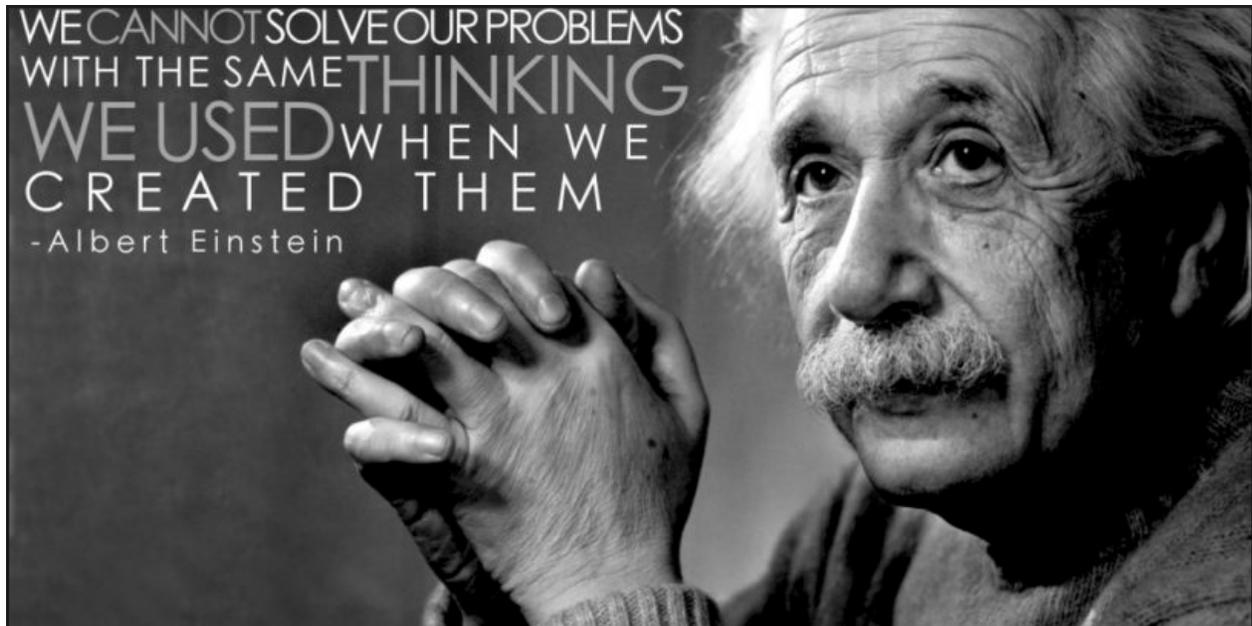


SAASS 643

## STRATEGY-TO-PRACTICE

15 APRIL – 10 MAY 2019



**Course Director: Lt Col Sarah Bakhtiari**

**Syllabus Approved:** \_\_\_\_\_

**SHAWN T. COCHRAN, Col, USAF  
Commandant**

## SAASS Course 643: Strategy-to-Practice

### Course Description

Strategy-to-Practice is an interdisciplinary graduate-level course in contemporary security studies intended to provide an increased understanding of the contexts for, constraints on, and conditions within which U.S. national security strategy is developed and executed, and offer students an opportunity to practice developing strategy.

Your year at SAASS has provided exposure to a range of different theories, concepts, historical contexts, and complex challenges, but has yet to ask you to synthesize that rich data in an effort to produce strategy, or afforded you the time to practice developing strategy. Practicing strategy development is important because “strategy is performance, and performance takes practice” (Col Celestino Perez, 2018). This course is intended to give you the opportunity to roll up your sleeves and develop strategy.

The course is organized into four blocks of instruction, each of which captures contexts, constraints, themes, or approaches important for strategy development. In Block 1, you’ll gain an understanding of the context within which national-level strategy is made, and the forces that push and pull strategy in different directions, constraining both options and outcomes. You’ll dissect the strategic guidance provided to senior military commanders that drives the development of military and operational strategy around the globe. Block 2 will refamiliarize you with military and civilian planning and innovation approaches that interact with strategy. In Block 3, you’ll survey some critical perspectives on China, in an effort to both inform the forthcoming strategy development block and attune you to some of the conditions important for national decision-makers and Combatant Commanders vis-à-vis the region. Finally, Block 4 provides you with a practical challenge, and gives you the opportunity to develop a strategy and present that strategy to your SAASS faculty and class.

