



S T R A T E G Y F O R T H E L O N G H A U L

CSBA

The Challenges to US National Security

BY ANDREW KREPINEVICH,
ROBERT MARTINAGE AND
ROBERT WORK

About the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments

The Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments (CSBA) is an independent, nonpartisan policy research institute established to promote innovative thinking and debate about national security strategy and investment options. CSBA's goal is to enable policymakers to make informed decisions on matters of strategy, security policy and resource allocation.

CSBA provides timely, impartial and insightful analyses to senior decision makers in the executive and legislative branches, as well as to the media and the broader national security community. CSBA encourages thoughtful participation in the development of national security strategy and policy, and in the allocation of scarce human and capital resources. CSBA's analysis and outreach focus on key questions related to existing and emerging threats to US national security. Meeting these challenges will require transforming the national security establishment, and we are devoted to helping achieve this end.

Acknowledgments

The author would like to thank the CSBA staff for their assistance with this report. Special thanks go to Charlotte Brock and Eric Lindsey for their editorial and production support.

The analysis and findings presented here are solely the responsibility of the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments and the author.

THE CHALLENGES TO US NATIONAL SECURITY

STRATEGY FOR THE LONG HAUL

By Andrew Krepinevich,
Robert Martinage and
Robert Work

ABOUT THE **STRATEGY FOR THE LONG HAUL** SERIES

This report is one in a series of CSBA's *Strategy for the Long Haul* intended to inform and shape the next administration's defense strategy review.

THE CHALLENGES TO US NATIONAL SECURITY. Translates the principal challenges to US security into a representative set of contingencies in order to determine what resources will be required, and how they should be apportioned among forces and capabilities.

US MILITARY POWER AND CONCEPTS OF OPERATION. Provides the connective tissue between the threats to US security and the capabilities and force elements needed to address the new challenges confronting the nation.

THE DEFENSE BUDGET. Overviews the budget environment and explores a range of options to make the Services' plans more affordable.

THE DEFENSE INDUSTRIAL BASE. Addresses the US defense industry's role as a strategic asset, and how it can best serve in that role.

MANPOWER. Examines recruitment and retention of quality people in sufficient numbers at an acceptable cost.

TRAINING, OPERATIONAL ART, AND STRATEGIC COMPETENCE. Assesses the need for an overhaul of training and education of America's service personnel and the importance of strategic thinking in senior leaders.

RESTRUCTURING THE US ALLIANCE PORTFOLIO. Considers the nature and type of alliances the United States needs in order to meet existing and emerging security challenges.

GROUND FORCES. Explores how the US Army and Marine Corps might best be organized, structured, modernized, and postured to meet existing and emerging challenges to US security.

SPECIAL FORCES. Addresses the expansion and growing role of US Special Forces.

MARITIME FORCES. Addresses how US maritime forces might best be organized, structured, modernized, and postured to meet existing and emerging challenges to US Security.

AIR AND SPACE FORCES. Explores how Air and Space Forces might best be organized, structured, modernized, and postured to meet existing and emerging challenges to US Security.

STRATEGIC FORCES. Examines the circumstances under which nuclear strategy and force posture decisions must be made today.

MODERNIZATION STRATEGIES. Explores potential modernization strategies that can best support the US defense posture in an era of great geopolitical uncertainty and rapid technological change.

ORGANIZING FOR NATIONAL SECURITY. Assesses how the United States Government can best organize itself to ensure effective strategic planning and execution of strategy.

A GRAND STRATEGY FOR THE UNITED STATES. Synthesizes the findings and insights of the study series.



CONTENTS

vii	Executive Summary
1	Introduction
7	Chapter 1. Defeating Violent Islamist Radicalism
23	Chapter 2. Hedging Against a Hostile China
43	Chapter 3. Preparing for a Proliferated World
57	Conclusion
	FIGURES
11	Figure 1. Global Distribution of Major Salafi-Takfiri and Khomeinist Terrorist Groups



Seven years after the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, the United States finds itself in a complex and constantly evolving security situation. The next administration will need a sound strategy to guide it when dealing with threats to national security. But first it is important to understand the strategic and operational challenges the United States will most likely confront in the coming years. What are these challenges and how can the United States best prepare for them?

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

THE CHALLENGES TO US NATIONAL SECURITY

The United States is currently in a situation comparable to the one it confronted in the early days of the Cold War, when US civilian and military leaders were faced with a new and daunting challenge in the form of the Soviet Union. To address this challenge, a long-term national strategy to preserve American security was developed. In the aftermath of the Soviet Union's collapse, the United States entered a period of relative calm—a “unipolar moment” in which its power was unrivaled and emerging threats to its security had not yet fully formed. Unfortunately, that period has been succeeded by a more dangerous era, as the United States now confronts several formidable challenges that may grow even more threatening in the years to come.

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the three existing and emerging strategic challenges that are most likely to preoccupy senior decision-makers in the coming years:

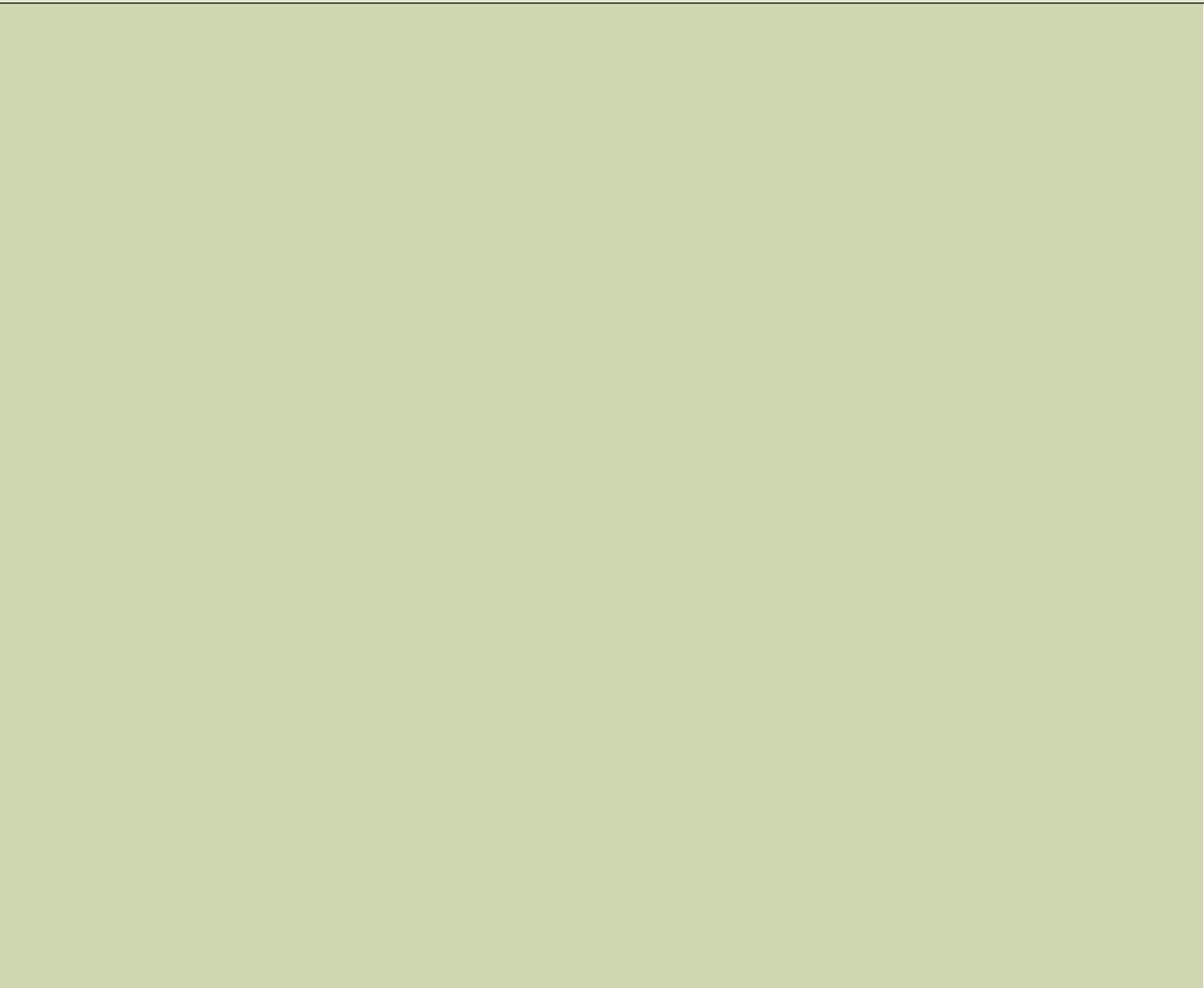
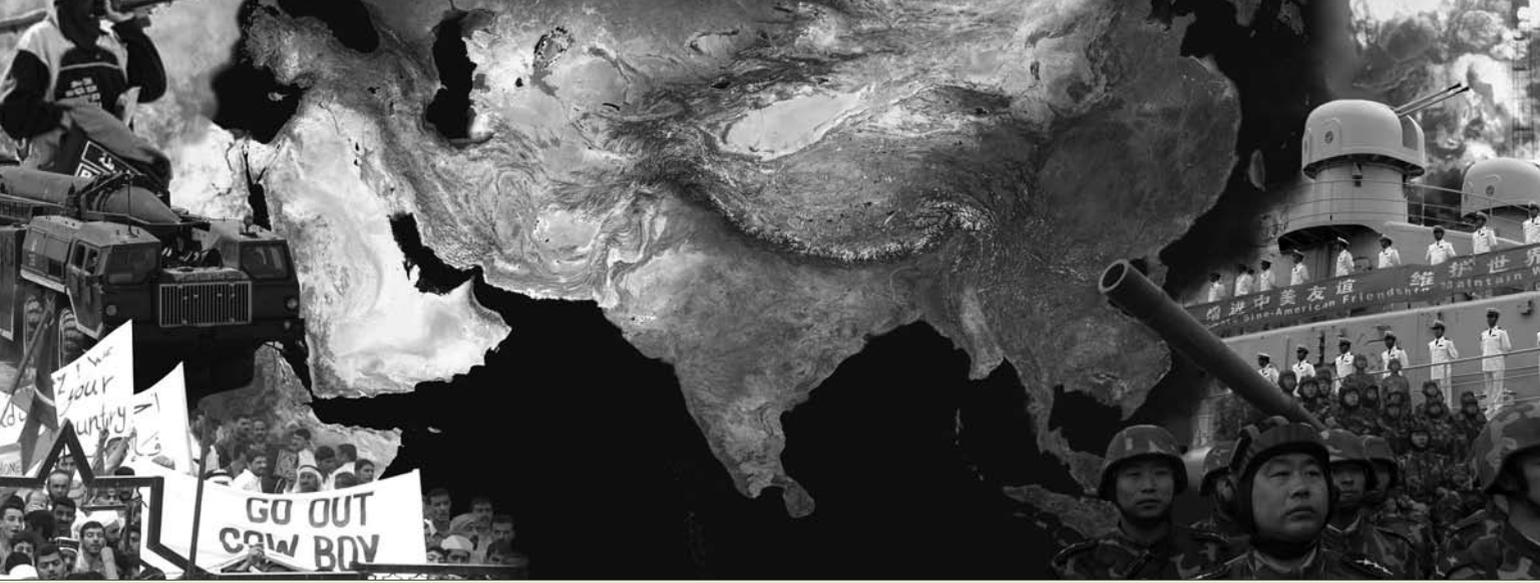
- > Defeating both the Sunni Salafi-Takfiri and Shia Khomeinist brands of violent Islamist radicalism;
- > Hedging against the rise of a hostile or more openly confrontational China and the potential challenge posed by authoritarian capitalist states; and
- > Preparing for a world in which there are more nuclear-armed regional powers.

Addressing these specific challenges should be at the forefront of the incoming administration's strategic calculations, particularly during the 2009 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR), which will help shape US defense strategy, planning, and force structure over the next 20 years.

Although none of these strategic challenges, individually, rival the danger posed by the Soviet Union during the Cold War, they are certainly graver than the types of threats that prevailed immediately after the Cold War, during the period referred to by some as the “unipolar moment,” when the power of the United States was at its peak and its dominance had not yet been put to the test. They are also quite different from the main threats the United States confronted throughout the twentieth century (Imperial Germany, Nazi Germany, Imperial Japan and the Soviet Union), all of which possessed militaries that, by and large, were very similar to the US military both in terms of their structure and their *modi operandi*. For example, both the German and Soviet armies focused primarily on conducting combined arms mechanized land combat operations, as did the US Army. That is not the case with respect to today’s threats and potential rivals, who instead focus their principal efforts on exploiting asymmetries that work to their advantage.

For example, radical Islamist movements use terror and subversion, engage in modern forms of irregular and insurgency warfare, and pursue WMD to inflict catastrophic damage on the United States and its allies. China, whose growing military is, among the three challengers, the most similar to the United States’, is emphasizing conventionally armed ballistic missiles, information warfare capabilities, anti-satellite weaponry, submarines, high-speed cruise missiles and other capabilities that could threaten the United States’ access to the “global commons” of space, cyberspace, the air, the seas and the undersea, and possibly to US partner nations in Japan, South Korea and Taiwan. Hostile and potentially unstable countries like North Korea and Iran have developed or may soon develop nuclear arsenals with which they could intimidate America’s allies and challenge the US military’s ability to protect vital national interests. Moreover, if these countries succeed in developing nuclear arsenals, they could spur others to follow suit.

In sum, by providing a clear overview of the three main strategic and operational challenges the United States will confront in the coming years, this report aims to remove some uncertainty and provide a better sense of the types of capabilities and capacities the Defense Department will require in the long term. Ultimately, the goal of this analysis is to enhance the ability of senior civilian and military leaders to engage in strategic planning and thereby improve the United States’ security posture.



INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the three security threats that are most likely to preoccupy senior decision-makers in the coming years. Addressing these challenges should be at the forefront of the incoming administration's strategic calculations, particularly during the 2009 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR), which will help shape US defense strategy, planning, and force structure over the next 20 years.

The last QDR, published in February 2006, was the first following the attacks of 9/11, the US invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq and the subsequent irregular warfare campaigns in those two countries, the revelation that North Korea was actively pursuing nuclear weapons and its later detonation of a nuclear device, the increasing progress made by Iran in developing its own nuclear program, and the ongoing, rapid buildup of Chinese military capabilities. It was not surprising, then, that the 2006 QDR declared that the principal challenges confronting America's security¹ were defending the homeland in depth, defeating terrorist networks, preventing the acquisition and use of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), and shaping the choices of countries at strategic crossroads.

It appears likely that these four challenges will persist at least over the next 20 years. Therefore, the next administration would do well to explore them in greater depth, to reevaluate initial assessments, and to go beyond the recommendations of the 2006 QDR, which were constrained by the demands of the campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan. For example, while defending the homeland continues to be a pressing strategic concern, it is perhaps best viewed as a subset of the three other core challenges. Moreover, these three challenges need to be more clearly defined, so as to ensure clarity in overall strategy, and to help identify and develop the most favorable national response.

¹ Donald Rumsfeld, Secretary of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review Report* (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Secretary of Defense, February 6, 2006), pp. 19–34.

In view of this, this paper considers the three core strategic challenges facing the United States over the next 20 years to be:

- > Defeating both the Sunni Salafi-Takfiri and Shia Khomeinist brands of violent Islamist radicalism;
- > Hedging against the rise of a hostile or more openly confrontational China, in particular, and the potential challenge posed by authoritarian capitalist states, in general; and
- > Preparing for a world in which there are more nuclear-armed regional powers.

THESE THREE CHALLENGES DEMAND A WIDER STRATEGIC FOCUS

Today the United States is in a situation somewhat comparable to the one it confronted in the early days of the Cold War, during which US civilian and military leaders were faced with a radically new national security challenge, different in character and scale from the ones that faced the United States between 1890 and the start of World War II—the period during which the United States became a global power. This new challenge came in the form of the Soviet Union and its hostile communist ideology, which called for the development of a coherent national strategy in order to preserve American security over the long term. Unlike this early Cold War period, however, when the Soviet Union was by far the single greatest danger to US security and was therefore the sole focus of US strategic planning, American leaders must today confront three immediate core strategic challenges: radical Islamism, a rising China, and the potential for a new wave of nuclear proliferation in Asia.

Although none of these strategic challenges, individually, rival the danger posed by the Soviet Union during the Cold War, they are certainly graver than the types of threats that prevailed immediately after the Cold War, during the period referred to by some as the “unipolar moment,” when the power of the United States was at its peak and its dominance had not yet been put to the test. They are also quite different from the main threats the United States confronted throughout the twentieth century, all of which—Imperial Germany, Nazi Germany, Imperial Japan and the Soviet Union—possessed militaries that, by and large, were very similar to the US military both in terms of their structure and their *modi operandi*. For example, both the German and Soviet armies focused primarily on conducting combined arms mechanized land combat operations, as did the US Army. That is not the case with respect to today’s

threats and potential rivals, who instead focus their principal efforts on exploiting asymmetries that work to their advantage.²

For example, radical Islamist movements use terror and subversion, engage in modern forms of irregular and insurgency warfare, and pursue WMD to inflict catastrophic damage on the United States and its allies. China, whose growing military is, among the three challengers, the most similar to the United States', is emphasizing conventionally armed ballistic missiles, information warfare capabilities, anti-satellite weaponry, submarines, high-speed cruise missiles and other capabilities that could threaten the United States' access to the "global commons" of space, cyberspace, the air, the seas and the undersea, and possibly to US partner nations like Japan, South Korea and Taiwan. Hostile and potentially unstable countries like North Korea and Iran have developed or may soon develop nuclear arsenals with which they could intimidate America's allies and challenge the US military's ability to protect vital national interests. Moreover, if these countries succeed in gaining access to nuclear weapons, they could spur others to follow suit.

