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Module 2: The Security Environment D14

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Formative Assessment #8

Gold Thomas DBF 2.4

The U.S. Navy, as postured in INDOPACOM, is not ready operationally, logistically, or structurally to meet the pacing threat posed by the People's Republic of China. The Pacific Deterrence Initiative outlines urgency. The NAVPLAN pleads for readiness by 2027. But posture without access is fantasy, and strategy without structure is ink spilled on paper.

The tri-service maritime strategy, built on assumptions of sea control, air superiority, and assured communications, is crumbling under the weight of China's precision strike complex. "Modern sensors and weapons range hundreds of miles both seaward and landward, blurring the distinction between operations at sea and on land" (Pratt, Session 2.19). The Navy still sails like it owns the sea. The PLAN begs to differ, and it is outproducing us.

The Marine Corps sees it. That is why it gutted tanks and artillery to fund Force Design 2030 and the Marine Littoral Regiment, a "self-deployable multi-domain force operating forward in the adversary's weapons engagement zone" (Pratt, Session 2.19). But the Navy? The Light Amphibious Warship, critical to this vision, is not its top priority. Its focus is the Columbia-class

submarine. Meanwhile, “Beijing’s aggressive maneuvers around Taiwan are not just exercises—they are dress rehearsals for forced unification” (Paparo, 2025, p. 3).

Yes, the theater has allies, geography, and momentum. The PDI funds it. The NAVPLAN sketches it. However, combatant commanders serve as a critical connection between strategic direction and operational execution, offering assessments and recommendations that influence force planning (Sullivan, 2015, p. 2), rather than aligning it.

Some argue the Navy’s global dominance still reigns through subsurface superiority, carrier groups, and the world’s largest blue-water force. However, dominance at scale means little when the fight is local, multi-domain, and inside the adversary’s weapons engagement zone.

In closing, structure must serve strategy, or strategy will serve nothing.

References

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Secondary Post #1 (by July 17, 2025)

Drew, your post makes a sharp case for the necessity of the current COCOM structure, but let's tilt the lens slightly. Is "ideal" still ideal when the COCOMs generate requirements they cannot fulfill? CCDRs make "substantial (and outsized) demands for forces that outmatch or over-tax supply" and often operate with expectations not "driven by strategy, and bound by reality" (Eaglen, 2020). That demand doesn't vanish. It ripples and wrecks maintenance cycles, delays modernization, and overextends personnel. Structure is not strategy. Sullivan (2015) emphasized that while COCOMs inform national guidance, they do not command force structure. They request. They react. They shape. But they do not build. CCDRs wield influence but lack control. Does that sharpen strategy or scatter it? Reveron et al. (2022) argue that theater strategy bridges national goals with operational plans. This is true, but bridges collapse when one side keeps loading freight and the other controls no trucks. Maybe it's not about too much power. Maybe it's about mismatched responsibility.

References

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Response to your Primary Post Response from Jordan

Jordan, you nailed it as the CCDR is caught mid-stride, being pulled between operational urgency and strategic patience. ADM Paparo's posture reflects this split. As Sullivan (2015) noted, they identify the gap, but they cannot close it. Vision without force design is drift. NAVPLAN's "readiness by 2027" becomes a slogan, not a schedule, if platform decisions are not aligned. Forward presence is not presence if it cannot persist. Until strategy drives structure, and CCDRs help enforce that discipline, integrated deterrence will keep reading like a theory paper, not a war plan.

References

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