### Course Objectives:

- Increased understanding of the contexts, constraints, and conditions for developing and executing national security strategy
- Enhanced critical and creative thinking, and objective analysis for the development of military strategy
- Practice in the art of developing military strategy
- Synthesis of strategic studies and military history concepts, ideas, and lessons

### Assignments:

1. Short paper: Write a 500-1000 word paper on one of the following topics, using a style suitable for a blog post (e.g. War on the Rocks, Strategy Bridge, Monkey Cage, etc) that

leverages the readings, ideas, and/or concepts from the year at SAASS. Please note that blog-style format does not normally allow for footnotes, but in this case please include them OR hyperlinks for any necessary attributions or references. Papers will be evaluated on clarity, persuasiveness, logic, and appropriateness of theories and evidence. Papers are due to seminar instructors by 0900 on 6 May 2019.

Topics:

- Strategy topic of your choice
- How should the USAF contribute to great power competition?

2. Group Presentation: Each seminar team must provide a 20-minute briefing detailing their group's strategy for presentation to the SAASS faculty and class. You may use any presentation format you desire. Each team is allotted thirty minutes total time for the presentation, so expect ten minutes for questions and feedback during and following the presentation. You have wide latitude on what you brief and how you brief. Please see the guidance for Days 13-17 for specific requirements.

**Grading:** The faculty will determine final course grades based on the following: presentation (25%), short paper (25%), and class participation (50%).

**Teaching Faculty:**

Lt Col Sarah Bakhtiari (Course Director)  
Col Stephanie Kelley  
Lt Col Mark Jacobsen  
Dr. Stephen "Wilbur" Wright

## Course Overview

### **Block 1 - National Security Policy-Making Contexts and Constraints**

- 15 April: Course Day 1 The National Security Enterprise
- 16 April: Course Day 2 Foreign Policy Making
- 17 April: Commandant Day Capabilities Briefing
- 18 April: Course Day 3 International Law of Military Operations
- 19 April: Course Day 4 Current Strategic Guidance and Military Strategy

### **Block 2 – Strategy Development Approaches**

- 22 April: Course Day 5 “Good” Strategy
- 23 April: Course Day 6 Strategy, Operational Art, and Design
- 25 April: Course Day 7 Agnostic Design Approach
- 26 April: Course Day 8 Special Operations Command Design Way

### **Block 3 – Conditions in the Strategic and Operational Environment**

- 29 April: Course Day 9 Key Defense Trends in the People’s Republic of China
- 30 April: Course Day 10 Understanding Chinese Nationalism
- 1 May: Commandant Day Scenario Planning Workshop
- 2 May: Course Day 11 China’s Authoritarian Rise
- 3 May: Course Day 12 Perennial Conflict Dynamics

### **Block 4 – Strategy is Performance, Performance Takes Practice**

- 6 – 9 May: Course Days 13-16 Developing Recommendations for the National Military Strategy
- 10 May: Course Day 17 Presentations of Military Strategy

## Course Outline

The final course in the SAASS program is intended to offer students the opportunity to take strategy to practice, building an appreciation for the context within which national and theater-level strategy is made, developing familiarity with different design approaches that can facilitate strategy formulation, understanding regional and adversary contexts for strategy development, and grappling with these approaches and contexts in the formulation of strategy.

In Block 1, National Security Policy, you'll gain exposure to the national-level policy-making process and the factors that complicate these processes. You'll analyze our key national strategy documents for evidence of the interest-group politics, institutional prerogatives, civil-military, and executive roles in strategy making, in addition to evaluating the various international relations theory influences in these documents.

Block 2 exposes you to a range of design approaches that can be used to facilitate the formulation of strategy. These design approaches will provide practical tools to leverage as you advance professionally and apply the theories, concepts, and ideas that you have been exposed to during your SAASS year. Additionally, you'll gain exposure to the intersection of operational art and strategy so that you can interface effectively as strategists with operational planners.

