

Introducing the Journal of Strategic Competition

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1 Introduction

Welcome to the inaugural issue of the *Journal of Strategic Competition*! This journal was created from a desire to provide a forum where academics, military practitioners, and policymakers can converge to discuss and explore the pressing issues of our time. Strategic competition has become an increasingly complex landscape, with rapid developments that impact global stability and national security. Our mission is to integrate theory, policy, and practice, offering a platform where research and insights can resonate across fields and where diverse perspectives are encouraged to foster well-rounded solutions to today's challenges.

The *Journal of Strategic Competition* was born out of the work and mission of the Irregular Warfare Initiative (IWI), a community dedicated to advancing the understanding of irregular warfare through a unique blend of theory, practice, and policy perspectives. In our work with IWI, we recognized a critical gap in the discourse on strategic competition: while many publications addressed elements of warfare or competition independently, few provided an integrated space for the comprehensive analysis that today's multifaceted global environment demands. We saw the need for a journal that could bring together insights that, when combined, create a more complete picture of strategic challenges. The *Journal of Strategic Competition* fills this gap by bridging fields, encouraging cross-disciplinary collaboration, and capturing the complexity of competition as it unfolds. This endeavor reflects IWI's commitment to fostering dialogue that doesn't just inform, but drives actionable insights and meaningful change in how we understand and approach strategic competition.

2 The Changing Global Landscape

The world has entered an era of unprecedented geopolitical competition marked by challenges that demand fresh thinking and collaborative approaches. Strategic competition is no longer confined to military might or economic superiority but is a complex interplay involving cyber threats, technological dominance, ideological battles, and power shifts within and across regions.

Unlike the bipolar structure of the Cold War, where competition was largely ideological and military in nature, today's strategic competition is far more complex and

dynamic. The rise of a globally interconnected economy has created intricate interdependencies that adversaries exploit to gain leverage, using economic tools such as debt diplomacy, trade coercion, and control over critical supply chains. Compounding this complexity is the speed and ubiquity of information, driven by digital technologies and social media, which enable adversaries to conduct influence campaigns, shape narratives, and destabilize societies at scale and with near-instantaneous reach.

This environment demands approaches far more sophisticated and integrated than those employed during the Cold War. Success in this strategic competition requires leveraging all instruments of national power—while also recognizing the indispensable role of the private sector and academia. The challenges posed by technological disruption, information warfare, and economic coercion cannot be met by governments alone. Collaboration across public and private sectors, combined with insights from academia, is essential to develop innovative, well-coordinated strategies capable of addressing these multifaceted challenges.

With that in mind, we recognize that our current operating environment reflects a paradigm shift in how strategic competition unfolds—moving beyond conventional warfare to persistent, multidomain challenges that demand agility, integration, and sustained engagement. As highlighted in the US Joint Concept for Competing (JCC), today's adversaries seek to “win without fighting” by leveraging cyber intrusions, economic coercion, legal warfare, and influence operations to bypass traditional deterrence and reshape global balances of power [1]. For instance, state actors increasingly use cyber operations to undermine infrastructure, weaponize global supply chains, and employ disinformation campaigns to destabilize governance in contested regions.

The Joint Doctrine Note 1-19, Competition Continuum reinforces this complexity, framing competition as a fluid continuum spanning cooperation, competition below armed conflict, and armed conflict [2]. Success in this dynamic environment requires states to engage proactively across all levels—shaping the competitive space, countering adversarial actions, and leveraging innovation to exploit vulnerabilities before they escalate. Building on this, Joint Doctrine Note 1-22, Joint Force in Strategic Competition underscores the protracted nature of modern competition, where outcomes are determined not by single decisive victories but through persistent influence and careful shaping of the environment over time [3].

Central to this effort is the application of strategic art: a deliberate and cognitive approach that aligns objectives, outcomes, and actions to secure sustained advantage. Strategic art calls for proactive, integrated strategies that deter escalation while countering adversarial moves across domains. The Joint Concept for Integrated Campaigning further emphasizes the importance of multi-domain responses, advocating for unity of efforts across national, international, and interagency lines to align military operations with diplomatic, economic, legal, and informational tools of power [4]. This kind of coordination ensures that competition is not merely reactive but deliberately shaped to deny adversaries opportunities while advancing strategic aims.

