

Adib Farhadi  
Anthony J. Masys *Editors*

# The Great Power Competition Volume 1

Regional Perspectives on Peace and Security



Springer

## About this book

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Over the past decade, the international political system has come to be characterized as a Great Power Competition in which multiple would-be hegemonies compete for power and influence. Instead of a global climate of unchallenged United States dominance, revisionist powers, notably China and Russia alongside other regional powers, are vying for dominance through political, military, and economic means. A critical battleground in the Great Power Competition is the Middle East, the Horn of Africa, and the Central Asia South Asia (CASA), also known as the Central Region.

With the planned withdrawal of U.S. military forces from Afghanistan, the U.S. has stated its intention of shifting attention away from the CASA Region in favor of a more isolationist foreign policy approach. This book provides an in-depth understanding of the implications for this shift related to regional diplomacy & politics, economic opportunities & rivalries, security considerations & interests, and the information environment. Amplifying the vital importance of success in the Central Region to U.S. prosperity and security, this volume advances dialogue in identifying key issues for stakeholders within and beyond the Central Region to gain a holistic perspective that better informs decision-making at various levels.

This collection of work comes from scholars, strategic thinkers, and subject matter experts who participated in the Great Power Competition Conference hosted by the University of South Florida, in partnership with the National Defense University Near East South Asia Center for Strategic Strategies in January 2020.

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# Preface

The Greater Central and South Asia regions have once again become the theater for a complex, high-stakes geostrategic contest. This contest, termed the Great Power Competition (GPC), echoes the “Great Game” of the nineteenth century, in which the Russian and British Empires competed on the “pull-and-tug” buffer zone of Afghanistan. In today’s GPC, multiple powers vie for influence, resources, and interests: the Global Powers include the United States, China, and Russia, while the Regional Powers include Iran, India, Pakistan, Turkey, the Central Asian states, and the Gulf countries.

The re-emergence of this new, multidimensional Great Power Competition is reflected in the United States’ National Security Strategy, which notes, “After being dismissed as a phenomenon of an earlier century, the great power competition returned.” Similarly, the National Defense Strategy (NDS) announced that “inter-state strategic competition, not terrorism, is now the primary concern in U.S. national security.”

The Middle East, Horn of Africa, Central Asia, and South Asia form the strategic crossroad known as the Central Region. Here, China is attempting to expand its influence, and Russia is working to regain a place of power internationally. Both China and Russia see opportunities to dominate and influence the Central Region, while the stated U.S. intent is to shift to other regions. The U.S. finds itself at a strategic disadvantage, having been in the middle of a nearly twenty-year conflict in the region. For the U.S. to counter these revisionist powers will require an understanding of their strategic objectives, perspectives, and the challenges that limit their competitive mobilization and the identification of common areas of interest and potential pathways to more holistic approaches, intersections, and/or cooperative efforts.

Those efforts must aim to combat terrorism and transnational organized crime in areas such as Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria, as well as deter Iranian ambitions and reigning in a nuclear North Korea. A key component of the United States’ national security is the global relationship between the U.S. and existing and emerging military and economic powers. These rising powers and their threat to the U.S. status as a Global Power are what have led to the Great Power Competition’s re-emergence. More specifically, the NDS asserts that “the central challenge to U.S. prosperity and security is the re-emergence of *long-term, strategic competition* by ... revisionist

powers,” specifically China, as an economic, technological, and political competitor, and Russia, as an opportunistic military power.

Hal Brands, the Henry A. Kissinger Distinguished Professor of Global Affairs at the John Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies (Perry World House, 2017) provides further insight into what he sees as the “Six Propositions about Great Power Competition and Revisionism in the twenty first Century”:

1. Clashing interests and clashing ideologies have long driven the leading powers in the system to compete with one another; they have often led to intense conflict and war.
2. Great power frictions and competition never fully went away even during the post-Cold War era; they were simply muted by the two defining features of the post-Cold War international system.
3. Great power competition has returned in fuller and sharper form today because the systemic conditions for such competition have become more propitious—and because some of the great hopes of the post-Cold War era have now been dispelled.
4. Great power competition and revisionism are sharper today than at any time since the end of the Cold War. We are seeing that competition in the geopolitical realm, in the sense that Russia and China are increasingly seeking to carve out spheres of dominant influence within their respective “near abroads,” to undermine U.S. alliances and partnerships in these areas, and to develop military capabilities needed to achieve regional primacy and project power even further abroad.
5. Intensified great power competition is certainly going to lead to a more dangerous and disorderly international environment, but it need not necessarily lead to a major crack-up of the existing international system. The fact that the major authoritarian great powers are pushing back more strongly against that international order and its defenders—principally the United States and its allies—means that we are likely to see more diplomatic and military crises and a generally higher level of international tensions in the coming years. It is going to make it harder to achieve meaningful multilateral cooperation among the great powers on common security challenges. Just look at how great power rivalry has stymied efforts to resolve the Syrian civil war over the past six years.
6. As nationalism, populism, and retrenchment grow stronger in the coming years, the United States and its friends will generally find it harder to meet the challenge of intensified great power competition. All of these phenomena are broad, and they sometimes pull in opposite directions, so many caveats are attached to this proposition.

With an aim to gain a holistic perspective that better informs decision-making at various levels and to further amplify the vital importance of success in the Central Region to U.S. prosperity and security, the University of South Florida (USF), in collaboration with the National Defense University Near East South Asia (NESA) Center for Strategic Strategies, hosted the inaugural Great Power Competition Conference in Tampa, Florida, on January 29 and 30, 2020. In a novel forum that brought together the industry, military, and academic subject matter experts in one

location, the conference facilitated a deep-dive understanding of Great Power and Regional perspectives in the Central Region by advancing the dialogue on identifying key issues for stakeholders within and beyond the Central Region as it relates to regional diplomacy and politics, economic potential and rivalries, security considerations and interests, and the information environment. This Great Power Competition Conference Series is the first in a Great Power Competition Conference Series, with conferences taking place twice per year for nine years at the University of South Florida.

While some publications consider the Great Power Competition topic, none are yet known that explore the Great Power Competition in the Central Region from the collective vantage of military, academic, and industry experts. The Inaugural Great Power Competition Conference, indeed, filled this gap, offering new ideas and lines of inquiry, innovative solutions, and decision support at multiple levels.

This book presents a compilation of papers that emerged from the Great Power Conference held in January 2020 at the University of South Florida. The 20 chapters in this volume cover topic ranging from historical analysis to innovative solutions, changing the dynamics of peace and conflict in the region, and matters pertaining to human security and intervention strategies associated with humanitarian, development, and peace nexus.

Tampa, USA

Adib Farhadi



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## About the Editors

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