Another essential difference between past challenges to US security and the current situation is one of geography: after more than a century of focusing on Europe as the principal theater of concern, the main front of military competition has shifted to Asia. Although global in scope, the challenges posed by radical Islamism, a rising China, and nuclear proliferation are concentrated in a wide arc that stretches from the Mediterranean's southern shores to the Sea of Japan. Within this enormous expanse of territory, the United States not only confronts a geography that is quite distinct from Europe's, it also finds itself in complex "cultural terrain"—i.e., interacting with an array of diverse cultures, many of which are fundamentally different from those of Europe.

After more than a century of focusing on Europe as the principal theater of concern, the main front of military competition has shifted to Asia.

THESE THREE CHALLENGES ARE INTERRELATED

While this report presents the challenges separately, it is important to fully appreciate their interconnectedness. Consider for example that "loose nukes" in Pakistan or Iran's acquisition of nuclear weapons could lead to terrorist possession of a nuclear weapon. A number of current and potential nuclear-armed states have links to Salafi-Takfiri and Khomeinist terrorist groups, creating the potential for these states to sponsor more assertive acts of indirect aggression as the terrorist groups act as proxies of the nuclear-armed states. We have already seen this in the form of Iranian support for Hezbollah in Lebanon and for various factions in Iraq, to include Muqtada

² To be sure, the Soviet Union employed subversion and wars of national liberation to support its efforts to realize its ambitions, and Nazi Germany did employ Fifth Columns for the purpose of undermining resistance. However, these efforts were dwarfed by their conventional armed forces (and, in the Soviet Union's case, its nuclear forces), which resembled, to a relatively high degree, the characteristics of the United States armed forces.

al-Sadr's militant Mahdi Army. Moreover, several major nuclear powers (such as China and Russia) have links to current and potential nuclear-armed rogue states, (e.g., North Korea, Iran). These interrelationships raise the prospect of cross-cutting anti-US coalitions.

To complicate matters further, current energy trends—greater demand than readily available supply, resulting high prices, and the huge financial transfers to oil states—bind these three challenges even more closely together. Consider that militant Islamists, who gain indirect financial support from certain oil-producing states, seek to undermine nations of Southwest Asia, the region that provides China with much of its oil. This induces China to become more involved in the region, and to seek reliable supply partners, such as Iran. This relationship provides the Iranian regime with important top cover in the United Nations. Moreover, oil transfer payments to Iran enable it to weather UN sanctions designed to dissuade it from pursuing nuclear weapons. In other words, we have a situation in which oil wealth indirectly provides Islamist groups with financial support, the Chinese seek greater influence, and oil-producing states may be tempted to use part of their huge financial flows to seek security by acquiring their own nuclear weapons.

THESE THREE CHALLENGES FORM THE NUCLEUS OF STRATEGIC THINKING

Admittedly, these three challenges are not the only threats to US national security. Other challenges include defending against cyber and biological attack, providing for energy security, ensuring continued access to strategic materials and resources, and dealing with the potential ramifications of global warming. These issues will require competent strategic planning and execution of whole-of-government solutions. If our government can develop an effective strategic posture to address the three core challenges outline above, it will likely be able to craft one for the full range of security challenges facing the nation.

The complexity and interconnectivity of these issues underscore the increased importance of flexibility of response. As Deputy Defense Secretary Gordon England, the senior official most involved in crafting the 2006 QDR, declared:

...our Nation faces far more diverse challenges, and far greater uncertainty about the future global security environment, than ever before. The only sure way to protect the American people is to make sure that the President has at his disposal as wide a range of options as possible.³

³ Statement of Deputy Secretary of Defense Gordon England FY 2007 Budget before the Senate Budget Committee March 2, 2006. Accessed at http://budget.senate.gov/democratic/testimony/2006/england_defensebudgethrngo30206.pdf. Accessed on June 22 2008.

An important premise of this paper is that military forces which are designed to defeat violent Islamist radicals, conduct counterproliferation and WMD elimination operations, and confront potential military near-peers like China will provide the greatest range of military options to future presidents. That is, forces which have been developed to meet these three core challenges will also be capable of handling most tasks associated with other strategic challenges. In cases where they are not, niche capabilities will need to be developed and fielded, as will be discussed in future papers on ground, naval, aerospace, special operations, and nuclear forces.

In sum, by providing a clear overview of the three main strategic and operational challenges the United States will confront in the coming years, this report aims to remove some uncertainty and provide a better sense of the types of capabilities and capacities the Defense Department will require in the long term. Ultimately, the goal of this analysis is to enhance the ability of senior civilian and military leaders to engage in strategic planning and thereby improve the United States' security posture.



لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ
مُحَمَّدٌ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ

CHAPTER 1 > DEFEATING VIOLENT ISLAMIST RADICALISM

In some ways the violent radicalism that is racking the Muslim world today is nothing new. Since the death of Muhammad in 632, Islamic history has been punctuated by periods in which various heterodox sects have emerged and clashed violently with mainstream Muslims, as well as with the West.

What makes contemporary violent Islamic radicalism threatening to the West is the following:

- > Five centuries of civilizational decline fused with resentment toward the West for its economic, scientific/technological, and military success, exacerbated by lingering hostility engendered by European colonization and exploitation of Muslim lands and, more recently, the creation and support of Israel, are at the source of deep-seated, popular frustration across much of the Muslim world
- > The globalization of communications, transportation, and trade are, paradoxically, viewed by jihadists as both a threat to the *ummah*⁴ (due to increased exposure to corrupting Western influences) and as a critical enabler of defensive jihad (because globalization makes it possible to spread their ideology more quickly and widely than in the past).⁵

⁴ In Arabic, “ummah” means “community” or “nation.” In the Muslim faith, the term can be interpreted as the “community of Believers.”

⁵ As Barry Posen notes, “the enhanced ability to communicate and travel” that is part of the trend toward globalization “makes it possible for likeminded groups in different countries to find each other, and to organize and cooperate.” Posen, “The Case for Restraint,” *The American Interest*, November/December 2007, p. 11.

- The emergence and diffusion of technologies make it possible for small groups to carry out catastrophic attacks (by using chemical high explosives, fuel-laden jet aircraft, and weapons of mass destruction, for example).⁶

Economic and demographic trends strongly suggest that the downward spiral of Islamic civilization will continue.

Assuming that Islamic radicalism is fueled by frustration and anger stemming from the decline of the Islamic (and, more particularly, Arab) world, it is almost certain to be a long-term problem. Economic and demographic trends strongly suggest that the downward spiral of Islamic civilization will continue, and may even accelerate in the decades ahead. For example, the Arab world experienced a sharp decline in gross domestic product (GDP) per capita between 1980 and 2000, as economic growth failed to keep pace with population growth.⁷ Consider as well that most nations in the Middle East and North Africa have extremely young populations; in fact, one in five people living in this region is between the ages of 15 and 24 years old, and one in three is between the ages of 10 and 24.⁸ These “youth bulges”—the product of a significant decline in child mortality rates and a much slower decline in fertility rates—can in principal contribute to economic growth, as a large portion of a society’s population is in or is entering its most productive years. If, however, these young adults cannot obtain an adequate education or find gainful employment, they may instead become susceptible to mobilization by radical elements and could become a significant source of instability.⁹ It is discouraging to note, therefore, that over the next two decades youth populations will grow most quickly in places such as Yemen, Iraq, and the Palestinian territories, regions in which economic and social institutions are ill equipped to handle this increase.¹⁰ In short, many of the underlying conditions that are conducive to radicalization are likely to persist for quite some time.

⁶ Martin Shubik, “Terrorism, Technology, and the Socioeconomics of Death,” Cowles Funds for Research in Economics Paper No. 952, Yale University, 1998.

⁷ Xavier Sala-i-Martin and Elsa V. Artadi, “Economic Growth and Investment in the Arab World,” *Arab Competitiveness Report, 2002–2003* (World Economic Forum), accessed at http://www.weforum.org/pdf/Global_Competitiveness_Reports/Reports/AWCR_2002_2003/Econ_Growth.pdf, on July 10, 2008.

⁸ Ragui Assaad and Farzaneh Roudi-Fahimi, “Youth in the Middle East and North Africa: Demographic Opportunity or Challenge?” *MENA Policy Brief*, Population Reference Bureau, April 2007, p. 1; and Farzaneh Roudi-Fahimi and Mary Mederios Kent, “Challenges and Opportunities — The Population of the Middle East and North Africa,” *Population Bulletin*, Vol. 62, No. 2, Population Reference Bureau, June 2007, p. 3.

⁹ Richard P. Cincotta, Robert Engelman and Daniele Anastasion, *The Security Demographic* (Washington, DC: Population Action International, 2003); and Graham E. Fuller, “The Youth Factor: The New Demographics of the Middle East and the Implications for U.S. Policy,” *Analysis Paper No. 3*, Brookings Institution, June 2003.

¹⁰ Roudi-Fahimi and Kent, “Challenges and Opportunities,” p. 3.

THE RADICAL ISLAMIST THREAT

Radical Islam's current war with the West began well before September 11, 2001. It started by and large with the Iranian Revolution in 1979. Key developments in this war include the taking and holding for 444 days of American hostages in Iran and the seizure of the Grand Mosque in Mecca in 1979; the assassination of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat in 1981; the successful campaign of Hezbollah in Lebanon in the 1980s, to drive out first the United States and eventually the Israelis; and the rise of al Qaeda in the late 1990s, with its sustained campaign of attacks against US interests, including the 1998 bombings of the US Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, as well as the small-boat attack on the USS *Cole* off Yemen on October 12, 2000. Most notably, in 1996, Osama bin Laden declared war against "Americans occupying the Land of the Two Holy Places" and in 1998, the World Islamic Front for Jihad against the Jews and Crusaders issued a *fatwa* that ruled that killing "Americans and their allies — both civilians and military — is an individual duty for every Muslim..."¹¹

There are two branches of the radical Islamic threat today: heterodox Salafi-Takfiri groups within the Sunni Muslim community and "Khomeinist" Shiite groups, both of which strive to impose their brand of *sharia* justice on the entire world. Currently, the Salafi-Takfiri "movement" can be disaggregated into three types of groups:

- > Surviving core elements of al Qaeda that offer inspiration and ideological guidance to the militant jihadi movement, and may retain capabilities for global coordination and execution of high-profile attacks.
- > Independently operated jihadist "franchises," several of which have sworn allegiances to Osama bin Laden and al Qaeda, that conduct jihad operations mostly at the country and sub-regional level, but whose resources could potentially be tapped for global operations.
- > Small cells and individuals with weak or no links to al Qaeda, inspired by its call to defensive jihad.

Together, these three groups constitute what is often referred to as the al Qaeda Associated Movement (AQAM). The movement is united by a similar set of core beliefs: that Islam is the one true faith that will, in time, dominate the world; that the Quran and *hadith* (statements and practice of Muhammad) contain all the guidance necessary for living a righteous life; that there is no separation between religion and the rest of life; and that Muslim rulers must govern by the *sharia*.¹² Derivative of these core beliefs, most groups share two overarching goals: to expel foreign military forces and influences from Muslim lands, and to overthrow apostate regimes that

¹¹ World Islamic Front, "Jihad against Jews and Crusaders," February 23, 1998.

¹² Mary Habeck, *Knowing the Enemy* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006), p. 17.

have misled the *ummah* and allowed Islamic society to retrograde to the “period of ignorance” that preceded Muhammad. More extreme groups such as al Qaeda believe that a violent jihad is required to revive and protect “true” Islam. They seek to establish a new caliphate that encompasses all lands that have ever been under Islamic control and to convert or conquer all unbelievers. The centerpiece of al Qaeda’s strategy for the “long war” is exploiting Muslims’ sense of individual religious obligation by declaring a defensive jihad (*jihad al-daf*) against the West and apostate regimes. Al Qaeda hopes that by “moving, inciting, and mobilizing” the *ummah* to this call, the Islamic nation will eventually reach a revolutionary “ignition point,” at which time the faithful the world round will join forces en masse to pursue al Qaeda’s core goals.¹³

The Islamic Republic of Iran is the prime mover behind Shia-inspired terrorism. Most of Iran’s efforts to “export the revolution” over the past quarter-century have failed. The major exception is Hezbollah, which was created in Lebanon in 1982 and has grown into a quasi-autonomous actor with global reach. It appears, however, that with its active support of the Supreme Islamic Iraqi Council (SIIC, formerly known as the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq), Shia cleric Muqtadah al-Sadr’s political organization, and their associated militias (the Badr and Mahdi Armies, respectively), Iran is attempting to create a Hezbollah-like organization in Iraq. In short, although “Khomeinism” as a revolutionary ideology was treading water for much of the past two decades, it is now resurgent. Bellwethers of this resurgence include the radicalization of Iranian domestic politics, the existence of Shia groups in Iraq with links to Iran, Hezbollah’s recent electoral victories in Lebanon, and Hezbollah’s growing stature in the wake of its strategic success in the battle against the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) in July–August 2006.

One of the core goals set forth in the Iranian constitution is “to perpetuate the revolution both at home and abroad,” meaning spreading two universally applicable ideas: Islam is relevant to all aspects of life, and the *sharia* alone provides a sufficient blueprint for living a just life on Earth.¹⁴ While the initial goal is to unite and liberate “oppressed Muslims,” the long-term objective is to bring all of humanity under the umbrella of Islamic justice. Iran’s strategy for realizing that goal has historically swung between active support—including lethal aid—to Shiite insurgents, to less confrontational propaganda efforts encouraging Muslims to emulate the Iranian model.¹⁵

¹³ For an extended discussion of AQAM’s major lines of operation for implementing its strategy, as well as its current capabilities, see: Robert Martinage, *The Global War on Terrorism: An Assessment* (Washington, DC: CSBA, 2008), pp. 31–88. For “ignition point” reference, see: “Bin Ladin Interviewed on Jihad Against U.S.,” *Al Quds Al Arabi* (London), November 27, 1996.

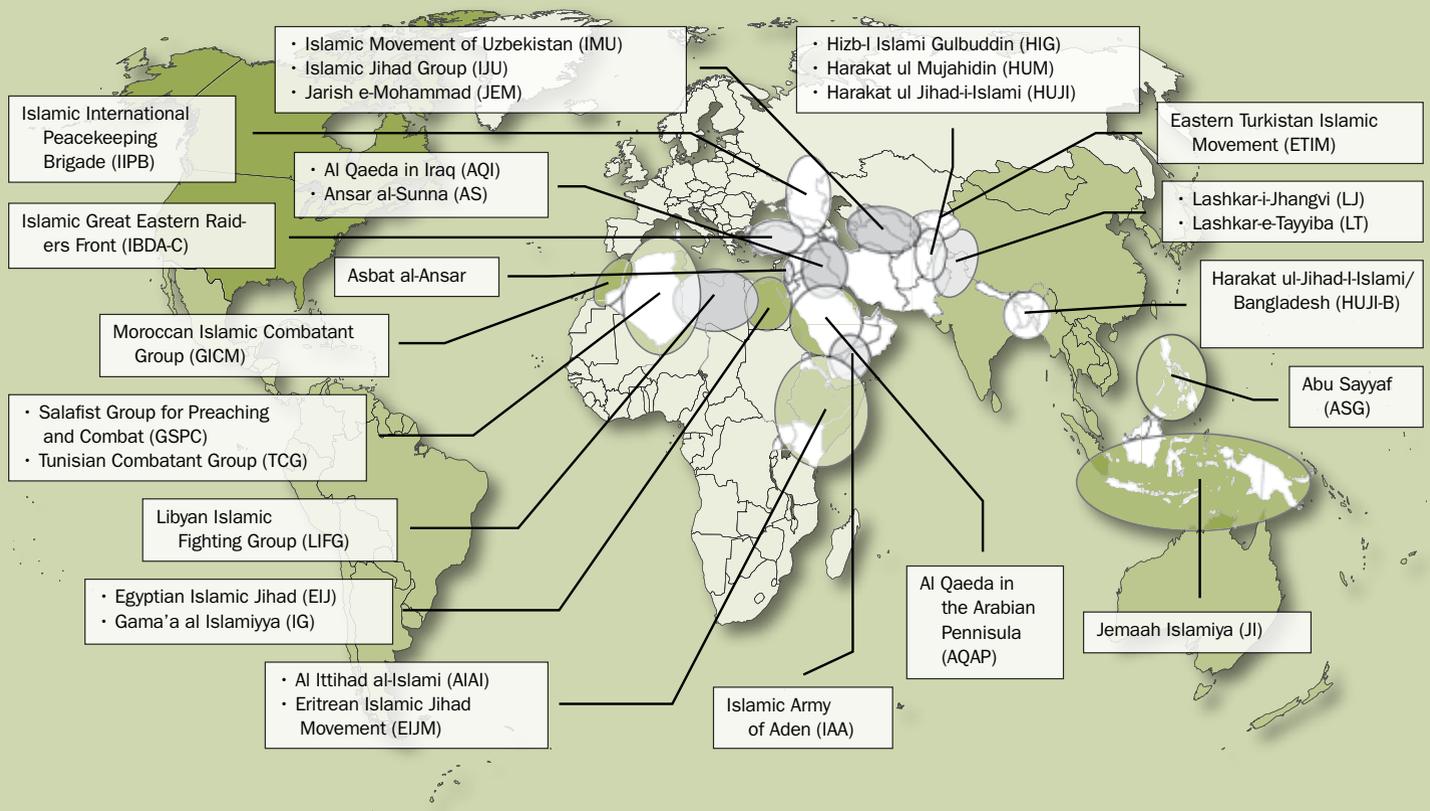
¹⁴ “Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran,” *Middle East Journal*, Spring 1980, p. 185.

¹⁵ For an extended discussion of the Iran’s major lines of operation for implementing its strategy, as well as its current capabilities, see: Martinage, *The Global War on Terrorism: An Assessment*, pp. 105–130.