By recognizing the enduring and multidimensional nature of strategic competition, the imperative becomes clear: success requires the ability to adapt, integrate, and innovate responses across all instruments of power. As rapid advancements in artificial intelligence, cyber capabilities, and global economic interdependencies reshape competition, states must remain agile and forward-thinking. The challenges posed by influence operations in Eastern Europe, technological and economical advancements in the Indo-Pacific, and the weaponization of supply chains underscore the need for comprehensive approaches

grounded in actionable insights and deliberate strategy.

The *Journal of Strategic Competition* meets that need. It provides a platform to analyze these dynamics, offering readers concrete insights into the interconnected challenges shaping global affairs. The IWI—with its proven ability to integrate theory, policy, and practice—stands uniquely positioned to lead this effort. Through this journal, IWI brings together academics, private sector professionals, policymakers, and military practitioners to bridge the divide between research and real-world application, ensuring the thought leadership necessary to navigate, shape, and win in the complex arena of strategic competition. By doing so, we hope to offer readers a deeper understanding of the interconnected elements shaping the future of global affairs and national strategies.

3 Goals for the Journal

At the *Journal of Strategic Competition*, we endeavor to achieve a few key goals: to promote high-quality research, foster pragmatic insights, and encourage innovative thinking that cuts across traditional boundaries. Through rigorous peer review and contributions from both experienced and emerging voices, we aim to maintain a standard of excellence that advances academic discourse. Additionally, we seek to be a resource for policymakers and practitioners who need actionable insights and a forum for new ideas. By integrating diverse perspectives, we are committed to addressing critical issues holistically and to pushing the field forward with meaningful contributions that challenge, refine, and expand current understanding.

One of the hallmarks of this journal is the variety of article types we welcome, reflecting our commitment to inclusivity and the understanding that strategic competition is best examined from multiple angles. Our analytic **Articles** provide concise, focused insights on specific challenges, while our longer-form **Reviews** allow for comprehensive examinations of critical issues. We are particularly excited about our **Operator Field Notes** section, where military practitioners and field operators can share firsthand observations and experiences, bringing invaluable, ground-level perspectives to the journal that traditional academic discourse often misses. Our **Lessons Learned from Wargames, Exercises, and Simulations** articles invite contributors to analyze outcomes from these activities, offering insights from simulation to strategy. We also feature **Policy Gap Assessments**, providing a space for critical evaluations and recommendations that highlight the gap between existing policies and emerging needs in today's competitive landscape. Our unique **Hybrid Perspectives** articles combine academic rigor with practical relevance by requiring co-authorship between an academic and a practitioner, presenting balanced analyses that are both insightful and applicable to real-world challenges. Lastly, our **Book Reviews** section provides readers with expert critiques of recent publications in the field, highlighting relevant literature and fostering engagement with emerging scholarship. By offering these varied article types, we aim to empower contributors to find the best fit for their work and present our readers with a rich array of perspectives on the pressing issues of strategic competition.

4 Call to Action

In keeping with our mission, we extend a warm invitation to contributors from all backgrounds. Whether you are an academic researcher, a military officer with field experience,

an executive in the private sector, or a policymaker engaged in crafting national strategies, your insights are valuable to this journal. Recognizing that some practitioners may be new to academic writing, we strive to make our submission and review process accessible to ensure all voices can be heard. Through this inclusive approach, we hope to democratize knowledge, incorporating a wide range of perspectives and ideas. Together, we can generate impactful research and dialogues that deepen our collective understanding of strategic competition and contribute to meaningful developments in the field.

We particularly welcome international voices, as we recognize that diverse perspectives and cross-cultural comparisons are essential to understanding the complexities of strategic competition. By including contributors from different regions, we aim to foster a richer dialogue that reflects the global nature of today's challenges. We believe that insights from varied geopolitical contexts can provide valuable contrasts and highlight shared concerns, helping readers to see issues through multiple lenses and inspiring innovative, globally informed approaches to competition.

As we launch this new platform, we invite you to join us in building and contributing to a community dedicated to examining and advancing the understanding of strategic competition. This journal is more than a publication—it is a collaborative effort to drive thought leadership, support informed policy decisions, and address complex strategic challenges. Whether you are submitting your work or reading the articles, your involvement plays an essential role in shaping this journal's impact. This is only the beginning of what we hope will be a long and impactful journey. With each issue, we look forward to seeing how the journal evolves alongside the ever-changing landscape of strategic competition, helping to shape ideas and solutions for a complex world. We hope you will join us on this journey.

References

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