As an addendum to Block 2, you will participate in a full-day workshop on the method of scenario planning, led by a prominent strategy consultant. Originally developed within Royal/Dutch Shell in the 1970s, this method emphasizes building and utilizing multiple competing stories about the future as the basis for strategic decision-making in the present. In particular, proponents of the method see its value in dealing with complex and uncertain situations. As Peter Schwartz describes, "The scenario process provides a context for thinking clearly about the impossibly complex array of factors that affect any decision." This workshop will familiarize you with the method, and will also give you the opportunity to work through a number of practical exercises.

In Block 3, you'll garner insights particular to China, as you read some texts relevant to strategy development for that region. You'll be able to identify the key trends in the areas of military doctrine, strategy and modernization in China, the risks associated with the age-old Thucydidean trap in the region, and the potential impacts of nationalism and authoritarianism on China's rise. This regional orientation will help inform your perspective for practicing strategy development in Block 4.

In Block 4, you'll have an opportunity to test your hand at developing national-level strategy. Leveraging not only the context, regional understanding, and tools you've garnered in this course, but also the concepts, ideas, and models you've engaged with throughout the year, you'll develop a portion of the next national military strategy. Seminar teams will have four days to develop a strategy, followed by presentations of that strategy to the class and faculty.

## **Block 1. National Security Policy-Making Contexts and Constraints**

The National Security Policy-Making block focuses in particular on the complex decision making challenges that security professionals face at the national-strategic level. The Block 1 objective is to provide students with an appreciation for the key contexts and constraints associated with national security policy and decision-making in a manner that is professionally relevant, and enables students to both frame and test their ideas.

### **Day 1 The National Security Enterprise**

George and Rishikof make the case that understanding the formulation of national security policy requires an understanding of not only the national security *system* but also of the national security *enterprise*, which encompasses more than the formal government institutions of the executive branch and Congress. Congress and the courts also play important roles in foreign affairs and security policy, as well as the informal actors like the media, think tanks, and interest groups. Within this national security enterprise, we find organizations with particular cultures that reflect certain value structures and incentives shared by the members of the organization, which shape their roles and influence in the policy process. The challenges that the national security enterprise faces reflect not only the proliferation of players that have a stake in national security policy, but also the friction between their institutional cultures and prerogatives, their capabilities (often resource-based) and interests, their access to privileged information, and their responsiveness to changing political priorities. The coherence and continuity of national security policy—or lack thereof—is significantly affected by the structure and nature of this national security enterprise.

**Required Reading:** George, Roger and Harvey Rishikof. *The National Security Enterprise: Navigating the Labrinth*. Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, 2017.

### **Day 2 Foreign Policy Making**

Milner and Tingley make the case that domestic politics does *not* stop at the water's edge; rather, domestic politics very much influence the choice of the foreign policy instrument the president selects. Presidential power over foreign policy hinges on both the policy instrument selected and relations with key actors. What are the different foreign policy instruments in the President's kit bag? Who are the key domestic players with which the President interacts and bargains to pursue his preferred foreign policy? Can the President enact his preferred foreign policy agenda independently? Are foreign policy instruments alike in their implications for domestic politics? How do you reconcile the authors' domestic politics theory with the theories of international

relations? Under what conditions does the President possess the most foreign policy influence? And how do the domestic constraints the authors outline affect the military strategy and policy components of foreign policy? In other words, as a military strategist, why should you be aware of or care about domestic politics?

**Required Reading:** Milner, Helen V. and Dustin Tingley. *Sailing the Water's Edge: The Domestic Politics of American Foreign Policy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015.

**Further Reading:**

Lawrence R. Jacobs and Benjamin I. Page. "Who Influences U.S. Foreign Policy." *The American Political Science Review*. 99, no.1 (2005): 107-123.

### **Day 3 International Law of Military Operations**

Modern military operations are not only shaped by institutional cultures and agendas, nor by domestic political forces. Military operations are also constrained by international laws governing military operations (or are they?). In this class, we explore the key laws governing the air, sea, space, and cyber domains, as well as their relative impact on our allies and adversaries operations. Does international law hold as much sway over the military operations of our competitors? Should it? What incentives exist for the United States in reinforcing or subverting the international legal order?

**Required Reading:**

Gill, Terry and Dieter Fleck, Eds. *The Handbook of the International Law of Military Operations*, 2nd Ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015. Chapters 19-23, 27-28.