The Sunni-Takfiri and Khomeinist branches of Islamic radicalism are believed to have operational terrorist cells in at least 60 countries spread over six continents (see Figure 1 below). Radical Islamist insurgencies, of varying intensity, are underway in nearly a score of countries—most notably in Iraq, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Somalia, and Lebanon. The operating environment for the US government in this struggle spans from Europe to the most underdeveloped parts of the world, and ranges from densely populated urban areas to remote mountains, deserts and jungles. It encompasses permissive, semi-permissive, and non-permissive environments, as well as hostile or denied areas. The ability of US allies and partners to address the threat ranges from sophisticated to almost non-existent, but even in the most capable partner areas (i.e., Europe) Islamist terrorist cells have repeatedly demonstrated their ability to operate.

The ability of US allies and partners to address the threat ranges from sophisticated to almost non-existent.

FIGURE 1. GLOBAL DISTRIBUTION OF MAJOR SALAFI-TAKFIRI AND KHOMEINIST TERRORIST GROUPS



Source: Chris Sullivan, CSBA.

CURRENT ASSESSMENT

While the United States and its partners in the war against Islamic militants have made important strides in combating Salafi-Takfiri groups worldwide since September 11th, they do not appear to have weakened the terrorists' will or their ability to inspire and regenerate. The high-water mark for the United States in the war on terrorism thus far was reached in 2002–2003. By that time, the Taliban government had been overthrown and al Qaeda stripped of its sanctuary in Afghanistan; many of al Qaeda's senior leaders had been captured or killed; dozens of jihadi cells had been rolled up worldwide; actions had been taken to seize the vast majority of terrorist finances frozen to date; and several partner countries around the world had taken steps to enhance their counter-terrorism (CT) capabilities.

From 2003 on, however, the overall US position in the war against Salafi-Takfiri and Khomeinist groups has eroded, with gains more than offset by four developments:

- > Al Qaeda has metastasized from a highly centralized organization headquartered in Afghanistan into a stateless, global movement comprising loosely coupled regional “franchises” and quasi-independent cells and individuals inspired by radical Islamist propaganda.
- > Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) has been highly successful in recruiting and training fighters for operations *outside* of Iraq and in waging a well-crafted “media war” portraying the United States and its allies as new “crusaders” that threaten the very survival of Islam.
- > A terrorist sanctuary has emerged in the Afghanistan-Pakistan border area, posing a threat not only to these countries but to the entire international community.
- > Iran's regional influence has been revived, both as a result of its direct involvement in Iraq and through its proxies, most notably Lebanese Hezbollah.

Some recent developments may signal a more positive trend for the United States. In late May 2008, General Michael Hayden, Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, offered a far more upbeat assessment of the war on terrorism:

On balance, we are doing pretty well. Near strategic defeat of al Qaeda in Iraq. Near strategic defeat for al Qaeda in Saudi Arabia. Significant setbacks for al Qaeda globally — and here I'm going to use the word “ideologically” — as a lot of the Islamic world pushes back on their form of Islam.¹⁶

¹⁶ Joby Warrick, “U.S. Cites Big Gains Against Al Qaeda,” *Washington Post*, May 30, 2008, p. 1; and JoAnne Allen, “Al Qaeda Near Defeat, On Defensive: CIA Chief,” *Reuters*, May 30, 2008.

Later in his remarks, he also highlighted the recent deaths of senior al Qaeda leaders Abu Laith al-Libi and Abu Sulayman al-Jazairi as indicative of the US government's continuing "ability to kill and capture key members of al Qaeda" and keep them off balance "even in their best safe haven along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border."¹⁷ While all of General Hayden's assessments are technically accurate, his overall conclusion that "we are doing pretty well" is based upon a relatively narrow and somewhat unstable analytic foundation. While it is true that Al Qaeda has been weakened in some areas, the Salafi-Takfiri threat has intensified in other areas — most notably in Africa, Southwest Asia, South Asia, and Europe. Finally, while the security situation along the Afghanistan-Pakistan frontier may have improved somewhat between late 2007 and early 2008, those hard-fought gains could easily be lost by the Pakistani government's decision in May 2008 to sign another "peace treaty" with tribal supporters of the Taliban, al Qaeda, and associated terrorist groups.

In any event, al Qaeda's eventual demise would neither end the deep-seated frustration among Muslims about their current plight nor reverse the deteriorating economic and social conditions they face; if al Qaeda fades away, it will almost certainly be replaced by another group promoting a different remedy — potentially still including violence against the West as a major ingredient — for curing the ills of the Muslim world.

The four most significant operational "arenas of jihad" are currently Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Lebanon.¹⁸

IRAQ

Over the past two years, AQI has been severely weakened by its penetration by Coalition intelligence assets, dwindling financial resources, the Sunni tribal backlash or "Awakening Movement" (the "Sons of Iraq" program), the death of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi and more than a score of other senior leaders, the capture or death of thousands of fighters, intensifying internal discord, and the elimination of key physical infrastructure (weapons stores, IED manufacturing facilities, media centers). As General Petraeus put it in September 2007, "Al Qaeda is certainly not defeated; however, it is off balance and we are pursuing its leaders and operators aggressively."¹⁹ The Defense Department's report to Congress in March 2008, *Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq*, noted that ethno-sectarian violence was down 90 percent relative to June 2007 and civilian/Coalition deaths had dropped by over 70 percent.²⁰ Reflecting

¹⁷ Warrick, "U.S. Cites Big Gains Against Al Qaeda," p. 1

¹⁸ For an expanded discussion of Salafi-Takfiri/Khomeinist gains and losses regionally over the past six years, see Martinage, *The Global War on Terrorism*, pp. 131–237.

¹⁹ General David H. Petraeus, Commander, Multi-National Force-Iraq, "Report to Congress on the Situation in Iraq," September 10–11, 2007, p. 4.

²⁰ DoD, *Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq*, March 2008 Report to Congress, p. iii.

the continuation of those trends, in May 2008 US Ambassador to Iraq Ryan Crocker offered: “You are not going to hear me say that al Qaeda is defeated, but they’ve never been closer to defeat than they are now.”²¹ As of June 2008, AQI fighters had been forced into a few pockets in parts of the Tigris River Valley and in the northern Iraqi provinces of Ninawa, Diyala, and Salah ad Din. Nevertheless, AQI continues to function, attacking Iraqi government, military, and police targets, as well as Coalition forces, on a near daily basis, and sporadically conducting vicious, high-profile attacks against soft targets.²²

Despite this noteworthy progress, two cautionary points must be made on the situation in Iraq. First, absent political reconciliation among the Shiite majority and Kurdish and Sunni minorities, which so far has proven elusive, large-scale sectarian conflict could break out again. In such chaos, AQI would likely regenerate, and new terrorist groups emerge. Second, Iran has thoroughly penetrated Iraq’s political and military institutions. Elements of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps’ Qods Force and Hezbollah are providing significant non-lethal and lethal aid to various Shiite militia, “special groups,” and gangs. General David Petraeus testified to Congress that Iranian-backed Shiite militias now “pose the greatest long-term threat to the viability of a democratic Iraq.”²³

AFGHANISTAN

The security situation in Afghanistan has deteriorated substantially over the past three years for at least four reasons:

- The central government has not been able to exert its authority in rural areas, especially in the south and east, and has thus failed to maintain security and improve the lives of Afghans through reconstruction, economic development, and humanitarian relief projects.
- Standing up a professional national police force, establishing a credible judiciary system, and cleaning up rampant government corruption have been very slow processes.
- Poppy cultivation and opium trafficking provide a critical source of revenue for the Taliban and create incentives for increased cooperation among drug traffickers, corrupt government officials, and tribal warlords against the Karzai government.

²¹ Lee Keath, Envoy: Al Qaeda in Iraq Reeling, *Houston Chronicle*, May 25, 2008; and Robert Burns, “Commander: Al Qaeda in Iraq Is At Its Weakest,” *Washington Post.com*, May 22, 2008.

²² Alissa Rubin, “Dozens Killed in Bombings in Four Iraqi Cities,” *New York Times*, April 16, 2008, p. 12; and Liz Sly, “Al Qaeda Revival in Iraq Feared—Targets Include Fellow Sunnis Who Switched Sides,” *Chicago Tribune*, April 20, 2008, p. 1.

²³ Mark Mazzetti, “Questions Linger On Scope of Iran’s Threat in Iraq,” *New York Times*, April 26, 2008, p. 1.

- > Taliban and associated terrorist groups have regrouped and established new bases of operation in neighboring Pakistan.

From its Baluchistan base, the Afghan Taliban conducts terrorist operations in the south-central Afghan provinces of Helmand, Kandahar, Uruzgan, and Zabol. Al Qaeda fighters and foreign jihadists are believed to be operating primarily from bases in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and North-West Frontier Province in Pakistan (NWFP).²⁴

Between 2005 and 2006, the frequency of terrorist attacks in Afghanistan increased four-fold. In February 2008 Lieutenant General Michael Maples, Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, testified that “Al Qaeda’s presence in Afghanistan is increasing to levels unseen since 2001–2002.”²⁵ In short, the security situation in Afghanistan is deteriorating.

The driving factor behind this most recent surge in violence in Afghanistan was a cease-fire agreement between the new Pakistani government and radicalized tribal groups in the FATA and NWFP. Unfortunately, the cease-fire was subsequently ratified in a peace agreement covering the NWFP and South Waziristan in May 2008. Absent a surge in Coalition operations in Afghanistan and sustained covert action in the FATA/NWFP, the security situation in Afghanistan is likely to remain in decline.

The terrorist threat in Pakistan has soared over the past year.

PAKISTAN

The terrorist threat in Pakistan has soared over the past year. Radical Islamist groups and operatives have been exploiting a de facto sanctuary in FATA and NWFP for at least two years.²⁶ In September 2007, CIA Director General Hayden stated that the CIA assessed with “high confidence” that “al Qaeda has protected or regenerated key elements of its homeland attack capability.”²⁷ In February 2008, the Director of National Intelligence, Michael McConnell, testified that the FATA not only serves as a “staging area for al Qaeda’s attacks in support of the Taliban in Afghanistan,” but also as a “location for training new terrorist operatives, for attacks in Pakistan,

²⁴ Robert Kaplan, “The Taliban’s Silent Partner,” *New York Times*, July 20, 2006; Peter Bergen, “The Taliban, Regrouped And Rearmed,” *Washington Post*, September 10, 2006, p. B1; and David Rhode, “Al Qaeda Finds Its Center of Gravity,” *New York Times*, September 10, 2006, p. WK3.

²⁵ Lt Gen Michael Maples, Director, Defense Intelligence Agency, “Current and Projected Threats to the United States,” Statement for the Record, Senate Armed Services Committee, February 27, 2007, p. 6.

²⁶ Kaplan, “The Taliban’s Silent Partner”; Bergen, “The Taliban, Regrouped And Rearmed,” p. B1; and Rhode, “Al Qaeda Finds Its Center of Gravity,” p. WK3.

²⁷ General Michael Hayden, CIA Director, Speech at the Council on Foreign Relations, September 7, 2007. See also: Maples, “Current and Projected National Security Threats to the United States,” February 27, 2008, p. 22.

the Middle East, Africa, Europe and the United States.”²⁸ At the end of March 2008, General Hayden characterized the situation along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border as “a clear and present danger to Afghanistan, Pakistan, to the West, in general, and to the United States, in particular.”²⁹

Immediately following the parliamentary elections in February 2008, the leadership of the two winning political parties, the Pakistan People’s Party and the Pakistan Muslim League (N), vowed to adopt a new course with the militants, pledging an increased emphasis on dialogue and less reliance on military confrontation.³⁰ In response, in April 2008 Baitullah Mehsud ordered *Tehrik-e-Taliban* and their associates to suspend attacks on Pakistani security forces.³¹ The cease-fire was followed by a prisoner exchange and a gradual pull-out of Pakistani security forces from selected checkpoints in the area.³² The deal, however, was silent on the issue of conducting or supporting cross-border attacks into Afghanistan.³³ Predictably, cross-border attacks into Afghanistan have more than doubled since 2007. In short, the hard-fought gains in the FATA/NWFP frontier between the Fall of 2007 and the early Spring of 2008 may be short-lived. Furthermore, the Pakistani government is internally divided on strategy.³⁴ Unless a common approach can be agreed upon, Pakistan’s efforts to stabilize the frontier will be futile.

LEBANON

On July 12, 2006, Hezbollah’s military wing staged a cross-border attack into Israel and kidnapped two soldiers and killed three others, triggering an extended precision air campaign by the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) followed by a limited ground

²⁸ Michael McConnell, Director of National Intelligence, “Annual Threat Assessment of the Intelligence Community,” Statement for the record to the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, February 7, 2008, pp. 5–6.

²⁹ Interview with Tim Russert, “Interview with CIA Director,” NBC News, March 30, 2008.

³⁰ Carlotta Gall and Jane Perlez, “Pakistan Victors Want Dialogue with Militants,” *New York Times*, February 20, 2008, p. 1; Yochi Dreazen and Zahid Hussain, “New Pakistani Leaders, U.S., At Odds On Militants,” *Wall Street Journal*, February 23, 2008, p. 4; and Jane Perlez, “New Pakistan Leaders Tell Americans There’s ‘A New Sheriff In Town,’” *New York Times*, March 26, 2008, p. 7.

³¹ Candace Rondeaux and Imtiaz Ali, “Taliban Leader Call Cease-Fire within Pakistan,” *Washington Post*, April 25, 2008, p. 1; and Ismail Khan and Carlotta Gall, “Pakistan Asserts It Is Near A Deal With Militants,” *New York Times*, April 25, 2008, p. 1.

³² Jane Perlez, “Pakistan: Taliban Prisoner Exchange,” *New York Times*, May 15, 2008.

³³ Khudayar Khan, “Militant Calls Off Talks As Pakistan Troops Stay,” *Washington Times*, May 6, 2008, p. 1; Jane Perlez, “Pakistan Defies U.S. On Halting Afghanistan Raids,” *New York Times*, May 16, 2008, p. 6; and Jane Perlez, “Pakistan And Taliban Agree to Army’s Gradual Pullback,” *New York Times*, May 22, 2008.

³⁴ Eric Schmitt and Thom Shanker, “Pakistani Discord Undercuts Vow to U.S. to Fight Militants,” *New York Times*, March 16, 2008; and Saeed Shah and Jonathan Landay, “Pakistan Regime, Military At Odds,” *Seattle Times*, May 1, 2008.

incursion into southern Lebanon. After 34 days of hostilities, a cease-fire agreement was hammered out that called for the IDF's phased withdrawal as the Lebanese Army and an expanded UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) replaced them.

What is especially remarkable about the 2006 conflict is that Hezbollah was able to hold its own against the IDF. Hezbollah fighters were disciplined, well-trained, and superbly equipped and organized for a defensive battle against the IDF on pre-determined, restricted terrain.³⁵ Following the war, Hezbollah's leader Hassan Nasrallah could credibly claim — at least to his Muslim audience — to be the leader of the first Arab “army” to have defeated the IDF in battle. By surviving the Israeli onslaught, he has become a rising anti-Israel icon in the Arab world. Hezbollah's popularity has soared not only among Lebanese Shiites, but also among Sunni Arabs and Palestinians.

In December 2006, Nasrallah started taking advantage on his new political leverage by calling for “civilized and peaceful” demonstrations to pressure the Lebanese government into accepting his demands for greater representation in the cabinet, which would, in effect, allow Hezbollah to exercise a veto over government actions. Embattled Prime Minister Fouad Siniora, who equated Nasrallah's threats to an attempted coup, cautioned that “Lebanon's independence is threatened and its democratic system is in danger.”³⁶

After nearly 18 months of stalemate, violence erupted. In early May 2008, the government attempted to disable Hezbollah's private internal telecommunications network and reassigned the commander of security at Beirut international airport, who was suspected of being a Hezbollah sympathizer. Nasrallah proclaimed these actions to be “a declaration of open war” and his fighters took to the streets.³⁷ Hezbollah quickly routed the Sunni Future Movement in intense street-fighting and effectively seized control of Sunni-dominated West Beirut in less than 14 hours.³⁸ After this convincing demonstration of its military strength, Hezbollah peacefully turned over control of West Beirut to the LAF. Hezbollah's coercive message was received; the Lebanese government reversed its decisions to dismantle Hezbollah's communications network and replace the head of airport security. In the week that followed, the government and opposition groups hammered out an agreement in Doha, Qatar, dubbed the “Doha Compromise.” While the US government praised the compromise, it was clearly a political and strategic victory for Hezbollah, which

Hezbollah was able to hold its own against the IDF.

³⁵ Ralph Peters, “Lessons from Lebanon—The New Model Terrorist Army,” *Armed Forces Journal*, October 2006, p. 38.

³⁶ Anthony Shadid, “Crisis Intensifies in Lebanon as Hezbollah Takes to the Streets,” *Washington Post*, December 2, 2006, p. 1; and Anthony Shadid, “Hezbollah Sets Anti-Government Protest, Sit-In,” *Washington Post*, December 1, 2006, p. 23.

³⁷ “Gun Battles Break Out in Beirut,” CNN, May 9, 2008.

³⁸ Nada Raad and Farnaz Fassihi, “Lebanon Fighting Jolts Middle East,” *Wall Street Journal*, May 10, 2008, p. 1; and Liz Sly, “Hezbollah Seizes Beirut Neighborhoods,” *Chicago Tribune*, May 10, 2008.

along with its allies was granted 11 seats in the cabinet, giving them a veto over any future government actions.³⁹

Falling on the heels of Israel's unilateral withdrawals from the Gaza Strip in 2005 and Hezbollah's "victory" against the IDF in the summer of 2006, the May 2008 street fighting in Beirut and the resulting Doha Compromise have bolstered Hezbollah's standing throughout the region.⁴⁰

THE GLOBAL "MEDIA WAR"

The United States and its partners in this conflict have been accused of having a "tin ear" when it comes to communicating with the global Islamic community, especially in regards to conveying US motives. However, despite the radical Islamists' advantage in understanding the cultural terrain over which much of this war is being waged, the "New Order" which they desire to create has resounded negatively with many people in the Muslim World. The ideology of the Salafi-Takfiri movement is inherently exclusionary. Moreover, the indiscriminate, extreme violence and "un-Islamic" tactics (e.g., suicide bombing) employed by terrorists linked to al Qaeda appear to be alienating mainstream Muslims. Al Qaeda is, in effect, its own worst enemy.

