

Now the US is repeating these huge misjudgments in its strategic thinking and planning for national security and defense. Since Barack Obama’s strategic pivot to Asia, both the Trump and Biden administrations have followed suit. As a result, the US now has a military force designed to fight one war, presumably against China, at a cost of about $900 billion a year.

Instead of taking the lead role in the war, the US strategic aim must be to defend treaty allies by helping them to defend themselves.

And this is a war the US will not or cannot win for many reasons. Former Secretary of Defense, Robert Gates, was correct when he warned that anyone considering fighting a land war in Asia “needed to have his or her mind examined.” In this case, what is the meaning of victory and winning? There is none.

Furthermore, given likely weapons expenditure rates should a war with China erupt, the US has the capacity for about a month before, as in Ukraine, it runs out of inventory. The most discussed scenario is the so-called battle of the Taiwan Straits and defeating a Chinese military invasion and assault on that island. This needs to be carefully reexamined.

Based on actual past invasions in World War II and Korea, particularly Normandy in 1944 and Okinawa a year later, upwards of five thousand or more ships and small craft and several hundreds of thousands of soldiers and marines would be required. In the short term, China will not have this capacity.

But suppose China launched an invasion or bombarded Taiwan with massive air and missile attacks. How would the US defend Taiwan? Today detecting a target makes its destruction likely. No matter the countermeasures, if carrier strike groups were to close Taiwan within, say, 1000 miles, they would be targeted and probably hit by Chinese missiles. US submarines would be limited to magazine capacity and would depart the fight once weapons were expended.

If the US were to attack China’s mainland, why would China not strike Guam, Hawaii or the continental US? In the latter case, would that invoke NATO’s Article 5 in which an “attack on one is to be considered an attack against all?” NATO did invoke Article 5 for the first time after September 11th. What would NATO do in this case?

Given China as the “pacing” or principal threat, what happens if the wars in Ukraine and Gaza and the effort to protect the Red Sea from Houthi attacks escalate? Is the US one war, China biased military strategy prepared for other contingencies? Or is it not? If not, is it time to re-examine that strategy?

War with China would be a strategic catastrophe. The US has not explained how such a war could be fought and won. The economic consequences would be disastrous. And how would such a war end? Can anyone answer these questions?

A strategic solution is so obvious that no one sees it. The US needs to change its strategic focus from assuming the burdens for “competing, deterring and defeating or prevailing” over specific adversaries outlined in the National Defense Strategy to working through and with allies in NATO and Asia “to prevent war and its escalation.”

Prevention is NOT deterrence and is more proactive. Simply put, instead of taking the lead role in the war, the US strategic aim must be to defend treaty allies by helping them to defend themselves. Further, the US must stop naming specific enemies. If China, Russia, Iran or others declared that their strategies were to deter and defeat America if war arose, what would be our reaction?

Such a revised strategic optic would allow a smaller, less expensive force tailored for more than one contingency because of greater reliance on allies. But if the US persists in shouldering the entire burden, again directed against China, it will repeat strategic blunders of the past. The worst of all would be a war with China that never needed to be fought. But will anyone listen?

*The writer is a senior advisor at Washington, DC’s Atlantic Council and a published author.*