

Gray Zones Challenges of East and Southeast Asia



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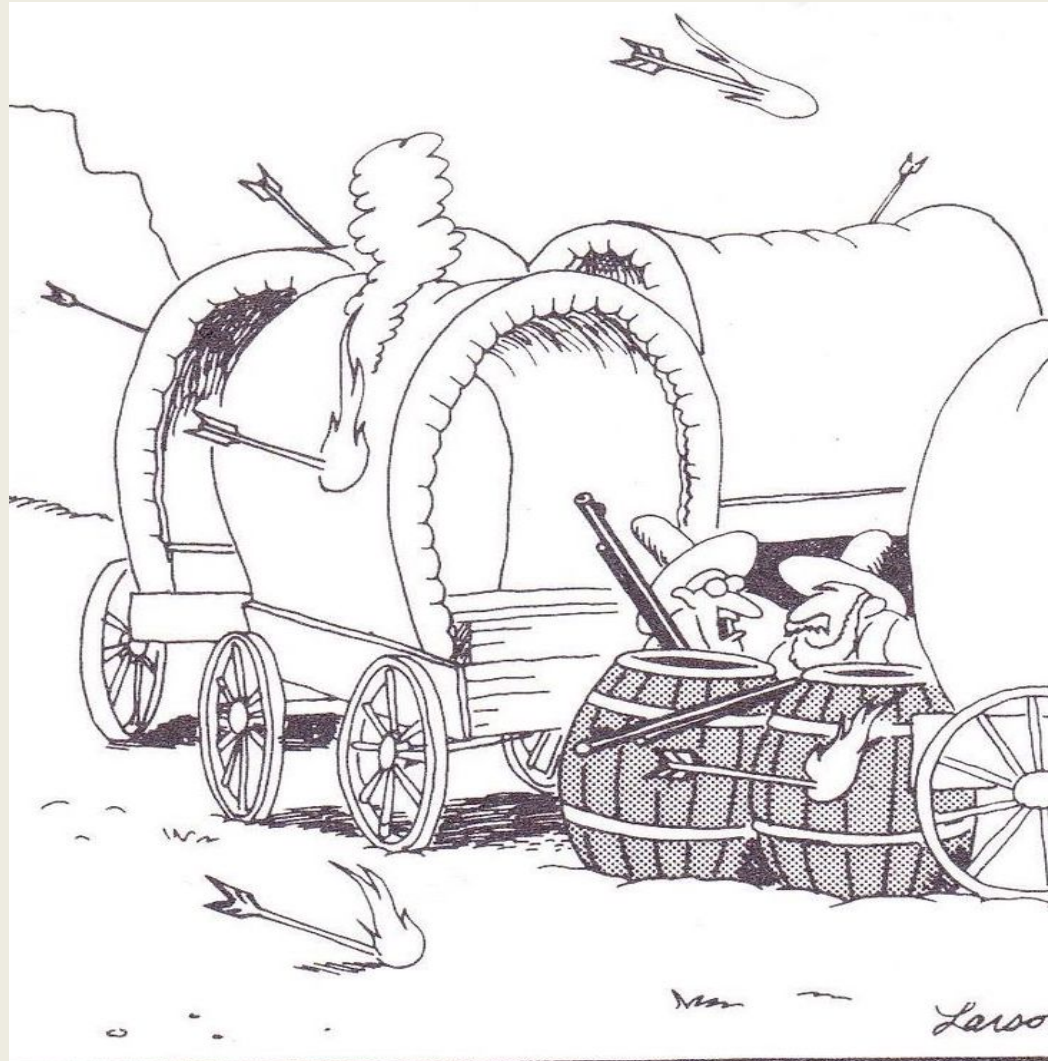
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What is a “Gray Zone”?

“A conceptual space between peace and war, involving coercive actions below a threshold that would prompt a conventional military response, often blurring the line between military and non-military actions and the attribution for events. Actions are often, but now always, undertaken to assert territorial claims.”

GZ Strategies Not New; Their *Tactics* Are



“Hey! They’re lighting their arrows! ...
Can they do that?”

Types of GZ Challenges in Asia

- 1) Military Intimidation
- 2) Paramilitary
- 3) Manipulation of Borders
- 4) Information Operations
- 5) Lawfare
- 6) Cyberware
- 7) Economic Coercion
- 8) Political Influence

Island-Building in SCS



CSIS

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“Swarm” Tactic in Disputed Waters



Maritime Militia



Escalatory Tactics of Coast Guards



Militarization of Coast Guards

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What Does the United States Have at Stake?

Generally, in larger context ...

- General global influence and perception of power
- Upholding international law, norms
- Demonstration of commitment to existing allies and partners
- Setting precedents of responses to aggression; avoiding slippery slope to generalized aggression

Specifically, in discrete gray zone issue areas ...

- Often only minimal direct, local U.S. interests at stake
- Credibility in eyes of specific allies, regional actors

Key response problem: The only vital U.S. interests lie in the general principles—but salami slices in the gray zone will not unquestionably engage them, and the immediate, direct U.S. interests at stake will often be modest

Defining Responses to Chinese GZ Activities

Type of Action	Examples	Potential Responses
<u>Category 1</u> Activities that cannot be accepted and must be deterred	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outright military aggression to seize territory • Direct military activity to prevent access to international waters • Large-scale cyber-attacks with significant impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific, credible threats of direct military responses • Investments in necessary capabilities to sustain deterrent threats • Threats of large-scale economic and political retaliation for aggression • Precise definitions of the forms of aggression that would produce a response
<u>Category 2</u> Ambiguous activities which fall in a gray area and deterrence may need to be determined case-by-case	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harassment of free exercise of navigation by ships or aircraft of other states • Cyber harassment that does not take the form of a major attack • Prominent political subversion that threatens the legitimacy of political processes in other states • Significant advances in military capabilities based on artificial islands 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct responses in similarly clandestine, non-attributable manner • Publicizing activities to maximize balancing under international norms • Persistent deterrent responses to individual moves
<u>Category 3</u> Activities that must be accepted while being mitigated and counteracted with U.S. and allied counter-gray zone campaigns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coercive threats to prevent self-determining policies by regional states • Campaigns to gain economic influence (trade policies, overseas development assistance, One Belt One Road) • Building economic institutions to enhance regional influence (Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and others) • General political engagement with regional states, to include some degree of subversion • Campaigns to shape narrative in region 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Persistent diplomatic engagement throughout the region • Alternative economic inducements to regional states • Information campaigns to shape attitudes • Insistence on conditions for alternative economic institutions (e.g. AIIB) • Norms and procedures to prevent inadvertent escalation

Thank You!

The Operational Challenge of IFF