Over the past three years, several prominent leaders and scholars within the Salafi and Wahhabi communities have stepped forward to critique al Qaeda's prosecution of the jihad.⁴¹ Al Qaeda's theology of jihad has been dealt powerful blows recently by several prominent Islamic figures: Salam bin Fahd al-Oadah, a widely known Saudi preacher and Wahhabi scholar; Abdul-Aziz el-Sherif, a long-time companion of Ayman al-Zawahiri and the author of *The Essential Guide for Preparation*, which is considered a "must-read" by aspiring jihadis; and Abdulaziz al-Ashaikh, the grand *mufti* of Saudi Arabia.

Reflecting the declining attractiveness of the Salafi-Takfiri theology and its practical implementation on the ground — most notably the indiscriminate slaughter of fellow Muslims, including numerous women and children — popular sympathy for al Qaeda and the Taliban has plummeted across a broad spectrum of the Muslim world. A recent poll conducted by the Pew Research Center, for example, found that the number of Muslims who view suicide bombing and other forms of violence against civilians as justifiable in the defense of Islam has fallen sharply over the past five

Popular sympathy
for al Qaeda and
the Taliban has
plummeted.

³⁹ Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, "United States Welcomes the Doha Agreement on Lebanon," Department of State Press Release, May 21, 2008.

⁴⁰ "Chertoff: Hezbollah Makes Al Qaeda Look 'Minor League,'" *Fox News*, May 29, 2008.

⁴¹ See Martinage, *The Global War on Terrorism*, pp. 265–272. See also: Uzi Mahnaimi, "Al Qaeda Split as Mentor Condemns Saudi Attacks," *London Sunday Times*, January 11, 2004; Marc Lynch, "Al Qaeda's Media Strategies," *The National Interest*, Spring 2006, pp. 54–55; Lawrence Wright, "The Rebellion Within," *The New Yorker*, June 2, 2008; and Peter Bergen and Paul Cruickshank, "The Unraveling," *The New Republic*, June 11, 2008;

years in Lebanon, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Jordan, and Indonesia.⁴² According to one survey of Pakistani popular opinion, since August 2007, approval ratings for Osama bin Laden were nearly halved, from 46 to 24 percent, those for al Qaeda fell from 33 to 18 percent, and those for the Taliban dropped from 38 to 19 percent.⁴³

As recent statements by bin Laden and Zawahiri make evident, the senior leadership of al Qaeda is painfully aware of the problem and is taking steps to address it. Al Qaeda will likely sharpen its propaganda message, emphasizing the call to defensive jihad to counter infidel “occupation” of Muslim lands. Indeed, Osama bin Laden’s recent public statements focusing more attention on the Israel-Palestine problem suggest this may already be occurring. Given the demonstrated resilience of al Qaeda over the last twenty years, recent predictions about the imminent demise of al Qaeda and the broader Sunni-based jihadi movement are almost certainly premature.⁴⁴

SELECTED OPERATIONAL CHALLENGES

To prevail in what is likely to be a protracted struggle against Salafi-Takfiri and Khomeinist terrorist groups, the United States, along with its allies and partners, will need to conduct a sustained, multifaceted, global campaign. Toward this end, the Department of Defense (DoD) will almost certainly find itself engaged in addressing three core missions:

- > Building partner capacity in counter-terrorism (CT) and counter-insurgency (COIN) capabilities and maintaining persistent, low-visibility ground presence in key operating areas.
- > Generating persistent air and maritime surveillance and strike coverage over “under-governed” areas and littoral zones.
- > Conducting clandestine and covert operations (e.g., manhunting, resource interdiction, and counter-proliferation), to include operations in politically sensitive and denied areas.

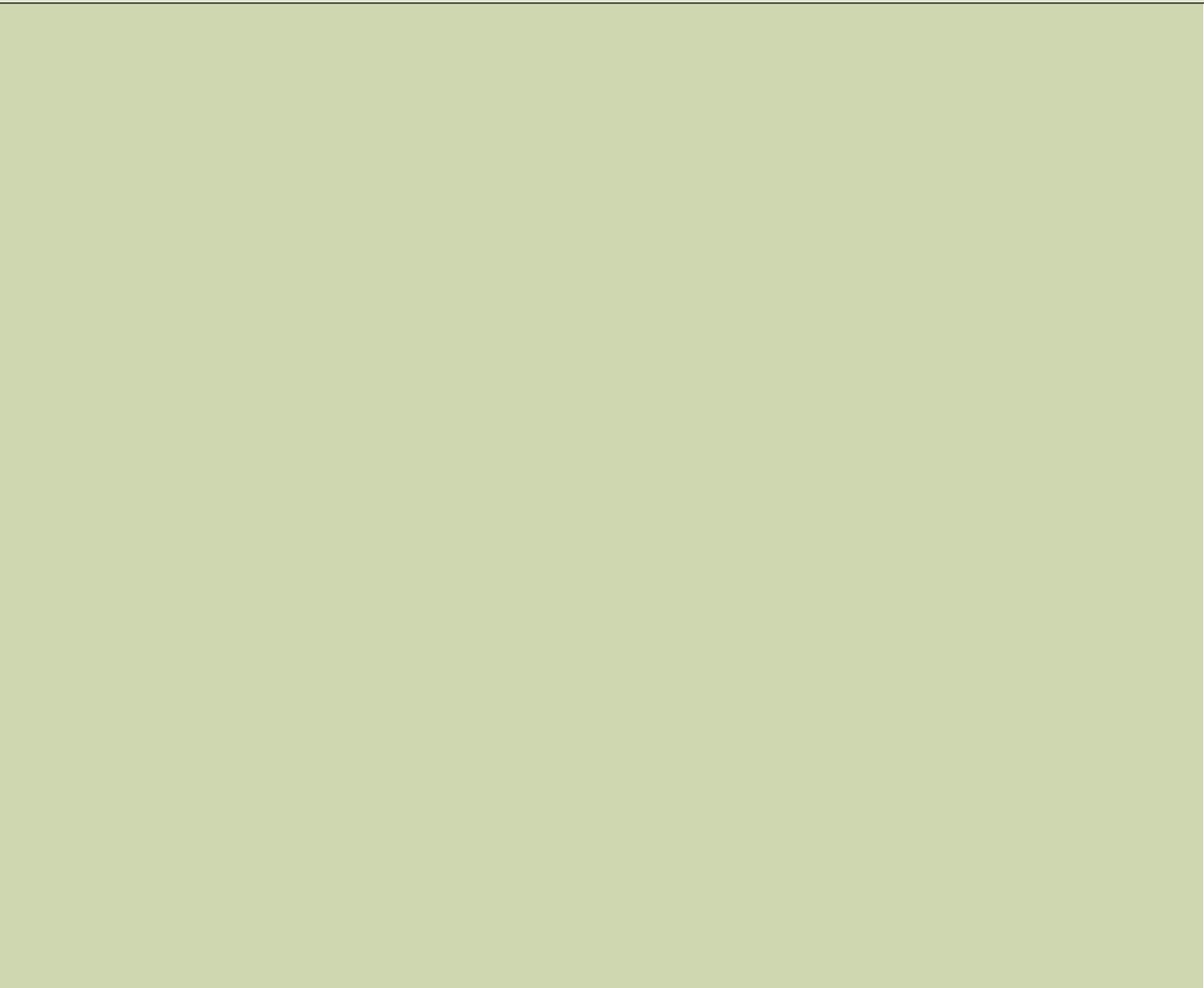
⁴² Andrew Kohut et al, *Global Opinion Trends 2002–2007: A Rising Tides Lifts Mood in the Developing World* (Washington, DC: The Pew Global Attitudes Project, July 2007), p.7.

⁴³ Terror Free Tomorrow, “Pakistani Support for Al Qaeda, Bin Laden Plunges; Moderate Parties Surge; 70 Percent Want Musharraf to Resign — Results of a New Nationwide Public Opinion Survey of Pakistan before the February 18th Elections, Washington, DC. Survey available at www.terrorfreetomorrow.org. See also: Stephen Graham, “Bin Laden Backing Plummet,” *Washington Times*, February 11, 2008, p. 14.

⁴⁴ Michael Scheuer, “Rumors of al-Qaeda’s Death May be Highly Exaggerated,” *Terrorism Focus*, June 3, 2008.

Those missions will pose myriad operational challenges for the US military, including:

- > Training, equipping, and advising foreign security forces—including air and maritime forces, as well as ground forces—in scores of countries simultaneously to improve and expand their defensive capabilities, with an emphasis on CT and COIN. This will require the US military to develop increased foreign language skills, cultural expertise, and familiarity with a wide range of foreign weapons, as well as specialized training and advisory skill sets.
- > Generating global presence sufficient to leverage and support ally and partner security forces, as well as collect operational intelligence against terrorist cells.
- > Identifying, locating, and hunting down high-priority terrorist commanders and their key lieutenants.
- > Denying terrorists sanctuary wherever possible: in state-controlled territory, under-governed areas, urban terrain, and increasingly, in cyberspace.
- > Prevailing in complex, large-scale COIN and CT contingencies—including, as foreshadowed by the 2006 conflict between the IDF and Hezbollah, against terrorist groups equipped with advanced conventional weapons (e.g., man-portable air defense systems, anti-tank munitions, anti-ship cruise missiles, and precision-guided rockets, artillery, and mortars).
- > Generating continuous surveillance-strike forces that can: locate, track, and strike time-sensitive, high-value terrorist targets; detect, interdict, and disarm weapons of mass destruction (e.g., “loose” nuclear weapons); enable partner operations by providing actionable intelligence and fire support; and monitor ungoverned land areas and littoral zones exploited by terrorist groups.
- > Securing critical maritime chokepoints, to include boarding and inspecting suspicious vessels, and seizing vessels by force.
- > Providing intelligence, communications, transportation, logistical, and operational support to covert US activities.



CHAPTER 2 > HEDGING AGAINST A HOSTILE CHINA

“AN END TO THE END OF HISTORY”⁴⁵

In the immediate aftermath of the Cold War, some western political leaders placed confidence in the advantages and even the inevitable global supremacy of representative government and a liberal economic model “fueled by private wealth, private investment, and private enterprise”⁴⁶ They generally foresaw a new era of global convergence in which former communist states and Western democracies would integrate their national economies into an increasingly globalized market and financial system.⁴⁷ As nations became more intertwined economically, growing middle classes would demand legal and political power, which would in turn accelerate a shift toward representative government. Consistent with this view, successive US administrations extolled the benefits of a globalized economy and worked aggressively to export the liberal economic model, which was seen as the necessary precursor and catalyst for the final triumph of Western liberal democracy. As Kaplan stated, rather than “confront and challenge autocracies, it was better to enmesh them in the global economy, support the rule of law and the creation of stronger state institutions, and let the ineluctable forces of human progress work their magic.”⁴⁸

By the first decade of the 21st century, however, two challenges to the liberal democratic model had emerged: radical Islam (discussed in the preceding chapter) and

⁴⁵ Robert D. Kaplan, “The End of the End of History,” *The New Republic*, April 23, 2008, available online at http://www.tnr.com/story_print.html?id=ee167382-bd16-4b13-beb7-08effe1a6844, accessed on June 7, 2008.

⁴⁶ Ian Bremmer, “The Return of State Capitalism,” *Survival*, June–July 2008, p. 55.

⁴⁷ Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 1992); Ashton B Carter, William James Perry, and John D. Steinbruner, *A New Concept of Cooperative Security* (Washington, DC: Brookings, 1992).

⁴⁸ The final quote and the thoughts expressed in this paragraph were drawn from Kaplan, “The End of the End of History.”

Democratic states may have to make the difficult decision whether to trade their civil liberties for their physical protection.

authoritarian states with relatively open economic systems.⁴⁹ Non-democratic powers, operating under what has been variously referred to as state capitalism, illiberal capitalism, or authoritarian capitalism,⁵⁰ present a viable governmental-economic alternative to the liberal democratic model. This alternative model could be attractive to a sizeable number of countries “predisposed toward statist models of economic development.”⁵¹ Authoritarian states with inefficient capitalist/statist economic models were a common fixture in the international system up through 1945, but they largely disappeared during the great competition between the democratic West and the communist empire. The emergence and apparent staying power of authoritarian capitalist/statist powers could, in turn, spark the rise of an economically-vibrant counter-coalition against Western liberal democracies. This model could prove especially attractive given concerns over the Western democracies’ inability to “get things done,” i.e., address the principal challenges confronting their citizens.

For example, while some Americans extol the virtues of divided government, others despair at the inability of a succession of administrations to put the country’s financial house in order, reform the social security system, control the nation’s borders, reverse the decline in education standards, or craft a coherent national energy policy. Perhaps of greatest concern, as ever greater destructive power comes into the hands of small groups, it has become increasingly possible for radical factions to exploit the civil liberty protections provided in a democracy (especially the right to privacy, freedom of movement, and freedom from unreasonable search) to their advantage. This was seen in the 1995 sarin nerve gas attack in the Tokyo subway system; the 9/11 attacks on the United States; the 7/7 attacks in London; and the March 2004 Madrid train bombings (also known as the 11/3 bombings).

Given these trends, there may come a time when authoritarian regimes are seen as better able to defend their societies from these kinds of threats and to provide for their citizens’ material well-being. If so, the citizens of democratic states may have to make the difficult decision whether to trade their civil liberties for their physical protection. To some extent, the American people, through their representatives

⁴⁹ Azar Gat, “The Return of Authoritarian Great Powers,” *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2007, available online at <http://www.foreignaffairs.org/20070701faessay86405/azar-gat/the-return-of-authoritarian-great-powers.html>, accessed on June 9, 2008.

⁵⁰ Robert Kagan, “Illiberal Capitalism,” *Financial Times*, January 22, 2008, accessed online at <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/publications/index.cfm?fa+print&id=19868> on June 9, 2008; Fareed Zakaria, *The Future of Freedom: Illiberal Democracy at Home and Abroad* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2003).

⁵¹ Bremmer, “The Return of State Capitalism,” p. 55.

in Congress, made this choice, albeit in a small way, when their representatives in Congress voted for the Patriot Act following the 9/11 attacks.⁵²

Whereas the two great 20th century totalitarian capitalist/statist powers—Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan—were small in comparison with the United States in terms of population, resources, and industrial potential, the two emerging 21st century powers—China and Russia—are large, populous (in China’s case), technologically advanced nuclear powers. Of note, both countries have recently enjoyed robust economic growth. For these two states, democracy is defined less in terms of competitive elections and more in terms of implementing the perceived national will. As long as the people stay out of politics, the country’s rulers tend to allow them to lead their personal lives without government intrusion, and even to produce great wealth. Moreover, as long as their standards of living are rising, the people in both countries appear content to leave politics and governance to their political leaders. In sum, both countries seem to “have figured out how to permit open economic activity while suppressing political activity.”⁵³ Russia and China therefore “represent a viable alternative path to modernity, which in turn suggests that there is nothing inevitable about liberal democracy’s ultimate victory—or future dominance.”⁵⁴

Moreover, the greatest attraction of the authoritarian capitalist model may come not only from its economic competitiveness, but also—and perhaps especially—from its potential to better ensure its citizens’ personal security in a world that may be increasingly populated by small groups possessing highly destructive capabilities. Consequently, the United States’ ability to address the threat posed by radical Islamism may significantly influence the competition between democratic and authoritarian capitalism.

THE CHALLENGE OF CHINA

One of the most important national security challenges facing the United States in the early 21st century is hedging against the rise of a hostile, more openly confrontational, or expansionist People’s Republic of China (PRC). Over the past two decades the PRC has transformed itself into a global economic powerhouse, and is now wielding its sovereign wealth and enormous market potential to great advantage across the globe. Moreover, its military power has increased markedly, a development that appears likely to continue. Of course it is hardly certain that the PRC will become an aggressive or

One of the most important national security challenges facing the United States in the early 21st century is hedging against the rise of a hostile, more openly confrontational, or expansionist People’s Republic of China.

⁵² The Patriot Act allows the government greater authority in tracking and intercepting communications, both for purposes of law enforcement and foreign intelligence gathering. Among its provisions, the Patriot act authorizes indefinite detentions of immigrants; the expanded use of National Security Letters, allowing the FBI to search telephone, email and financial records without a court order; and the expanded access of law enforcement agencies to business and financial records. Accessed at http://www.lifeandliberty.gov/what_is_the_patriot_act.pdf. Accessed on July 14, 2008.

⁵³ Kagan, “The End of the End of History.”

⁵⁴ Gat, “The Return of Authoritarian Great Powers.”

expansionist power in the years to come. Instead, China could emerge as a democratic nation, in which case it would be far less likely to pose a direct threat to the United States. Alternatively, China could become consumed by political, economic, environmental or demographic problems at home, limiting its ability to compete with the United States abroad.⁵⁵ It is even possible—and most desirable—that China join with the United States to address the dangers posed by WMD proliferation and militant Islamists. Although many scenarios exist, and while the United States should encourage the PRC's leadership to pursue a constructive, peaceful global role, prudence calls for the US to be prepared to deter or counter any aggressive Chinese moves. This will be no easy task. As the 2006 QDR report pointedly notes, "Of the major and emerging powers, China has the greatest potential to compete militarily with the United States and field disruptive military technologies that could over time offset traditional U.S. military advantages absent U.S. counter-strategies."⁵⁶ The remainder of this chapter will focus on the impressive growth of PRC economic power, the expansion of Chinese military capabilities, and their implications for US defense strategy.

AN ECONOMIC POWERHOUSE

In 1978, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) made economic expansion its top priority. Key to this goal was a gradual shift from a Soviet-style, centrally-planned economy to a more market-oriented model modified to account for the Chinese communist political framework. The Party's leaders refer to this system as "Socialism with Chinese Characteristics."⁵⁷ By whatever name, the subsequent rise of Chinese economic strength has been impressive by virtually any measure.