Air Force Operations and the Law 2014, USAF JAG School, Chapter 5, Space Law.  
<https://www.afjag.af.mil/Portals/77/documents/AFD-100510-059.pdf>

### **Day 4 Current Strategic Guidance and Military Strategy**

To conclude Block 1, we'll analyze the key national security guidance documents our senior military commanders use to guide the development of their strategies and plans. In reading these strategic documents, you should evaluate how the national policy-making process, institutional agendas and cultures, domestic politics, and international and military law are reflected. Also consider which international relations approach or combinations of approaches these documents reflect. What IR theories undergird the 2017 NSS? Are these same theories in evidence in the

NDS, or are there contradictions? What are some considerations that alternative IR theories might suggest for these documents? Is there evidence of institutional biases, agendas, and cultures within the NSS? The NDS? Can you find ways in which domestic political considerations are reflected in our guiding strategy documents? Review strategic guidance documents in the Army War College Campaign Planning Handbook 2018 first.

***Required Reading:***

Army War College Campaign Planning Handbook 2018, pages 1-11:

<https://ssi.armywarcollege.edu/PDFfiles/PCorner/CampaignPlanningHandbook.pdf>

Trump, Donald J. *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*. Washington DC: The White House, December 2017. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf>

Mattis, James. *Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy of the United States of America*. Washington DC: The Office of the Secretary of Defense, January 2018. <https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2018-National-Defense-Strategy-Summary.pdf>

Note that the 2018 National Military Strategy is classified. Read the most recent unclassified summary available, the 2015 National Military Strategy:

[http://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Publications/2015\\_National\\_Military\\_Strategy.pdf](http://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Publications/2015_National_Military_Strategy.pdf)

***Further Reading:***

Cohen, Eliot A. “Three Ways to Read Trump’s National Security Strategy,” *The Atlantic*, December 18, 2017, pp. 1-4.

Feaver, Peter. “Five Takeaways from Trump’s National Security Strategy.” *Foreign Policy*, December 18, 2017, pp. 1-7.

Ochmanek, David. “Restoring U.S. Power Projection Capabilities: Responding to the 2018 National Defense Strategy.” Santa Monica: RAND, 2018.

## **Block 2. Strategy Development Approaches**

Block 2 will expose you to a variety of design approaches that can be used to facilitate the formulation of strategy, and that interact with strategy in the planning process. First we'll explore the SOCOM approach to operational art and design, which varies from the more linear and prescriptive Joint Planning Process you are familiar with. SOCOM design creates the opportunity for meta-level analysis, emergent phenomena and the construction of alternate futures. Next, we'll explore how strategy interacts with operational design in the Joint Planning Process. Finally, we'll take an agnostic approach to design that considers varied design methodologies and demonstrates an awareness of ontological and epistemological assumptions. All of the design approaches offer strategists intuitive, flexible, and practical approaches for generating outcomes that account for and integrate diverse perspectives.

### **Day 5 “Good” Strategy**

Rumelt identifies three essential elements to an effective or “good” strategy, noting that a “master strategist is a master designer” that often constructs coordinated actions to yield an advantage. Liedtka and Ogilvie offer an approach to design that puts humans at its center, and provide techniques for strategy development. Martin and Hanington provide techniques through which designers can visually structure ideas and concepts. Do you find Rumelt’s conceptualization of a strategist as designer persuasive? What about his model for “good” strategy? How does Rumelt’s approach interact with Liedtka and Ogilvie’s? Is it useful to think about strategic design in human-centric terms? How do you envision employing any of these approaches in developing your own strategy?

#### ***Required Reading:***

Rumelt, *Good Strategy, Bad Strategy: The Difference and Why It Matters*. New York: Crown Business, 2011. Chaps 5, 9, 16, 17

Liedtka, Jeanne and Tim Ogilvie. *Designing for Growth: A Design Thinking Toolkit for Managers*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2011.

Hanington, Bruce and Bella Martin. *Universal Methods of Design: 100 Ways to Research Complex Problems, Develop Innovative Ideas, and Design Effective Solutions*. Rockport: 2012.

