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Managing Escalation and Limiting War in a Conflict in the Western Pacific

Center on Contemporary Conflict; Colby, Elbridge

Monterey, California: Naval Postgraduate School

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The Project on Advanced Systems and Concepts for Countering WMD (PASCC) is run at the Center on Contemporary Studies (CCC) and sponsored by the Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA). PASCC awards and supports strategic studies and dialogues that anticipate and try to reduce the threat of WMD capabilities.



The CCC has a respected track record for providing research and timely analysis on a variety of topics to leading decision makers in the U.S. national security community. Located in the Naval Postgraduate School, the CCC is the research wing of the Department of National Security Affairs.

Research in Progress describes ongoing PASCC research. For more information, please contact pascc@nps.edu.

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Managing Escalation and Limiting War in a Conflict in the Western Pacific

Performer: Center for a New American Security

Project Lead: Elbridge Colby

Project Cost: \$149,000

FY15-16

Objective:

China is modernizing, expanding, and improving its conventional weapons. At the same time, U.S. military capabilities in the region are under considerable pressure for a number of reasons, including budget cuts and competing demands for resources. As China continues to modernize its arsenal, including its nuclear weapons, the question of how the United States could favorably manage escalation in a conflict with China while achieving its own political objectives is becoming increasingly important. This project will examine the implications of China's growing military power as it pertains to the U.S. ability to effectively deter conflict or, if need be, prevail in a manner that controls escalation. By analyzing the dynamics of limited war as applied to the U.S.-Chinese context and identifying weaknesses in U.S. strategy and posture, the study will provide new knowledge to analysts, academics, U.S. officials, and others who discuss, monitor, and contribute to U.S. policy on these matters.

Approach:

Drawing on previous studies and discussions with experts, the Center for a New American Security will conduct an analytical study to synthesize the literature on the problems of limiting war and managing escalation, in order to baseline U.S. doctrine and thought on potential conflict. It will also review China's capabilities and identify opportunities for minimizing consequences of WMD/WME use. Furthermore, it will provide guiding principles for planners and analysts confronting escalation challenges and recommendations for U.S. doctrine, strategy, procurement plans, and/or posture. The principal investigator will host several round table discussions with experts and publish a final report.