The numbers tell the story. Chinese annual agricultural and industrial growth rates averaged ten percent during the early 1980s. After a short downturn caused by accelerated price reforms in the late 1980s, China's economic expansion regained its momentum after President Deng Xiaoping pushed new market reforms during the 1990s. As a result, since the beginning of economic reforms in 1978, China's gross national product (GNP) has more than quadrupled, and China has become a leading industrial nation.⁵⁸ By 2007:

⁵⁵ For a discussion of different possible scenarios regarding China's future, see Cheng Li, "China in the Year 2020: Three Policies Scenarios," *Asia Policy*, Number 4, July 2007, available online at <http://www3.brookings.edu/views/articles/li200707.pdf>, accessed on June 12, 2008.

⁵⁶ Rumsfeld, Quadrennial Defense Review Report, p. 29.

⁵⁷ Suisheng Zhao, "China's Pragmatic Nationalism: Is It Manageable?" *The Washington Quarterly* Winter 2005/2006, pp. 134–135.

⁵⁸ See entry on China in CIA, *World Fact Book*, 2005 available on-line at <http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook>. See also: K.C. Yeh, "China's Economic Growth: Recent Trends and Prospects," in Shuxun Chen and Charles Wolf, eds., *China, the United States and the Global Economy* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2001), pp. 69–97; and Angang Hu, "The Chinese Economy in Prospect," in Chen and Wolf, *China, the United States and the Global Economy*, p. 99–146.

China [had been the] world's leading producer of steel, copper, aluminum, cement, and coal for several years. As a consumer, China surpassed Japan as the globe's second largest importer of petroleum in 2005. In 2006, China surpassed Japan as the world's No. 2 auto market, with total sales of 7.2 million vehicles and production of 7.3 million. In 2007, China also became the world's top producer of merchant ships.⁵⁹

Powered by these impressive numbers, China passed Britain to become the world's fourth largest economy in 2006.⁶⁰ Chinese leaders predict that their country's economy will overtake Germany's by the end of 2008, moving it to number three among world powers. By 2020, experts conservatively estimate that China's per capita income will likely reach \$6,320, compared with \$1,730 in 2005. However, if the Chinese currency appreciates every year at a pace of 3 percent, per capita income in China will probably hit \$9,800 by the year 2020. As a result of this impressive growth, a recent report by McKinsey & Co. estimates that by 2025 China's middle class will consist of about 520 million people.⁶¹ Moreover, according to some estimates China's economy could overtake that of the United States between 2017 and 2035, *if* China sustains high annual economic growth rates over at least the next 20 years.⁶² If this occurs it will certainly be a momentous event: since 1900, the United States has never faced the prospect of competing against a global power with a larger economy than its own.

THE “PROSPEROUS NATION, STRONG MILITARY” MODEL

For Chinese strategists, the country's impressive and sustained economic growth and its military strength are now inextricably linked—they no longer believe they can have one without the other.⁶³ The close relationship between the PRC's economic and military aims, referred to by the Chinese as the “prosperous nation, strong military” model,⁶⁴ is clearly evident in China's strategic objectives, which are to maintain balance among competing priorities for sustaining momentum in national economic

⁵⁹ John Tkacik, “China's Superpower Economy,” WebMemo, The Heritage Foundation, No. 1762, December 28, 2007, p. 1.

⁶⁰ *Annual Report to Congress: Military Power of the People's Republic of China, 2007*, p. 2.

⁶¹ Cheng Li, “China in the Year 2020: Three Policies Scenarios,” p. 21.

⁶² See, for example, “Who Will Be Number One?” *Economist*, World in 2006 Special Issue; and Albert Keidel, “China's Economic Rise—Fact and Fiction,” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Policy Brief 61 (July 2008), accessed at http://www.carnegieendowment.org/files/pb61_keidel_final.pdf on July 7, 2008.

⁶³ Gordon Fairclough, “Surface Tensions: As China Grows, So Does Its Long-Neglected Navy,” *The Wall Street Journal*, July 16, 2007. For an in-depth discussion of the connection between Chinese economic growth and military expansion, see *Annual Report to Congress: Military Power of the People's Republic of China 2006* (Washington, DC: Office of the Secretary of Defense, 2006), Chapter Four, “Resources for Force Modernization,” pp. 18–23.

⁶⁴ John J. Tkacik, Jr., “China's Quest for a Superpower Military,” The Heritage Foundation, Background No. 2036, May 17, 2007, p. 2.

The Chinese believe that the security threats to their state and its economic interests are growing.

development, and to maintain favorable trends in the security environment within which such economic development can occur.⁶⁵

It is also evident that the Chinese believe that the security threats to their state and its economic interests are growing. These thoughts are made plain in a CCP white paper published in December 2006, which states that “Security issues related to energy resources, finance, information and international shipping routes are mounting.”⁶⁶ As one Chinese professor wrote, “*Economic globalization entails globalization of the military means for self-defense...* With these complex and expanding interests, risks to China’s well-being have not lessened, but have actually increased” (emphasis added).⁶⁷

Not surprisingly, then, Beijing has been willing to allocate a significant portion of its steadily growing GNP to defense spending. For the past 15 years, China’s “official” military budget has risen by double-digit rates each year. The official budget was reported to be about \$35-38 billion in 2006, up from \$15 billion in 2000.⁶⁸ On March 4, 2007, Beijing announced a 17.8 percent increase in its military budget, bringing its “official” defense budget figure for 2007 to approximately \$45 billion. This budget continued a trend of PRC military spending increases that are greater than comparable increases in domestic spending. An analysis of PRC budget data and International Monetary Fund (IMF) GDP data for the period of 1996 to 2006 showed real average annual GDP growth and an average annual defense budget growth of 9.2 and 11.8 percent, respectively.⁶⁹

If anything, these figures likely understate the magnitude of the PRC’s defense budget. The lack of accounting transparency and China’s failure to comply with international standards for reporting military expenditures and funding make accurate estimates of PRC military spending problematic. For example, in 2003, the Chinese government reported that its defense budget was \$22.3 billion in US dollars. In contrast, calculations made by non-Chinese governments and organizations based on official exchange rates or purchasing power parity (PPP) models estimated actual PRC defense expenditures to be somewhere between \$30.6 to \$141 billion. Similarly, the Defense Intelligence Agency estimates the PRC’s 2007 defense expenditures to be between \$85 and \$125 billion — or between two to three times that of official Chinese figures. Assuming these numbers are correct, the PRC has the world’s largest defense

⁶⁵ See *Annual Report to Congress: Military Power of the People’s Republic of China 2006*, p. 9.

⁶⁶ Fairclough, “Surface Tensions: As China Grows, So Does Its Long-Neglected Navy.”

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Maples, “Current and Projected Threats to the United States,” p. 20. See also: John Pomfret, “China Hikes Defense Budget Again,” *Washington Post*, March 5, 2003, p. 10; Erik Eckholm, “China is Increasing its Budget for Military Spending by 17.6%,” *New York Times*, March 7, 2002; Craig Smith, “China Sends Its Army Money, and a Signal to the U.S.,” *The New York Times*, March 11, 2001, p. 1; and John Pomfret, “China Plans Major Boost in Spending for Military,” *Washington Post*, March 6, 2001, p. 1.

⁶⁹ *Annual Report to Congress: Military Power of the People’s Republic of China, 2006*, p. 25.

budget after the United States, and is the largest defense spender in Asia by a wide margin.⁷⁰

EVOLVING CHINESE GRAND STRATEGY

China's growing economic-military might is central to the PRC's evolving grand strategy. As a substitute for the general failure of communist ideology, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has staked its continued legitimacy on both economic performance and nationalism. Accomplishing this requires incrementally improving the country's Configuration of National Power (CNP) and Strategic Configuration of Power (SCP), or *shi*. These two concepts "shape how Chinese political leaders and strategic planners assess the security environment, gauge China's relative position in the world, and make adjustments to account for prevailing geopolitical trends."⁷¹

The CNP is a relative metric derived from both qualitative and quantitative measures of territory, natural resources, economic prosperity, diplomatic influence, international prestige, domestic cohesiveness, military capability, and cultural influence. Since the early 1980s, the basic Chinese grand strategy has been to increase China's CNP and to improve its relative standing among world powers.⁷² By 2006, for example, the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences judged that in terms of CNP, China was the sixth most powerful state in the world.⁷³

Shi, or the Strategic Configuration of Power, has no direct Western equivalent. It can be roughly translated as the alignment of forces. Chinese political leaders, strategists, and planners continuously review, analyze, and assess the SCP for potential threats (such as a potential conflict with the United States over Taiwan) or opportunities (such as the decline in America's strategic freedom of action due to operations in Iraq and Afghanistan) that might prompt them to adjust, modify, or change their plans. In short, the SCP functions as a strategic planning tool for the Chinese leadership: it supports leaders' efforts to accomplish what strategists have historically striven to achieve—leveraging areas of competitive advantage in ways that exploit enemy weaknesses.⁷⁴

China's leaders view the first two decades of the 21st century as a period of opportunity to increase China's CNP and to complete its transformation into a true global power. During this timeframe, they will be guided by former paramount leader Deng Xiaoping's "24 character" strategy, which translates roughly into "observe calmly;

Shi can be roughly translated as the alignment of forces.

⁷⁰ *Annual Report to Congress: Military Power of the People's Republic of China, 2007*, pp. 5–9.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁷² This is not to say the leadership in Beijing is totally rational in everything they do, and operate entirely within some fixed grand design. However, there do seem to be certain enduring characteristics of Chinese strategy, what might be termed the product of the country's "strategic culture."

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

secure our position; cope with affairs calmly; hide our capacities and bide our time; be good at maintaining a low profile; never claim leadership, and make some contributions.”⁷⁵ Since its formulation, and as China’s political, economic, and military might has increased and its CNP improved, PRC leaders have debated the strategy’s relative emphasis on “never claim leadership” or “make some contributions;” some have argued for China to take a more proactive stance. However, the underlying theme of the strategy remains the same: to downplay China’s capabilities and avoid confrontation over the short-term, and to build up China’s power to maximize future options.⁷⁶

EVOLVING CHINESE MILITARY THOUGHT

A key component and contributor to China’s near-term and far-term Configuration of National Power is the country’s aggregate military capability. As explained in an April 2006 edition of the official publication *Liberation Army Daily*, “As China’s [CNP] is incrementally mounting and her status keeps on going up in international affairs, it is a matter of great importance to strive to construct a military force that is commensurate with China’s status and up to the job of defending the interests of China’s development, so as to entrench China’s international status.”⁷⁷

Not surprisingly, then, as China’s economy and international stature have grown, so too have its military capabilities. Along the way, China’s national military strategy evolved from a focus on continental territorial defense to defending areas along the country’s periphery as well as the extended aerospace and maritime approaches to the motherland. At the same time, Chinese operational doctrine shifted from defensive operations designed to exploit the country’s great territorial depth and huge population in order to wear down an invading enemy, to high-intensity, relatively short-duration offensive operations designed to seize the initiative and set the conditions for rapidly achieving limited diplomatic and political aims.⁷⁸

PEOPLE’S WAR UNDER MODERN CONDITIONS

After China’s rapprochement with the United States in 1973, the main Chinese military concern was defending against a limited Soviet invasion of the industrialized northern regions of the country. In this scenario, the traditional Chinese strategy of luring an invading army deep into its territory and fighting a battle of annihilation

As China’s economy and international stature have grown, so too have its military capabilities.

⁷⁵ Deng Xiaoping formulated his 24-character strategy in the early 1990s. The original strategy did not include the phrase “and make some contributions.” That was added later. *Annual Report to Congress: Military Power of the People’s Republic of China, 2007*, p. 7.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 6–8.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁷⁸ Cliff, et al., *Entering the Dragon’s Lair: Chinese Anti-access Strategies and Their Implications for the United States*, p. 18.

would be obsolete. The Chinese would instead need to craft strategies to thwart the Soviets' limited aims. This led to the new doctrine of a "People's War under Modern Conditions," which relied on the People's Liberation Army (PLA) to block Soviet advances while Chinese guerrilla forces attacked their rear areas and lines of communication. Once these guerrilla attacks had worn down a Soviet advance, the PLA would counterattack and eject the Soviet forces. As the Cold War went on, Chinese strategists concluded that most future military contingencies would resemble this model. That is, China no longer had to worry about fighting wars against enemies who were intent on conquering China or dismantling the CCP and state. Instead, it would more likely fight wars limited in geographical scope and political objectives, to "assert one's own standpoint and will through limited military action."⁷⁹

To fight limited wars around the entirety of China's long continental borders, PRC strategists began extolling the benefits of an active defense based on early offensive action. Consistent with this new view, the Chinese Central Military Commission (CMC) directed the development of new "first units"—rapid reaction forces capable of moving quickly along interior lines of communication and acting decisively upon arrival in an area of operations. The need for these first units to operate in all military dimensions naturally demanded that they be "joint," a requirement that began to erode the ground forces' long dominance in the PLA.⁸⁰

PRC strategists began extolling the benefits of an active defense based on early offensive action.

IMPACT OF OPERATION DESERT STORM ON CHINESE MILITARY THINKING

With the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union, Chinese strategists saw the United States as the principal potential threat to their country's security. For this reason, the 1991 Gulf War spurred a major reevaluation of PRC strategic thinking. The ease with which US and Coalition forces overwhelmed and defeated the Iraqi military, equipped with Soviet and Chinese weapons, had a tremendous and sobering impact on Chinese political and military leaders. The Chinese carefully noted the US military's great skill in coordinating joint operations, as well as its huge advantages in surveillance and reconnaissance, information systems, and guided-weapon systems. In particular, the Chinese were impressed by the effectiveness of US tactical air forces, and the way US airmen skillfully combined command and control planes, tankers, long-range bombers, stealth aircraft and multi-role fighters, guided air-to-ground munitions, and conventional land-attack cruise missiles (LACMs) to overwhelm the Iraqi air defenses and ground combat forces. The Chinese were also impressed with US space forces, which supported the US joint force

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 19.

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 20.

with reliable space-based navigation and communications, as well as near real-time weather and missile warning data.⁸¹

By June 1991, when considering how the American “revolution in military affairs” (RMA) should affect the “development of defense-related scientific research and army building,” leaders in China’s People’s Liberation Army (PLA) foresaw rapid changes in land, air, and sea warfare, as well as the emergence of war in the information, electromagnetic, and space realms.⁸² In response to these changes, the Chinese Academy of Military Science identified three different potential developmental pathways: the existing People’s War School; the “Limited, High-Technology War School;” and the “RMA School.”⁸³ After two years of debate, President Jiang Zemin ordered the PRC high command to begin organizing, training, and equipping the military to fight “local wars under high-technology conditions”—limited wars, fought over limited political objectives but characterized by high-intensity, short-duration, multidimensional campaigns. These campaigns would be waged with “informationalized” (i.e., guided) weapons of unprecedented accuracy and lethality together with “information equipment of all kinds . . . linked into wide-ranging networks, forming huge information systems with C4 [command, control, communications, computers and] ISR [intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance] systems at their core.”⁸⁴

“DEFEATING A SUPERIOR WITH AN INFERIOR”

In the immediate aftermath of Operation Desert Storm, when contemplating a future war against the United States, Chinese military strategists began turning to former Chairman Mao’s philosophy of “defeating the superior with the inferior.” This thinking was based on a key assumption: namely, that even the most powerful of potential opponents cannot be superior in every military capability or skill, much less in politics, diplomacy, and geography. This was especially true of a major power like the United States, which must spread its attention (and forces) over a number of regions in order to defend its global interests. Therefore, should the Chinese find themselves in a limited confrontation with the United States, they would avoid confronting the US military head-on. Rather, they would seek to create areas of advantage where the United States might be weakest. The best way to accomplish this, they came to believe, involves seizing the initiative early by exploiting surprise, achieving

⁸¹ Ibid., pp. 20–22.

⁸² For an overview of Chinese thinking on the future security environment and future warfare see: Michael Pillsbury, *China Debates the Future Security Environment* (Washington, DC: NDU Press, 2000); and Michael Pillsbury, *Chinese Views of Future Warfare* (Washington, DC: NDU Press, 1997).

⁸³ Jason E. Bruzdinski, Chapter 10, “Demystifying *Shashoujian*: China’s ‘Assassin’s Mace’ Concept,” p. 318, available online at http://www.mitre.org/work/best_papers/best_papers_04/bruzdzinski_demystify/bruzdzinski_demystify.pdf, accessed online on August 20, 2007.

⁸⁴ Cliff, et al., *Entering the Dragon’s Lair: Chinese Anti-access Strategies and Their Implications for the United States*, pp. 22–23.

information superiority, launching preemptive attacks, and concentrating their efforts on achieving limited strategic aims. At all times, their strategies and tactics would seek to raise the potential costs of any US intervention to block the PLA's achieving its limited objectives.⁸⁵

“KEY-POINT STRIKES”

As these calculations make plain, PRC strategists seek to prevent the United States from winning the *initial engagement* in any limited war, to control the pace and scope of escalation thereafter, and to gain a strong position before war termination negotiations. One way to achieve these aims is to mount “key-point strikes” aimed at crippling or degrading US operational superiority in a particular military dimension – that is, strikes that could have a direct influence on the ultimate outcome of a particular campaign or operation. Key-point targets might include command systems, information systems, specific weapon systems, logistics systems, or the links that connect them.⁸⁶

“ASSASSIN’S MACE”

By 1996, the heavy PRC emphasis on surprise, preemptive strikes on key-point targets, seizing the initiative, and raising the potential cost of any future conflict was increasingly reflected in calls from Chinese military and political strategists for new *shashoujian*, or “assassin’s mace,” capabilities.⁸⁷ *Shashoujian* were ancient hand maces that could be concealed in a wide sleeve, and immediately employed with little or no warning to break swords and crush human skulls, even those protected by helmets. (This also made them ideal weapons for assassinations.) Today, *shashoujian* weapons and combat methods are seen by PRC strategists as those powerful enough to deter a superior adversary like the United States, or to defeat US forces in modern, high-tech warfare. The search for special weapons and methods that could be used to surprise and cripple US forces is attractive to all Chinese schools of strategic thought. Indeed, between 1996 and 2000, China expert Michael Pillsbury counted no less than

Raising the potential cost of any future conflict was increasingly reflected in calls from Chinese military and political strategists for new *shashoujian*, or “assassin’s mace,” capabilities.