### **Day 6 Strategy, Operational Art, and Design**

Operational art and design are not well specified (Reilly 2012), and consequently leave many of us confused about their respective roles in strategy development. Reilly argues that the

operational art elements are focused on the development of strategy, and integrate with operational design during the Joint Planning Process (JPP) course of action (COA) development step. Reilly's perspective seeks to disaggregate a role for strategy in the planning process so it is clear how we can differentiate the two. Dr. Jeffrey Reilley will facilitate a seminar on the role of strategy in operational design.

***Required Reading:***

Reilley, Jeffrey. *Operational Design: Distilling Clarity from Complexity for Decisive Action*. Montgomery, Al: AU Press, 2012.

***Further Reading:***

Army War College Campaign Planning Handbook 2018:

<https://ssi.armywarcollege.edu/PDFfiles/PCorner/CampaignPlanningHandbook.pdf>

## **Day 7 Agnostic Design Approach**

Which design approach is the right approach? Author Ben Zweibelson argues that in order to minimize the pitfalls of prescriptive process-based approaches to developing strategy or operational plans, one should take an agnostic design approach. Agnostic design allows for application of the most suitable design methodology, but advocates for an awareness of the alternative methods, as well as the ontological and epistemological assumptions that underpin selection. Mr. Zweibelson will facilitate a seminar on taking an agnostic design approach to strategy development.

***Required Reading/Viewing:***

"Appreciating Design Methodologies for Security and Strategic Applications," *On Strategy: A Primer*, Nathan K. Finney, editor (forthcoming, fall 2019). [PDF File.]

Zweibelson, Ben. "Multidisciplinary Design Movement: A Frame for Realizing Industry, Security, and Academia Interplay." *Small Wars Journal*. Web. February 20, 2019.

<https://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/multidisciplinary-design-movement-frame-realizing-industry-security-and-academia-interplay>

Joint Special Operations University. Special Operations Course 4445. Lesson 8. View the complete lesson:

<https://jsou.blackboard.com/bbcswebdav/institution/JSOU/3440%20Foster/Lesson%208/story.html>

## **Day 8 Special Operations Command Design Way**

The SOCOM design model asserts that military decision-making and planning processes like the Joint Planning Process (JPP) are predicated on reductionist assumptions suitable for closed-system analysis, but problematic for the “wicked” problems associated with human social systems (i.e. open systems). How does the SOCOM design model account for closed and open systems design? What is important to realize about the differences between JPP and the SOCOM Design Way? How does this insight inform your ideas about strategy development? Dr. David Ellis will facilitate a seminar on using the SOCOM Design Way for strategy development. Please refamiliarize yourself with the Joint Planning Process in Joint Publication 5-0 Joint Planning, 16 June 2017, as necessary.

### ***Required Reading:***

Ellis, David C. and Charles N. Black. *Complexity, Organizational Blindness, and the SOCOM Design Way*. JSOU Report 18-3. MacDill AFB, FL: JSOU Press, 2018.

### ***Further Reading:***

Joint Chiefs of Staff. Joint Publication 5-0. *Joint Planning*. Washington DC, 16 June 2017.  
[https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/pubs/jp5\\_0\\_20171606.pdf](https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/pubs/jp5_0_20171606.pdf)

### **Block 3. Conditions in the Strategic and Operational Environment**

In Block 3, you will gain important regional context for strategy development in the Asia-Pacific region. This is critical preparation for your future roles as strategists and decision-makers, but also for your strategy development practice in Block 4. Four texts will canvas the themes of the US-China relations, Chinese identity, and the Chinese approach to strategy and politics.

#### **Day 9 Key Defense Trends in the People's Republic of China**

DoD's Annual Report to Congress and assessment of China's expanding global access highlights key trends and developments in Chinese security strategy, military doctrine and military modernization efforts within the context of regional and global international relations. Consider these documents an essential reference for all China-related security issues from the U.S. military perspective. Lt Col Steve "Smitty" Smith will present his perspective as a linguist and regional expert on understanding the context of US-China relations and Chinese military developments.

#### ***Required Reading:***

Department of Defense. *Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China*. Washington DC, 2018.

<https://www.hsdl.org/?view&did=814130>

Department of Defense. *Assessment on U.S. Defense Implications of China's Expanding Global Access*. Washington DC, 2018.

<https://media.defense.gov/2019/Jan/14/2002079292/-1/-1/1/EXPANDING-GLOBAL-ACCESS-REPORT-FINAL.PDF>

#### ***Recommended Reading:***

Defense Intelligence Agency. *China Military Power: Modernizing a Force to Fight and Win*. Washington DC, 2019.

