



Strength and Wisdom . . . in Space

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Since its establishment in 1901, the US Army War College (USAWC) has addressed some of the most complex and pressing national security problems facing the United States. From analyzing the lessons of the Spanish-American War to studying emerging concepts from the World Wars, preparing students for the Cold War, and transforming senior military officers into strategic thinkers, the civilian and soldier scholars at the US Army War College have been uniquely adept at examining the changing character of warfare.¹ In light of this rich legacy of study, the college's motto of "Strength and Wisdom" perfectly encapsulates the spirit of the institution and its faculty. Today, the character of war includes resurgent peer competition across various national interests; thus, the US Army War College must redirect its focus toward shaping a strategic environment that cuts across different domains. Securing the increasingly competitive, contested, and congested space domain ranks as one of the most vital efforts in shaping a new strategic environment, and the US military space community has issued an academic call to arms to help design the theoretical aspects of the effort. Applying the US Army War College's intellectual heritage to this new dilemma would provide the best answer for the space community because this heritage brings the most relevant expertise to the challenge of securing the space domain and has the added benefit of strengthening the US Army in the long run.

Some may be surprised space domain security has deficits in the first place. After all, the United States took a giant step in 2019 by creating two strategic military space organizations—United States Space Command and the US Space Force—to take responsibility for space domain security. These organizations have made headway in developing a force structure, acquiring new technology, and maintaining orbital operations, but the organizations lack the academic capacity to frame long-term, strategic solutions for the space environment. Most notably, United States Space Command has only reached initial operational capability, and the US Space Force consists of just over 10,000 personnel, with a fraction of this workforce dedicated to developing holistic space strategies.² Even when it reaches full operational capability, the Space Force, which will be the smallest military service, will be tasked with overseeing the largest area of responsibility. In addition to being undersized, the US Space Force lacks a senior service college that would form much of the academic bedrock for grappling with broader strategic concepts and instilling a warfighting mindset in the service's space cadre.³ Compounding these deficiencies is a sense of urgency driven by the increasing activity of commercial and foreign space actors, which makes space security progressively unstable. Recent actions to launch the United States Space Command Academic Engagement Enterprise and the US Space Force University Partnership Program clearly indicate the sobering acknowledgment of such gaps in scholarly capacity.⁴ These initiatives represent the initial salvo in the battle against the limitations of the two organizations, but the success of the initiatives still relies on participation from academic institutions like the US Army War College that study and practice the disciplines most relevant to developing comprehensive space security strategies.

The "Strength and Wisdom" of USAWC scholars that have evolved from over a century of solving diverse problems resonate because of the strategic fields the scholars study. These areas examine dilemmas, including those unfolding in today's space environment, that are common to all domains. New space organizations face fundamental tasks like creating an organizational culture, building joint and combined partnerships, developing strategy, deterring or defeating hostile actors in the operation domain, synchronizing global operations, competing for resources, and overcoming the civilian-military divide.

¹ "Historic Carlisle Barracks," US Army War College (website), n.d., <https://www.armywarcollege.edu/history.cfm>.

² United States Space Command (USSPACECOM) Public Affairs Office, "USSPACECOM Declares Initial Operational Capability," USSPACECOM (website), August 24, 2021, <https://www.spacecom.mil/Newsroom/News/Article-Display/Article/2743777/usspacecom-declares-initial-operational-capability/>; and Kelley M. Sayler, *Defense Primer: The United States Space Force*, IF11495 (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, updated January 11, 2022).

³ William D. Sanders, "Space Force Culture: A Dialogue of Competing Traditions," *Air & Space Operations Review* 1, no. 2 (Summer 2022): 37.

⁴ "Academic Engagement Enterprise," USSPACECOM (website), n.d., <https://www.spacecom.mil/Partnerships-and-Outreach/Academic-Engagement-Enterprise/>; and US Space Force Space Systems Command Public Affairs, "USSF, USC Sign MOU Establishing University Partnership Program," US Space Force (website), March 1, 2022, <https://www.spaceforce.mil/News/Article/2951655/ussf-usc-sign-mou-establishing-university-partnership-program/>.

Having studied, experienced, and mastered these types of “wicked problems” for decades, USAWC faculty and students have a historical and experiential head start in influencing adjacent domains that contain similar obstacles. Simply put, USAWC faculty and students are conditioned to think strategically, regardless of the domain of operations. The faculty and students’ fluency in warfare theory, policy and strategy development, strategic leadership, domain superiority, strategic design, wargaming, and conflict deterrence and escalation is an unequivocal commodity that would benefit military space organizations greatly in the near term.⁵ Civilian universities across the nation have world-class academic pedigree, but their space-related disciplines are contained solely in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics fields; distributed across different departments or colleges; only taught at the undergraduate level; or a combination of all three. Space-related programs at civilian universities will help to inform United States Space Command and the US Space Force’s technological and tactical priorities, but none will offer comprehensive thought leadership for solving long-term problems and formulating strategy. Likewise, the other senior service colleges have comparable ensembles of historically minded, multidisciplinary national security experts, but the US Army War College has the most reliable track record of affecting national security concerns outside the college’s assigned domain. Arguments over academic expertise aside, the Army stands to lose more than any other service from degraded space security; thus, the US Army War College has the principal duty to its own service to take action.