⁸⁵ Ibid., pp. 27–44. In many respects, this approach appears similar to Japan’s in World War II. Then the Japanese sought to gain initial surprise (i.e., through the attack on Pearl Harbor); achieve limited aims in the western Pacific; and make the cost of reversing these gains too high for the United States to undertake to reverse them.

⁸⁶ Ibid., pp. 34–37.

⁸⁷ The three Chinese characters that make up the term *shashoujian* are literally translated to kill (*sha*), hand (*shou*), and sword, club, or mace (*jian*). The most common translation is “assassin’s mace.” Bruzdinski, Chapter 10, “Demystifying *Shashoujian*: China’s ‘Assassin’s Mace’ Concept,” p. 312.

20 articles that espoused *shashoujian* as the best way to confront the superior US military.⁸⁸

As further explained in 2002 by Senior Colonel Yang Zhibo, then-deputy researcher in the Office for Planning and Management Research at the PLA Air Force (PLAAF) Command College, *shashoujian* is:

... whatever the PLA needs to win future local wars under high-tech conditions. It includes two aspects: (1) weapon systems and equipment (e.g., hardware); and every type of combat method (e.g., software). Weapons and equipment are the systems needed to deal with the enemy's electronic warfare and information warfare, and to counter every type of weapon and equipment the enemy can use for firepower attack. [*Shashoujian*] [c]ombat methods include attacking different types of weapons... as well as the combat principles to deal with different situations.

To build a *shashoujian*, China must first complete a development program. It is a difficult, systematic process and not just one or two advanced weapons. It is something all the Services will use. It is an all-army, all location, composite land, sea, and air system.... The development of weapons, equipment, combat methods, and training must go hand-in-hand for them to be effective.⁸⁹

From the Chinese perspective, the power of *shashoujian* would help make up for China's "one low and five insufficiencies"—meaning its poor (i.e., low) integration of information technology with armaments and equipment; and its lack of high-power armaments, weapons for launching attacks, guided munitions, ISR, early warning and command and control capabilities, and electronic armaments (i.e., the five insufficiencies).⁹⁰

The Chinese refuse to reveal what they consider to be *shashoujian* weapon systems, perhaps because there is no fixed agreement on what *shashoujian* encompasses. However, US analysts believe that the systems include anti-satellite weapons to deny US forces the use of space; computer network and information attack capabilities (e.g., EMP weapons) to disrupt US command and control and information systems; and weapons able to penetrate defended space reliably, such as ballistic missiles.⁹¹

The PRC's determined pursuit of *shashoujian* weapon systems and hardware is perhaps best illustrated by its quest for an effective anti-satellite (ASAT) weapon. In 2001, the Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, Vice Admiral Thomas Wilson,

⁸⁸ Ibid., pp. 314, 322. For a discussion of the assassin's mace concept, a chronology of statements on the concept, and relevant R&D programs, see Michael Pillsbury, "China's Military Strategy Toward the U.S.—A View from Open Sources," November 2, 2001. See also: Michael Pillsbury, *China's Process in Technological Competitiveness—The Need for a New Assessment*, prepared for the US-China Economic and Security Review Commission, April 21, 2005. See also Victor N. Corpus, "America's Acupuncture Points: Part 2: The Assassin's Mace," *Asia Times Online*, October 20, 2006, accessed online at <http://www.atimes.com/atimes/China/HJ20A01.html>, on August 15, 2007.

⁸⁹ Bruzdinski, Chapter 10, "Demystifying *Shashoujian*: China's 'Assassin's Mace' Concept," p. 315.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 330.

⁹¹ Wang Wei, "The Effect of Tactical Ballistic Missiles on the Maritime Strategy System of China," *Shipborne Weapons*, August 2006, translated by SN Danling Cacioppo, pp. 12–15.

The Chinese refuse to reveal what they consider to be *shashoujian* weapon systems.

testified to Congress that US military forces might confront Chinese anti-satellite capabilities by 2015.⁹² One year later, he advanced that timeline to 2010.⁹³ Yet on January 11, 2007, after three failed attempts made in 2005 and 2006, PLA rocket forces destroyed an inoperative Chinese weather satellite at an altitude of 865 kilometers (466 nm)—three years sooner than predicted by US intelligence agencies.⁹⁴ The rapidity with which the Chinese were able to overcome the technological challenges of an ASAT weapon helps to explain why US military planners can ill afford to underestimate either the sophistication or the pace of Chinese military modernization, especially when it comes to *shashoujian* capabilities designed to defeat US power projection and joint multidimensional battle networks.⁹⁵

BUYING ANTI-ACCESS/AREA DENIAL CAPABILITIES

With regard to *shashoujian* combat methods, the Chinese are also clearly pursuing what US strategists refer to as anti-access/area-denial strategies—strategies designed to delay the arrival of US forces, to keep them beyond effective range of Chinese territory, or to defeat them if they try to penetrate the denial zone. For example, Chinese planners believe that if war were to break out with the United States over Taiwan or some other flashpoint in East Asia, the US military would conduct an air and missile campaign while attempting to build up a powerful regional multidimensional battle network. To preclude that outcome, the Chinese military would conduct preemptive attacks on US theater ports and airfields, American aircraft carriers and large surface combatants operating in theater, as well as on logistics, transportation, and support forces. They might also employ coercive measures designed to convince US allies to deny US forces access to their bases.⁹⁶

Consistent with this thinking, China is assembling the building blocks of a multidimensional, anti-access/area-denial network capable of disrupting or defeating future US multidimensional power-projection networks. Indeed, as early as 2001, the Defense Intelligence Agency assessed that:

⁹² Vice Admiral Thomas R. Wilson, “Global Threats and Challenges Through 2015,” Statement for the Record, Senate Armed Services Committee, March 8, 2001, p. 14.

⁹³ Vice Admiral Thomas R. Wilson, “Global Threats and Challenges,” Statement for the Record, Senate Armed Services Committee, March 19, 2002, p. 17.

⁹⁴ See “2007 Chinese Anti-Satellite Missile Test,” available online at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2007_Chinese_anti-satellite_missile_test, accessed on August 1, 2007.

⁹⁵ For an elaboration on this logic, see Thomas P. Ehrhard, testimony before the US-China Economic and Security Review Commission, February 2, 2007. This testimony is available online at http://www.uscc.gov/hearings/2007hearings/written_testimonies/07_02_01_02wrts/07_02_1_2_ehrhard_tom_statement.pdf.

⁹⁶ See Cliff, et al., *Entering the Dragon's Lair: Chinese Anti-access Strategies and Their Implications for the United States*, pp. 60–80. See also Mark Stokes, *China's Strategic Modernization: Implications for the United States* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, September 1999), pp. 8–9.

In terms of its conventional forces, Beijing is pursuing the capability to defend its eastern seaboard — the economic heartland — from attack by a “high-technology” opponent employing long-range precision strike capabilities. This means China is expanding its air, anti-air, anti-submarine, anti-surface ship, and battle management capabilities, to enable the PLA to project “defensive” power out to the first island chain.⁹⁷

For example, in the few years leading up to 2006, China had:

- Equipped its 2nd Artillery units opposite Taiwan with roughly 900 mobile, short-range ballistic missiles (SRBM), and was adding to them at the rate of 100 per year⁹⁸
- Increased the range and accuracy of its intermediate-range missile systems
- Initiated development of terminally guided (i.e., radar and passive IR), maneuvering reentry vehicles to enable its ballistic missiles to target and sink ships at sea⁹⁹
- Deployed its fourth battalion of S-300PMU (SA-20) surface-to-air missile (SAM) batteries
- Contracted with Russia to buy more capable S-300PMU-2 SAM systems, with engagement ranges in excess of 200 kilometers
- Taken delivery of the last of 12 Russian-made *Kilo*-class attack submarines armed with advanced ASCMs (e.g., SS-N-27B missiles) and wake-homing torpedoes
- Completed production of the *Song*-class attack submarine and commenced deliveries of the improved *Yuan*-class submarine
- Deployed at least two Type 093 nuclear-powered attack submarines (SSNs)
- Commissioned its first capable air defense destroyers
- Launched a microsatellite
- Continued R&D on a variety of ASAT weapons, including high-power, ground-based lasers
- Procured Su-30MKK multirole and Su-30MK2 maritime strike aircraft from Russia

⁹⁷ Vice Admiral Thomas Wilson (Director, Defense Intelligence Agency), “Global Threats and Challenges Through 2015,” *Statement before the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence*, February 7, 2001, p. 12.

⁹⁸ *Annual Report to Congress: Military Power of the People’s Republic of China, 2006*, p. 3.

⁹⁹ PLA is reportedly developing a ship-killer variant of the DF-21C (CSS-5) ballistic missile, which has a range of between 2,150 and 2,500 km. It is expected to be armed with maneuvering re-entry vehicles that will be guided by radar or infrared seekers in the terminal phase of flight to provide the accuracy required to attack moving ships at sea. Ted Parsons, “China Develops Anti-Ship Missile,” *Jane’s Defence Weekly*, January 25, 2006, p. 12; and Bill Gertz, “China Buildup Seen Aimed at U.S. Ships,” *Washington Times*, November 22, 2006, p. 5.

- > Manufactured F-11 fighter aircraft, an indigenous version of the Russian SU-27SK
- > Begun fielding the indigenously designed and built, “fourth generation” F-10 fighter.¹⁰⁰

To be sure, the Chinese motives for this military buildup may be defensive in character; rising great powers have often sought to expand their defense perimeters and challenged for access to the global commons. On the other hand, the capabilities described above, while offering the potential to increase China’s sense of security, can also be used to decrease the security of others in the region, and to compromise US interests and those of allies and partners. What remains difficult to discern is how Chinese leaders will employ their country’s growing military power, and their current and longer-term intentions.

As Chinese military capabilities have increased across the board at a rapid pace, so too have their overt demonstrations of these capabilities. For example, since September 2006, China has reportedly fired targeting lasers at US remote-sensing satellites several times.¹⁰¹ In October 2006, a Chinese *Song*-class submarine successfully trailed an American aircraft carrier strike group conducting training exercises near Okinawa without being detected, penetrated the strike group’s anti-submarine defensive perimeter, and surfaced within five miles of the carrier USS *Kitty Hawk*—well within the striking range of the torpedoes and anti-ship cruise missiles typically carried by *Song*-class submarines.¹⁰² As mentioned earlier, in January 2007, China intercepted and destroyed one of its own satellites with a direct-ascent ASAT, demonstrating an operational offensive space-denial capability.¹⁰³

WHAT DOES IT ALL PORTEND?

Given China’s impressive rise as a global power in such a relatively short period of time, a critical question facing US defense strategists is: How will China exploit its growing economic strength and military power over time? Opinions in the national security community vary widely on this question, to include on the issue of whether conflict with China is inevitable.¹⁰⁴ For their part, Chinese leaders continue to emphasize that

¹⁰⁰ *Annual Report to Congress: The Military Power of the People’s Republic of China, 2007*, pp. 3–5; and Bill Gertz, “China Expands Sub Fleet,” *Washington Times*, March 2, 2007, p. 1.

¹⁰¹ Vago Muradian, “China Tried to Blind U.S. Sats with Laser,” *Defense News*, September 25, 2006, p. 1.

¹⁰² Bill Gertz, “U.S. Presses China on Armed Submarine Encounter,” *Washington Times*, January 11, 2007, p. 3.

¹⁰³ Craig Covault, “Chinese Test Anti-Satellite Weapon,” *Aviation Week and Space Technology*, January 17, 2007; and Reuters, “U.S. Voices Concern over China Satellite-Killer Test,” January 18, 2007; and Edward Cody, “China Confirms Firing Missile to Destroy Satellite,” *Washington Post*, January 24, 2007, p. 8.

¹⁰⁴ For an excellent summary of the debate, see Aaron Friedberg, “The Future of U.S.-China Relations—Is Conflict Inevitable,” *International Security*, Vol. 30, No. 2, Fall 2005, pp. 7–45.

Beijing has increasingly turned toward state-inspired, patriotic nationalism as a source of regime legitimization.

China's rise as a global power will be peaceful.¹⁰⁵ Moreover, US grand strategy calls for developing closer ties with China and facilitating its peaceful rise. However, if history is any guide, it is certainly plausible that US-Sino relations will increasingly be characterized by heated competition rather than sustained cooperation.¹⁰⁶ Although he stressed that "China is not an inevitable enemy" of the United States, General Michael Hayden, Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, concluded:

The Chinese have fully absorbed the lessons of both wars in the Persian Gulf. They've developed and integrated advanced weaponry into a modern military force. And while it's certainly true that those new capabilities could—could—pose a risk to U.S. forces and interests in the region, that military modernization is at least as much about projecting strength as anything else. After two centuries of perceived Western hegemony, China seems to be determined to flex its muscles. It sees an advanced military force as an essential element of great power status, and it is the Intelligence Community's view that any Chinese government, even a more democratic one, would have similar nationalist goals.¹⁰⁷

Indeed, as General Hayden suggests, both PRC political elites and a large portion of the Chinese people view the century leading up to the roughly 100 year period leading up to the Chinese Communists' assumption of power in 1949 as one of shame, in which China was stripped of her sovereign territory throughout Asia by a series of humiliating, "unequal" treaties.¹⁰⁸ Beijing has increasingly turned toward state-inspired, patriotic nationalism as a source of regime legitimization, and nationalistic fervor is a well-known historical contributor to conflict among nations.

¹⁰⁵ Zheng Bijian, "China's 'Peaceful Rise' to Great-Power Status," *Foreign Affairs*, September–October 2005.

¹⁰⁶ Many respected scholars concur with this view. That being said, China's rise could be derailed by the collapse of its fragile economy or by internal fragmentation along regional lines. Given a regime change and democratic reforms, relations with China could become considerably more cooperative than is the case today. Chinese economic interdependence with the West and increased participation in various international organizations may also discourage military competition and confrontation. See Aaron Friedberg, et al, "Facing China," *Commentary*, February 2001, pp. 16–26; Friedberg, "The Future of U.S.-China Relations—Is Conflict Inevitable?," pp. 16–24; Friedberg, "The Struggle for Mastery in Asia," *Commentary*, November 2000, pp. 17–26; Eliot Cohen, "It's No Cold War, But China Is Our Biggest Threat," *The Wall Street Journal*, April 9, 2001; Arthur Waldron, *Statement before House Armed Services Committee*, June 21, 2000; and Arthur Waldron, "Why China Could Be Dangerous," *The American Enterprise*, July–August 1998, pp. 40–43.

¹⁰⁷ General Michael V. Hayden, Remarks at the Landon Lecture Series, Kansas State University, April 30, 2008.

¹⁰⁸ President Hu Jintao still refers to a "century of humiliation" that China endured beginning in the 19th century with the Opium Wars. In their aftermath China's national sovereignty was compromised, a condition that was not rectified until the Chinese Communists' victory over the Nationalists in 1949. Peter Gumbel, "It's a Whole New World," *Time*, July 30, 2006. Accessed at <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1220450-2,00.html>. Accessed on July 3, 2008. It comes as no surprise that China has border demarcation and territorial disputes, as well as a host of policy differences (e.g., water-use policies with respect to cross-border rivers, human rights issues, and immigration practices), with many of its neighbors including Taiwan, India, Vietnam, Malaysia, the Philippines, Japan, and Russia. See Peter Lewis Young, "China May Look Again at 'Unequal Treaties,'" *Jane's Intelligence Review*, July 1996, pp. 326–327.

Moreover, China also faces major energy and water shortages over the long-term that could be a source of conflict. For example, China imported less than two million barrels of oil per day (bbl/d) in 2002, but that figure is projected to soar to between 9.5 and 15 million bbl/d by 2025. Today, China is the world's second largest consumer and third largest importer of petroleum, bringing in over 40 percent of the oil required to meet domestic demand.¹⁰⁹ Although the Chinese are taking steps to address their growing dependence on oil, to include the development of oil pipelines from Central Asia and Russia and the increase of natural gas imports, these will not eliminate China's heavy dependence on oil in the foreseeable future.

China's growing oil and natural gas dependence could be a prescription for friction between Washington and Beijing. Thanks to its military and political alliances, the United States maintains a formidable presence in key petroleum-producing regions. The United States is capable of intervening when necessary to address threats to its energy supplies; the US fleet controls the key ocean transit routes. China possesses neither advantage. However, over time China may use its expanded military capability to deny the United States secure access to its energy supplies, thereby placing both countries' economic security at risk. Depending upon what form these actions might take (e.g., challenging the US fleet for sea control from the Gulf to East Asia or, failing that, using its military power—its submarine fleet and extended range missiles, for example—to create a comparable threat to US offshore oil supplies or transport of same), the United States might be hard-pressed to field effective countermeasures.

In addition, over half of China's major cities already face persistent water shortages and more than 100 face severe scarcities. Given current trends in water demand for irrigation, industrial and municipal uses, the situation is expected to deteriorate significantly over the next two decades, especially in the northern part of the country. Competition over oil, gas, potable water, and other limited natural resources could compromise economic growth and lead to friction or even conflict with other states seeking access to these resources.¹¹⁰

In short, while increased competition and even conflict between the United States and China are hardly certain, Beijing remains beset by questions of political legitimacy, worsening ecological troubles, an economy that has enjoyed remarkable growth but is showing signs of deceleration, demographic trends which may forecast societal instability, a rapidly growing dependence on foreign energy supplies, and outstanding security issues in the form of Taiwan, the Spratly Islands, Tibet, and perhaps portions

China's growing oil and natural gas dependence could be a prescription for friction between Washington and Beijing.

