

Jim Rooney's SESA 2024 Paper

Individual Paper Proposal

Topic Selection: Defense, Security and Intelligence

Title: Changing the Calculus of Military Space Operations: China's Pursuit of Counterspace Capabilities in Support of an Unrestricted Warfare Strategy

Author/Presenter: James J. Rooney, Jr.

This paper considers that the medium of space has evolved from militarization to weaponization over the last sixty-seven years. The research problem identifies that recent Chinese activities have accelerated the more aggressive utilization of space through their use of dual-purpose satellites, the application of directed energy technologies, and the development of active / passive, offensive / defensive capabilities. The research question asks whether a rising China, influenced by a changing strategic culture, is pursuing counterspace capabilities that will operationalize the space medium and alter the calculus of military space operations including in the ground-to-space, space-to-space, and space-to-ground domains. The paper provides overviews of the changing nature of the space operational environment, the dynamics and influence of strategic culture to include China's adoption of the strategic doctrine of unrestricted warfare, and China's evolving pursuit of counterspace capabilities in support of that doctrine. The paper will compare and analyze the counterspace capabilities of Russia, China, and the United States in order to establish comparative operational baselines. China's use of proxies will also be considered. This research is timely and important because the space domain is quickly becoming an essential element of U.S. national defense having critical security policy implications. Space is integral to the U.S. "way of life" and counterspace threats against U.S. space infrastructure and systems could be existential.

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