General James Dickinson, United States Space Command commander, gives opening remarks during an academic fair at the United States Military Academy at West Point, September 13–14, 2022. The fair featured dozens of universities and formally established the Academic Engagement Enterprise. (Photo courtesy of United States Space Command Public Affairs)

Greater USAWC intellectual intervention increases the chances the Army will succeed during future conflict because space power directly enables modern Landpower. For decades, integrated space effects have been the hallmark for providing the Army with global reach, precision, lethality, intelligence, and situational awareness in myriad operations. Domain stability and space superiority have been game changers for land warfare by giving the Army the agility and competitive edge the service needs to prepare, fight, and win. As a result, the Army has emerged as the Department of Defense’s largest consumer of space capability and is therefore the most dependent upon it to achieve the service’s strategic goals.⁶ As the Army evolves to defeat new threats on changing battlefields, a strong and functioning space domain that provides assured satellite communications; intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance; and positioning, navigation, and timing assets is paramount for the service’s future success. Therefore, the US Army War College has the unique opportunity to increase its positive impact on the Army and, indirectly, on the Joint Force by supporting the strategic posture of the former’s sister service and domain. To provide consultation to the space domain and manifest the “Strength” of the US Army War College, the leaders at Carlisle Barracks can initiate several practical measures.

The first step in effecting change in the space domain is simple, foundational, and internally beneficial: officially join the academic alliances of both United States Space Command and the US Space Force. Doing so would create a two-way outreach superhighway between the US Army War College and the two organizations. The Center for Strategic Leadership and the Strategic Studies Institute have already built necessary relationships by participating in recent academic conferences and workshops hosted by each command; thus, the conditions for alliance have been set.⁷ With approved membership, USAWC faculty would have the freedom to collaborate with the respective space staffs and directorates on a variety of meaningful topics. Both space organizations have already identified and published lists of initial topics for deeper examination that USAWC students and faculty could research, and the Strategic Studies Institute included the topics in its Academic Year 2023 Strategic Research Topics list.⁸ Each school, center, institute, and program has the means to affect these topics with their internal capabilities and to identify where they can provide support. Beyond examining research topics, the US Army War College could leverage institutional capabilities to help to create similar programs both space organizations need. The Center for Strategic Leadership’s Department of Strategic Wargaming could coordinate with its space counterparts to assist in establishing rigorous and integrated strategic space war games. Basic Strategic Art Program and Army Strategic Education Program leaders

⁵ US Army War College, *Academic Programs Guide: Academic Year 2023* (Carlisle, PA: US Army War College, 2022), 22–23.

⁶ US Army Public Affairs, “Army Announces Its Service Component Command for US Space Command,” US Army (website), August 21, 2020, https://www.army.mil/article/238376/army_announces_its_service_component_command_for_u_s_space_command.

⁷ USSPACECOM Staff, “USSPACECOM Launches Academic Engagement Enterprise,” USSPACECOM (website), September 14, 2022, <https://www.spacecom.mil/Newsroom/News/Article-Display/Article/3158395/usspacecom-launches-academic-engagement-enterprise/>.

⁸ USSPACECOM, “Attachment 1: Proposed Academic Research Topics for USSPACECOM,” USSPACECOM (website), 2022, <https://www.spacecom.mil/Portals/57/Proposed%20Research%20Topic%20List%2015NOV22.pdf>.

can guide the Space Force in replicating educational programs that would develop the service's rising strategists and strategic leaders, respectively. The US Army Heritage and Education Center could consult the Space Force on properly documenting its short history and establishing a model of heritage, which would complement the force's desire to create a service culture.⁹ The accomplishment of these simple actions by well-established USAWC programs would greatly enrich the college's goal to "Develop, Advance, Connect, and Create" as well as offer an immediate impact to United States Space Command and the US Space Force as they grow and develop as critical partners.

To attain "Strength and Wisdom," the US Army War College spent decades observing, studying, and practicing methods that would give the United States the strategies and strategists it needed to outpace the changing character of war. Today's strategic military environment is expanding outside the atmosphere, but the principles governing how the United States secures its interest in this environment remain the same as when warfare began. The strategic thinkers, military historians, educators, and war gamers of the US Army War College possess the necessary attributes to help to develop this new environment that will ultimately affect the US way of war—and the Army's, in particular. Scholars at the US Army War College are advantageously positioned to guarantee long-term success for the service and to pass down lessons from the most experienced warfighting domain to a different cohort of warfighters. Just as the US Air Force inherited much of the institutional lineage and insight from its parent organization in 1947, so too should the Army's organizational grandchild.



Strategic competition between the United States and China has extended into the space domain, uncovering familiar strategic challenges that USAWC experts have routinely mastered in other warfighting domains for decades. (Graphic design by Yong-ho Shin, National Security Research Institute)

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⁹ Sanders, "Space Force Culture," 37.

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