¹⁰⁹ Annual Report to Congress: Military Power of the People's Republic of China, 2007. See also US Energy Information Administration (EIA), Country Analysis: China, available on-line at <http://www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/cabs/china.html>. See also: Erica Strecker Downs, *China's Quest for Energy Security* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2000), pp. 8–9.

¹¹⁰ For a discussion of the potential security implications of growing energy demands in Asia, see: S. Enders Wimbush (Chair), *Asian Energy: Security Implications—Report of the 1997 Undersecretary of Defense for Policy Summer Study* (Washington, DC: DoD, 1997). See also: S. Enders Wimbush (Chairman), *Asia 2025—Report of the 1999 Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Summer Study* (Washington, DC: DoD, 1999).

of the Russian Far East. Depending upon how Beijing chooses to address these issues, China could become a threat to peace.

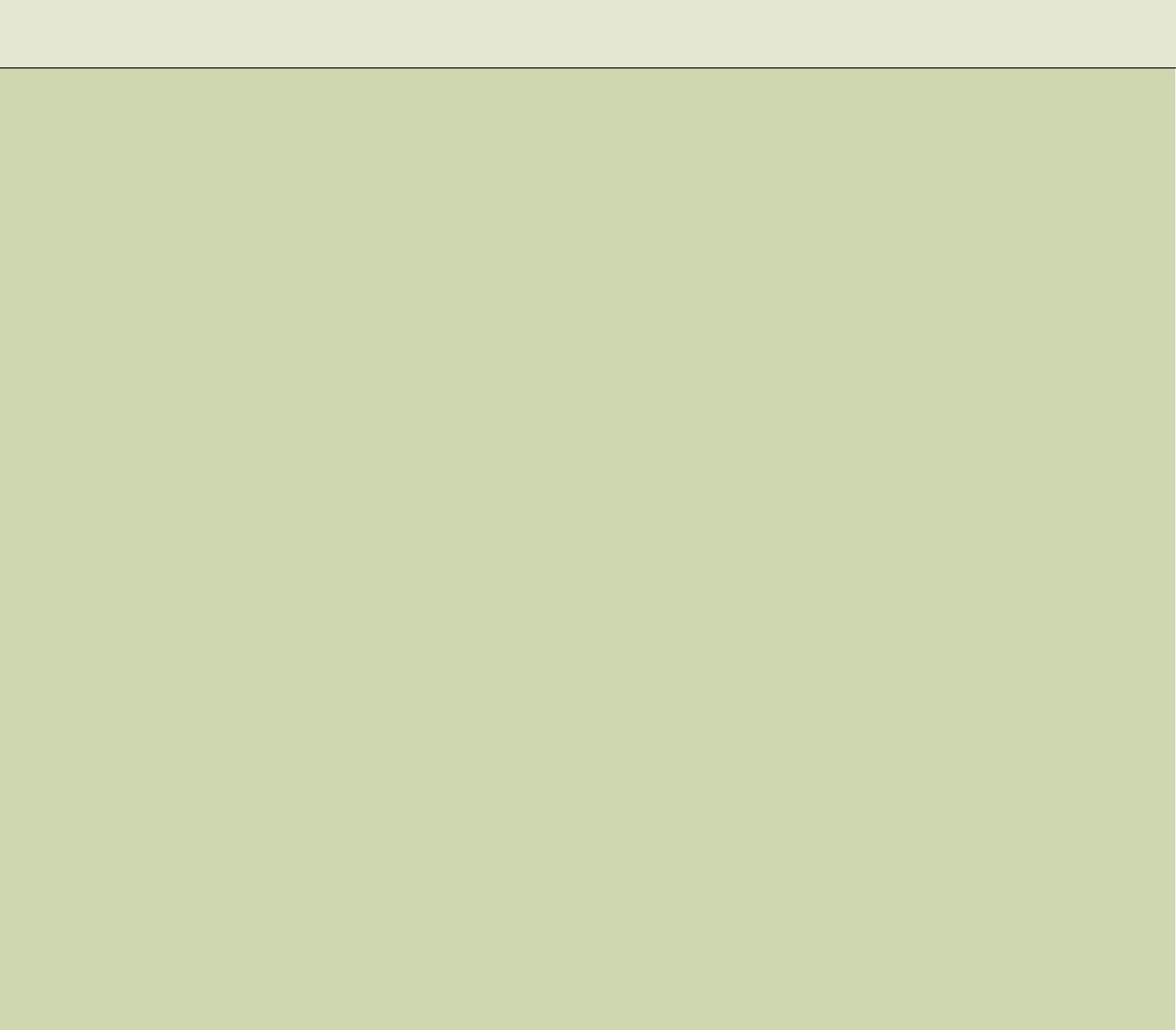
OPERATIONAL CHALLENGES

Whatever its ultimate intentions are, China clearly has the greatest potential of any nation to challenge the US military, as well as the militaries of key allies and partners. In the emerging strategic competition between the United States and China, the United States will have two important and enduring objectives. The first will be to maintain a stable military balance in the East Asian littoral. Under no circumstances can the United States allow Chinese military leaders to believe they would have the upper hand in a military confrontation over Taiwan (or any other vital issue). With such a favorable Strategic Configuration of Power, Chinese leaders might be tempted to exploit perceived opportunities in East Asia through coercion or to employ military force in support of their national objectives. The United States must therefore possess a clearly demonstrated ability to roll back any potential PRC anti-access/area denial network. Second, the United States must preserve access to the global commons of space, cyberspace, the sea and the undersea, which it currently dominates. Assured access is critical for any nation that seeks to thrive within a global economy. Yet China's testing of anti-satellite forces, its cyber attacks on US government information networks, and its rapidly expanding submarine fleet are clear indications that Beijing is not satisfied with the status quo, and may hope to deny the United States access to the global commons.

These two requirements pose several operational challenges for the US military, including:

- Operating from forward bases in the Western Pacific and East Asia under constant threat of guided-weapon attack. This will require developing operational concepts which may include attack warning, base hardening, responsive launch and dispersal, active defense, and rapid base construction and repair.
- Sustaining adequate global and regional command, control, communications, computers, and intelligence (C4I) networks in the face of PRC attacks.
- Initiating counter-network and penetration operations (deception, spoofing, and computer network exploitation and attack) against the full range of PRC national and military networks.
- Sustaining US access to space constellations.
- Sustaining extended-range aerospace C4ISR and guided-weapon strike operations throughout the East Asian littoral and over the Chinese mainland.

- > Sustaining extended-range naval C4ISR and strike operations, from beyond the effective range of PRC maritime strike forces.
- > Achieving and sustaining undersea superiority.
- > Penetrating and neutralizing/destroying PRC advanced integrated air defense systems and advanced over-the-horizon naval attack systems.
- > Holding at risk high-value PRC targets throughout the depth and breadth of Chinese territory.
- > Deterring PRC direct attacks on the US homeland, with emphasis on nuclear and cyber attacks, and mitigating the damage should an attack occur.



CHAPTER 3 > PREPARING FOR A PROLIFERATED WORLD

Weapons of mass destruction include chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear weapons. In the future, they may also include enhanced conventional explosives.¹¹¹ Despite their differences, these weapons all share a common characteristic: “the potential to do extreme damage, physical and psychological, with a single strike.”¹¹²

Preventing the use of weapons of mass destruction has long been a national security policy goal of the United States, and US leaders – with a great deal of help from other leaders from the world community – have been relatively successful in doing so. However, given the increasingly globalized and interconnected world in which ideas and information flow freely, the knowledge necessary to develop these terrible weapons is now more readily available. Consequently, preventing hostile state or non-state actors from acquiring and using WMD is becoming an increasingly important – and increasingly difficult – national security challenge.

Of the different types of WMD, nuclear weapons are the most important in terms of US national security policy. The United States armed forces are well trained in chemical warfare defense and consequence management. Radiological weapons can cause terrible and long-lasting damage, but their radius of effect is relatively small compared to other WMD.¹¹³ The threat of biological weapons is real and terrifying, but there are significant problems associated with developing and employing these weapons in a manner that produces mass casualties. Nevertheless, the emerging

¹¹¹ The Department of Defense also refers to WMD in terms of chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, and enhanced conventional (CBRNE) weapons.

¹¹² Philip A. Odeen, Chairman, *Transforming Defense: National Security in the 21st Century*, Report of the National Defense Panel, December 1997, p. 15, available online at <http://www.dtic.mil/ndp/FullDoc2.pdf>, accessed on June 19, 2008.

¹¹³ At least one expert believes “radiological dispersion devices” should not be considered weapons of mass destruction because they only cause local contamination and costly cleanup. See Ashton B. Carter, “How to Counter WMD,” *Foreign Affairs*, September/October 2004, p. 73.

threat of biological weapons use—either by state or non-state enemies—merits attention.

On the other hand, the proliferation of nuclear weapons to states and non-state actors hostile to the United States is a clear and present danger that could have a disruptive effect on the global system, US alliance relationships, and the way that the United States projects power around the globe. Finally, these weapons could threaten the well-being, and even the survival, of the United States.

Given the danger posed by these weapons, the Defense Department (DoD) is rightly according high priority to preventing their spread. However, a quick nuclear history suggests that DoD must also hedge against the possibility that these efforts will fail, and prepare for a world in which nuclear weapons are more widely proliferated.

THE COLD WAR ERA

The nuclear era officially began with the Trinity test in Alamogordo, New Mexico on July 16, 1945. There, an implosion-type nuclear fission weapon with approximately six kilograms of plutonium produced an explosive yield of 20 kilotons—the equivalent of 20,000 tons of trinitrotoluene (TNT). The following month, nuclear bombs were dropped on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, bringing an end to the war in the Pacific.¹¹⁴ Within five years, the total loss of life due to the two initial blasts and their residual effects (burns and radiation poisoning) reached some 340,000 souls, approximately 54 percent of the original inhabitants of the two cities.¹¹⁵

The destructiveness and killing power of these atomic bombs stunned the world. As a result, after Japan's surrender, many governments called for an outright ban on nuclear weapons. While the United States initially favored putting the atomic bomb and its technologies under strict international control, any hope of keeping the nuclear genie in the bottle was soon dashed by an intense nuclear arms race between the United States and Soviet Union.¹¹⁶ In August 1949, only four years after the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Soviet Union conducted its first test of an atomic weapon. By 1955, both the United States and the Soviets had successfully tested vastly more powerful thermonuclear (fusion) devices.¹¹⁷ Over the remainder of

¹¹⁴ For a concise overview of these events and the development of nuclear weapons, see Joseph Cirincione, *Bomb Scare: The History & Future of Nuclear Weapons* (New York: Colombia University Press, 2007), chap. 1.

¹¹⁵ “The Development and Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons,” available online at http://nobelprize.org/educational_games/peace/nuclear_weapons/readmore.html, accessed on June 18, 2008.

¹¹⁶ See Appendix A, “History of Nuclear Testing, Test Bans, and Nonproliferation,” *Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty: Issues and Arguments*, Congressional Research Service, Report RL34394, dated February 28, 2008, p. 65.

¹¹⁷ Cirincione, *Bomb Scare: The History & Future of Nuclear Weapons*, pp. 19–23.

the long Cold War, the two superpowers developed and fielded tens of thousands of nuclear weapons of all types and yields.

At first, it seemed as though the broader superpower nuclear competition might spur a great wave of nuclear proliferation. The British, with American aid, exploded their first bomb in 1952, becoming the third declared nuclear power, and by the late 1950s the US intelligence community was predicting that more than a dozen other states might become nuclear powers within the following decade. France became the fourth nuclear power in 1960 and China exploded its first nuclear weapon in 1964.¹¹⁸ After the latter event, the fear that nuclear proliferation would spread throughout Asia, the Middle East, South American and Europe increased even further.¹¹⁹

Locked in a globe-spanning ideological and military competition, neither the United States nor the Soviet Union ever seriously considered eliminating their nuclear arsenals. However, they did agree that the further spread of nuclear weapons was an unfavorable prospect. Neither wanted an ally or a third party country inadvertently dragging them into a devastating nuclear exchange with the other. Consequently, they both championed the 1968 Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, often referred to as the Non-Proliferation Treaty, or NPT. The NPT was, in essence, a “grand bargain” between the first five nuclear-weapon states and all non-nuclear powers. The former agreed not to transfer nuclear weapons technology to other states, while the latter agreed not to pursue nuclear weapons of any type. To seal this seemingly discriminatory deal between nuclear haves and have-nots, the nuclear state signatories promised to gradually reduce their respective arsenals, with an ultimate goal of complete nuclear disarmament.¹²⁰

When the NPT went into effect on March 5, 1970, it was signed by a total of 62 countries, including the United States, the Soviet Union, and Great Britain. However, the two remaining nuclear-armed states — France and China — refused to sign the treaty, as did several other important states. Moreover, the NPT was *not* a formal arms control treaty. It was instead simply a voluntary pact. As a result, an August 1974 US Special National Intelligence Estimate (SNIE), entitled “Prospects for Further Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons,” predicted that India and Israel would soon have their own nuclear weapons, if they didn’t have them already; and that Taiwan, Argentina, South Africa, Spain, Iran, Egypt, Pakistan, Brazil and South Korea all might have nuclear weapons within a decade. In addition, the Estimate concluded that West Germany, Sweden, Canada, Italy, and Japan had the technical wherewithal to pursue nuclear weapons in the event of “a major adverse shift in great power relationships.”¹²¹

The NPT was a “grand bargain” between the first five nuclear-weapon states and all non-nuclear powers.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., p. 27.

¹¹⁹ Francis J. Gavin, “Blasts from the Past: Proliferation Lessons from the 1960s,” *International Security*, Winter 2004–2005, pp. 104–107.

¹²⁰ Appendix A, “History of Nuclear Testing, Test Bans, and Nonproliferation,” pp. 65–66.

¹²¹ “Special National Intelligence Estimate: Prospects for Further Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons,” available online at <http://www.fas.org/nuke/guide/snief4-1-74.pdf>, pp. 2–4, accessed on June 20, 2008.

As it turned out, the SNIE was overly pessimistic. By the end of the Cold War, India had exploded a “peaceful” nuclear weapon, and although it had not tested a bomb, Israel was widely believed to have a substantial nuclear stockpile numbering between 100–200 weapons, including both fission and fusion bombs.¹²² However, the more widely proliferated world envisioned by the SNIE did not materialize. The United States successfully dissuaded both the Taiwanese and South Korean governments from continuing their weapons programs, threatening to limit or withdraw its military support for both nations.¹²³ In 1990–91, for internal political concerns, the government of South Africa voluntarily dismantled its nuclear program, destroyed its few operational weapons, and signed the NPT. None of the other countries listed in the 1974 SNIE ever developed nuclear weapons. Moreover, both France and China acceded to the NPT in 1992.¹²⁴ In other words, even though the NPT was less of an arms control treaty than a voluntary agreement, it proved remarkably effective in limiting nuclear proliferation during the Cold War.

PREVENTING WMD PROLIFERATION IN THE POST-COLD WAR ERA

According to some analysts, the end of the Cold War ushered in a “Second Nuclear Age” characterized by the further spread of nuclear weapons to nations in Asia and fears that non-state actors might acquire these weapons as well.¹²⁵ With the collapse of the Soviet Union, therefore, a key question facing US defense strategists and planners quickly surfaced: Would the relative success of the NPT prove lasting in the Second, post-Cold Nuclear Age, or would the old fears of widespread nuclear proliferation finally be realized?

From a US national security perspective, the prospect of a world with more nuclear powers was troubling and preventing the further spread of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction became an important component of the early post-Cold War defense strategy. As stated in the 1993 Bottom-Up Review:

¹²² Israel’s quest for nuclear weapons was aided immeasurably by France, which refused to sign the NPT. See Lieutenant Colonel William T. Farr, USA, “The Third Temple’s Holy of Holies: Israel’s Nuclear Weapons,” US Air Force Counter-proliferation Center, Air War College, Maxwell AFB, Alabama, September 1999, available online at <http://www.fas.org/nuke/guide/israel/nuke/farr.htm>, accessed on June 21, 2008.

¹²³ Rebecca K.C. Hersman and Robert Peters, “Nuclear U-Turns: Learning from South Korean and Taiwanese Rollback,” *Nonproliferation Review*, November 2006.

¹²⁴ For an overview of the status and provisions of the NPT, see “Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons [NPT],” The Nuclear Information Project, accessed at <http://www.fas.org/nuke/control/npt/> on July 11, 2008.

¹²⁵ See, for example, Paul Bracken, “The Second Nuclear Age,” *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2000; and Fred Charles Iklé, “The Second Coming of the Nuclear Age,” *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 1996.

Dangers posed by nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction (WMD)—that is, biological and chemical weapons—are growing. Beyond the five declared nuclear-weapon states (the United States, Russia, France, Great Britain, and China), at least 20 other nations either have acquired or are attempting to acquire weapons of mass destruction. In most areas where US forces could potentially be engaged on a large scale, such as Korea or the Persian Gulf, our likely adversaries already possess chemical and biological weapons. Moreover, many of these same states (e.g., North Korea, Iraq, and Iran) appear to be embarked upon determined efforts to acquire nuclear weapons.¹²⁶

Concerns about nuclear proliferation proved well founded, as a series of developments during the 1990s clearly demonstrated. For example, almost immediately after the Cold War drew to a close, the United States worked to convince several former Soviet states to relinquish nuclear weapons that had been stationed on their territory. As a result of those efforts, in 1996 the Ukraine, Belarus, and Kazakhstan all voluntarily gave up their nuclear weapons and signed the NPT as non-nuclear weapons states.¹²⁷ The United States also began its still-ongoing efforts to help secure the enormous stockpile of Soviet nuclear weapons and materials.