[http://www.dia.mil/Portals/27/Documents/News/Military%20Power%20Publications/China\\_Military\\_Power\\_FINAL\\_5MB\\_20190103.pdf](http://www.dia.mil/Portals/27/Documents/News/Military%20Power%20Publications/China_Military_Power_FINAL_5MB_20190103.pdf)

#### **Day 10 Understanding Chinese Nationalism**

Despite the age of this book, its central arguments regarding the powerful influence of nationalism in China's national behavior continue to be even more operative in China's

international security behaviors today. Hays captures the power of the Central Communist Party's narrative as well as the associated danger of nationalism run amok in Chinese foreign policy. How do the Chinese and US approaches to rhetoric differ? Do words really matter to the degree that Hays' asserts, and how might we take that into account in our development of strategy? Is China perverting its historical legacy during the Century of Humiliation?

***Required Reading:***

Gries, Peter Hays. *China's New Nationalism: Pride, Politics, and Diplomacy*. Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2005.

**Day 11 China's Authoritarian Rise**

Much of the strategic angst surrounding China is based on the premise that its rise will continue unabated in a linear manner. Minzer examines the fragility of China and how authoritarian retrenchment under Xi Jinping is paradoxically weakening the country, a phenomenon that has its own negative implications for domestic and international stability.

***Required Reading:***

Minzner, Carl. *End of an Era: How China's Authoritarian Revival is Undermining Its Rise*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018.

**Day 12 Perennial Conflict Dynamics**

In *Destined for War*, Allison examines the fear, honor, and interest pressures that cause tension and, usually, armed conflict between rising and established powers. Allison argues that China and the US are potentially heading down the road to conflict based on these age-old pressures. How persuasive is Allison's argument? Which, if any, international relations theories are in evidence in Allison's rendering of the strategic situation? Is it legitimate to compare conflicts across such dramatically different periods of time?

***Required Reading:***

Allison, Graham. *Destined for War: Can America and China escape Thucydides' Trap?* Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017.

## **Block 4: Strategy is Performance, Performance Takes Practice**

### **Day 13-16** Developing Recommendations for the next National Military Strategy

Now that you are familiar with the national policy-making process, constraints and influences on that process, as well as several design models that can be used to facilitate strategy development, you are tasked with developing a strategy for specific security objectives in the Pacific region. You are a member of the team in the Joint Chiefs of Staff responsible to provide inputs to the next National Military Strategy. Your task is to present to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs your team's input to the Asia Pacific portion of the forthcoming national military strategy. Teams should ensure their strategy reflects national strategic priorities, and relevant constraints, contexts, and conditions. You may leverage any/all real-world research, references, and data available to inform your strategy. Take into account all you have learned about international relations, military history and theory, domain-specific concepts, national policy making considerations, and your own training and operational experience to develop your strategy.

Each seminar team should develop their strategy using seminar time and additional time the seminar elects to spend on the assignment. Teams will brief their military strategy to the SAASS class and faculty on Friday, 10 May (Course Day 17). Seminar teams should prepare a 20-minute presentation of their strategy that, at a minimum, characterizes both the problem they are trying to solve and the environment, identifies assumptions, provides the logic behind the strategy, the associated risks, and explains the approach/method used to develop the strategy—*and/or any additional elements teams think are essential to a sound strategy*. You may, but are not required to, include dependencies on other national instruments of power in your strategy if they are essential to the success of your military strategy. A select committee of SAASS faculty, acting as the Chairman and his advisors, will evaluate the presentations and offer feedback on the strategies. Group presentations will be graded on originality, persuasiveness, feasibility, effectiveness, and logic. Seminar teams should operate independent of one another and pursue collaboration only within their own seminar team.

Security objectives:

- Avoid further militarization of the South China Sea
- Prevent a forcible takeover of Taiwan by China
- Ensure regional alliances and partnerships are capable of enabling decisive action
- Reduce potential for conflict over territorial sovereignty disputes in the East China Sea

### **Day 17 Strategy Presentations (MGMWERX)**

Students will present briefings to faculty and student audience beginning at 0900 on 10 May at MGMWERX.