Another key US post-Cold War counterproliferation objective was to keep North Korea from acquiring nuclear weapons. On March 12, 1993, citing US and South Korean threats, North Korea announced its intention to withdraw from the NPT. After hurried negotiations between the three states, North Korea apparently backed down, entering into a framework agreement that would see Pyongyang freeze its nuclear weapons research in return for concessions from both South Korea and the United States. However, in 1997, a DoD official acknowledged that when the framework was signed, North Korea had already extracted enough fissile material to build at least one nuclear warhead, and perhaps more. In other words, North Korea had joined Israel as an undeclared but assumed nuclear power.¹²⁸

Then, between 11 and 13 May, 1998, India conducted no less than five underground nuclear explosions, the first such test since its “peaceful nuclear explosion” in 1974. Within two weeks, Pakistan responded in kind and surprised US intelligence agencies by exploding five nuclear devices of its own, becoming the seventh confirmed (and ninth suspected) member of the nuclear club. These dueling tests sparked fears of a

¹²⁶ Les Aspin, Secretary of Defense, *Report on the Bottom-Up Review* (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Secretary of Defense, October 1993), available online at <http://www.fas.org/man/docs/bur/index.html>, accessed on June 20, 2008.

¹²⁷ “Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons [NPT].”

¹²⁸ Siegfried S. Hecker, “Report on North Korean Nuclear Weapon Program,” Stanford University, Center for International Security and Cooperation, November 15, 2006, available online at <http://www.fas.org/nuke/guide/dprk/nuke/hecker1106.pdf>; and “North Korean Nuclear Weapons Program,” available online at <http://www.fas.org/nuke/guide/dprk/nuke/index.html>. Both sites were accessed on June 20, 2008.

By the end of the 1990s an increasing number of national security experts were warning of the dangers and implications of nuclear proliferation.

nuclear conflict between the two nuclear rivals, and were followed by worldwide condemnation and the imposition of sanctions on both parties by the United States.¹²⁹

Given these and other developments, such as the widespread belief that Iraq was attempting to rebuild its nuclear program, it is hardly surprising that by the end of the 1990s an increasing number of national security experts were warning of the dangers and implications of nuclear proliferation. For example, the US Commission on National Security/21st Century, also known as the Hart-Rudman Commission, argued in 2000 that preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction would be one of the highest priorities for the United States over the next quarter century.¹³⁰ However, despite such warnings, US defense strategy lagged in elevating the threat of nuclear proliferation.

Between 2001 and 2006, however, several events further increased US concern regarding the spread of nuclear weapons. For example, in 2002, North Korea openly acknowledged it had continued clandestine nuclear weapons testing after signing the 1994 framework agreement, and one year later it officially claimed to have several nuclear weapons. In October 2006 North Korea conducted an underground nuclear explosion, making it the eighth confirmed nuclear-armed state. North Korea is now believed to have extracted and processed enough weapons-grade plutonium to build between six and eight nuclear fission bombs.¹³¹

Perhaps the most dramatic example of the dangers inherent in nuclear proliferation occurred in December 2001, as Pakistan and India nearly found themselves at war after an attack on India's Parliament by militants from the disputed province of Kashmir. The attackers were believed by many to be supported by Pakistan's intelligence service and perhaps even the Pakistani government; as a result, India promptly mobilized its land, sea, and air forces, leading to reciprocal mobilization on the part of Pakistan.¹³² Tensions mounted, and "By the end of May [2002], it appeared that India and Pakistan were sleepwalking into a nuclear exchange that threatened to wipe out most of the north-west of the Indian subcontinent with minimum casualties

¹²⁹ Howard Diamond, "India Conducts Nuclear Tests; Pakistan Follows Suit," *Arms Control Today*, May 1998, accessed at http://www.armscontrol.org/act/1998_05/hd1my98.asp on July 11, 2008.

¹³⁰ The United States Commission on National Security/21st Century, *Seeking a National Security Strategy: A Concert for Preserving Security and Promoting Freedom*, April 15, 2000, p. 8, accessed at <http://www.fas.org/man/docs/nwc/PhaseII.pdf> on July 11, 2008.

¹³¹ Hecker, "Report on North Korean Nuclear Weapon Program," and "North Korean Nuclear Weapons Program." In June 2008, the United States agreed to remove North Korea from the State Department's list of state sponsors of terrorism in exchange for a declaration of its nuclear activities. That declaration, however, only addressed Pyongyang's production of plutonium and omitted any information about its assembled nuclear weapons, its alleged uranium enrichment program, or any efforts on its part to share nuclear technology with other nations. Helene Cooper, "Bush Rebuffs Hard-Liners to Ease North Korean Curbs," *New York Times*, June 27, 2008; and Peter Speigel and Barbara Demick, "North Korea Wins U.S. Concessions," *Los Angeles Times*, June 27, 2008.

¹³² Steve Coll, "The Stand-Off," *The New Yorker*, February 13, 2006.

estimated at 20 million.”¹³³ Alarmed over the possibility of nuclear war, the US government ordered all non-essential citizens to leave India on May 31. While US strong-arm tactics ultimately helped defuse the situation, the imminent danger of nuclear war was far more palpable than at any time since the 1962 Cuban missile crisis.

For the past several years the world has been focused on Iran’s efforts to develop a nuclear capability and perhaps nuclear weapons. In February 2003, the UN nuclear weapons watchdog agency, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), announced that the Iranians had built a uranium enrichment facility near Natanz. The plant was “extremely advanced,” with hundreds of gas centrifuges ready to produce the enriched uranium necessary to construct atomic weapons, and “the parts for a thousand others ready to be assembled.”¹³⁴ This constituted a serious violation of Iran’s commitment as a signatory of the NPT. Moreover, an inspection in June 2003 turned up traces of highly enriched uranium, one of the two primary fissile materials used to fuel nuclear weapons. Under pressure from the international community, in December 2003, Iran voluntarily signed the Additional Protocol to the Non-Proliferation Treaty, which allowed UN nuclear inspectors to conduct more intrusive inspections of Iranian nuclear facilities. In November 2004, after revelations that Iran had covertly received nuclear assistance from Pakistan, the IAEA demanded that Iran suspend its nuclear-related activities until an investigation could take place. Although Iran agreed to temporarily abide by the IAEA’s resolution, in August 2005 it announced that it would resume its uranium conversion efforts, and was consequently found in non-compliance with its obligations to the IAEA. By late 2006 Iran’s defiance and its continuing efforts to enrich uranium led to UN-approved sanctions against Tehran.¹³⁵ Concern over Iran’s nuclear ambitions remains a matter of grave concern for the international community.

As noted above, concerns over Iran’s pursuit of a nuclear capability were intertwined with another major development that contributed to the growing concerns over proliferation: the discovery of an underground Pakistani nuclear proliferation network, headed by the “father of the Pakistani bomb,” Abdul Qadeer Khan, often referred to as A.Q. Khan. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, aided by people on four different continents, Khan managed to buy and sell nuclear components to Libya, North Korea, and Iran, and offered to do so for Iraq, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Syria, despite existing NPT monitoring and compliance regimes. Indeed, US and foreign intelligence agencies did not manage to unearth and penetrate Khan’s network until 2000, which ultimately led to the 2003 seizure of uranium-enrichment gas-centrifuge com-

Concern over Iran’s nuclear ambitions remains a matter of grave concern for the international community.

¹³³ Gurharpal Singh, “On the Nuclear Precipice: India, Pakistan, and the Kashmir Crisis” available online at http://www.opendemocracy.net/conflict-india_pakistan/article_194.jsp, accessed on June 21, 2008.

¹³⁴ Massimo Calabresi, “Iran’s Nuclear Threat,” *Time*, March 8, 2003, available online at <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,430649,00.html>, accessed on June 21, 2008.

¹³⁵ Nuclear Threat Initiative, Iran Profile: Nuclear Overview, accessed at http://www.nti.org/e_research/profiles/Iran/Nuclear/index_1822.html on July 11, 2008.

ponents on their way to a Libyan secret nuclear weapons program. When confronted with the evidence, and under intense pressure from the United States, Libya agreed to renounce its nuclear program. In addition, it provided information which ultimately resulted in Khan's arrest and the dismantlement of his network.¹³⁶ Experts were surprised by the network's global reach, and stunned that it could operate so freely despite apparent widespread support for the NPT. As one nuclear-terrorism expert observed:

The fact that a very small number of individuals—nobody believes that A.Q. Khan was acting alone—can create a network that provides some of the most worrisome states on the planet with the technology needed to produce nuclear weapons is very troubling. It shows that the NPT regime is only as strong as its weakest links. We can secure 90 percent of the nuclear material to very high levels, but if the other 10 percent is vulnerable to theft, we still won't have solved the problem because we're dealing with intelligent adversaries who will be able to find and exploit the weak points.¹³⁷

In sum, North Korea's accession into the nuclear-armed club, Iran's continued, if uncertain, nuclear activities,¹³⁸ a near-nuclear war in Southern Asia, the discovery of an underground globe-spanning nuclear proliferation network, and increasing displeasure with the NPT bargain all worked to sharpen US focus on nuclear proliferation and counter-proliferation. US efforts shaped into two distinct but related challenges: preventing non-state/terrorist groups and hostile or unstable regional states from acquiring and using nuclear weapons.

PREVENTING CATASTROPHIC TERRORISM

After September 11, 2001, and informed by the apparent weakening of the NPT regime, President Bush concluded that the greatest danger facing the United States was “the world's most dangerous people” (e.g., violent extremists and terrorists) getting their hands on “the world's most dangerous weapons” (i.e., nuclear weapons).¹³⁹ He is not alone. As one expert explains:

¹³⁶ David Albright and Corey Hinderstein, “Unraveling the A.Q. Khan and Future Proliferation Networks,” *Washington Quarterly*, Spring 2005, p. 111.

¹³⁷ Quoted in Mary H. Cooper, “Nuclear Proliferation and Terrorism,” *CQ Researcher*, April 2, 2004, p. 301.

¹³⁸ In November 2007 a US National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) judged that Iran had halted its active nuclear weapons program in fall 2003, and that it remained halted as of mid-2007. However, the estimate also judged that “Iran probably would be technically capable of producing enough highly enriched uranium for a weapon sometime during the 2010-2015 time frame” if it chose to do. Office of the Director of National Intelligence, *Iran: Nuclear Intentions and Capabilities*, November 2007, accessed at http://www.dni.gov/press_releases/20071203_release.pdf on July 11, 2008.

¹³⁹ Fareed Zakaria, “Tackle the Nuke Threat,” *Newsweek*, June 21, 2004.

The worst potential WMD problem is nuclear terrorism, because it combines the unparalleled destructive power of nuclear weapons with the apocalyptic motivations of terrorists against which deterrence, let alone dissuasion or diplomacy, is likely to be ineffective.¹⁴⁰

The explosion of a nuclear weapon on US territory would be a momentous, catalytic event. As one expert noted, “A nuclear 9/11 in Washington or New York would change American history in ways that the original 9/11 didn’t.”¹⁴¹ When thinking about the way a terrorist-sponsored nuclear attack on the United States might change American history, analysts at the US Department of Homeland Security divided the threat between catastrophic and limited attacks. The former might cause *at least* ten thousand casualties and 50 to 100 billion dollars in economic damage, and would produce a “major global policy shift.” The latter might cause between 100 to a few thousand deaths, serious economic impacts confined to a single region, and have some global political effects.¹⁴² Based on the different scales of the two attacks, the focus of homeland security officials is on preventing a catastrophic attack involving the explosion of a fission-type bomb (or a widespread biological attack) in a major urban area, which would likely force millions of Americans to flee major cities and trigger a worldwide economic depression.¹⁴³

Terrorist groups are well aware of the potentially devastating effects of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, and are actively seeking to acquire them. For example, in 1999, when responding to a comment from a *Time* reporter that the US believed he was seeking nuclear (and chemical) weapons,” Osama bin Laden replied:

Acquiring weapons for the defense of Muslims is a religious duty. If I have indeed acquired these weapons, then I thank God for enabling me to do so. And if I seek to acquire these weapons, I am carrying out a duty. It would be a sin for Muslims not to try to possess the weapons that would prevent the infidels from inflicting harm on Muslims.¹⁴⁴

At present, there is no evidence to suggest that bin Laden’s al Qaeda or any other terrorist organization has actually acquired any nuclear weapons. However, they actively continue to seek them. As John Rood, the US Undersecretary of State for Arms Control, recently stated, “Regrettably we continue to see indications . . . [that] the very

Terrorist groups are well aware of the potentially devastating effects of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, and are actively seeking to acquire them.

¹⁴⁰ Carter, “How to Counter WMD,” p. 76.

¹⁴¹ Graham Allison, Director of Harvard University’s Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, as cited in Cooper, “Nuclear Proliferation and Terrorism,” p. 299.

¹⁴² The distinction between catastrophic and limited attacks is not limited to nuclear weapons. The former also includes the use of some biological agents or an epidemic that might cause the closure of US borders for up to 90 days. Tellingly, a radiological device is included in the limited category. See Steve Coll, “The Unthinkable,” dated March 12, 2007, available online at http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2007/03/12/070312fa_fact_coll?, accessed June 21, 2008.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Cited in Rumsfeld, *2006 Quadrennial Defense Review Report*, p. 33.

terrorist groups [with whom] we are most concerned [are] making concerted efforts to acquire nuclear capabilities with the express intent to use them...”¹⁴⁵ As just one example, in September 2007, the Nuclear Threat Initiative posted a translation of a web message attributed to Abu Ayyub al-Masri, then-leader of al Qaeda in Iraq. Al-Masri called for experts in:

...chemistry, physics, electronics, media and all other sciences, especially nuclear scientists and explosive experts. We are in dire need of you... The field of jihad can satisfy your scientific ambitions, and the large American bases are good places to test your unconventional weapons...¹⁴⁶

Fortunately, concerns over the threat of nuclear terrorism are not limited to the United States. In 2006, US President George Bush and Russian President Vladimir Putin announced the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism. The focus of the effort is to reinforce controls over nuclear facilities and materials in order to prevent such groups from accessing them. Since then, 73 countries have joined the initiative, including all five original NPT nuclear states. As Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Kislyak explains, “Each year we see a considerable increase in membership of the initiative and that happens because there is an understanding that terrorism is a global, common threat that requires a global response.”¹⁴⁷ This effort is complemented by the broader Proliferation Security Initiative and other overt and covert US counter-proliferation efforts.

RESPONDING TO A FUTURE NUCLEAR EVENT

What actions should the US government take *the day after* an American city is hit with a nuclear explosion?

The Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism is just one answer to a provocative question posed by former Senator Sam Nunn, who asked: On the day after a nuclear weapon goes off in an American city, what would we wish we had done to prevent it? In view of the determined efforts of terrorists and other violent extremists to gain nuclear weapons, an increasing number of respected defense experts are asking an even more provocative question: What actions should the US government take *the day after* an American city is hit with a nuclear explosion? When answering this question, some believe that Washington must stop “pretending” that its role would be to support local responders, state and local governments, and that the Federal Government instead plan to “quickly step in and take full responsibility and devote all of its resources, including those of the Department of Defense,” to manage the crisis.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁵ “Extremist Groups Continue to Seek Nuclear Weapons: US Official,” available online at <http://afp.google.com/article/ALeqM5ia48Tg7W5oPCzyBnJoR9aPDwXhGQ>, accessed on June 21, 2008.

¹⁴⁶ Coll, “The Unthinkable.”

¹⁴⁷ “Extremist Groups Continue to Seek Nuclear Weapons: US Official.”

¹⁴⁸ William J. Perry, Ashton B. Carter, and Michael M. May, “After the Bomb,” *The New York Times*, June 12, 2007.

This is sound advice. Faced by the potential catastrophic threat of nuclear terrorism, the United States must pursue two tracks of emergency preparedness: prevention, and response and recovery. The former depends greatly on intelligence gathering, especially human intelligence, as well as overt and covert actions designed to disrupt enemy efforts to acquire and employ nuclear weapons. The latter requires a unified national effort for response and recovery operations. The first step toward this end was the National Response Framework, published in January 2008, which outlines the basic strategy, principles, and national, state, and local governmental structures needed to forge a truly national response to a nuclear event inside US borders. In the future, national training and exercises will be needed to test, coordinate, and hone all aspects and levels of the nation's response plans and organizations, and to determine the best role for active US armed forces as well as the National Guard in so-called "consequence management" situations.¹⁴⁹

LIMITING THE NUMBER OF NUCLEAR-ARMED STATES

Preventing nuclear terrorism is only one of the problems associated with the increased danger of a proliferated world. A complementary challenge—and one that may become increasingly difficult—is limiting the number of nuclear-armed states.

A further increase in the number of nuclear-armed states is undesirable for a variety of reasons. First, it is not clear that these states would view nuclear weapons in the same way that the political leadership of the United States and other major powers have come to view them—as weapons of last resort. Whether the result of cultural differences, intense and ongoing rivalries with their neighbors, internal divisions or some other factor, there are doubts as to whether regimes such as those in Iran, North Korea, and Pakistan would be as hesitant to resort to nuclear use as the earlier generation of nuclear powers has proven to be. Second, the acquisition of nuclear weapons by hostile regimes threatens to disrupt the existing military balance by significantly restricting the United States' ability and willingness to project power in the event of a crisis. Third, nuclear proliferation may embolden hostile regimes to engage in ambiguous forms of aggression, such as support for terrorist and insurgent groups. For example, during the 1990s, Pakistan's government supported Kashmiri insurgents in an effort to draw India into a costly and potentially exhausting counterinsurgency war. Pakistan's decision to support the insurgents was bolstered by its nuclear capability, which made it unlikely that India would respond by undertaking a large-scale conventional military operation against Pakistan.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁹ James M. Loy, "When 'Inevitable' Isn't Inevitable," *Washington Times*, April 26, 2008, p. 11.

¹⁵⁰ Guarav Kampani, "Placing the Indo-Pakistani Standoff in Perspective," Center for Nonproliferation Studies, Monterey Institute of International Studies, n.d., p. 4, accessed at <http://cns.miis.edu/pubs/reports/pdfs/indopak.pdf> on July 11, 2008

Fourth, given the significant levels of domestic instability that plague several existing and prospective nuclear states, it is possible that current regimes could collapse or be overthrown. The security of their nuclear weapons would then be jeopardized, and the likelihood of a nuclear weapon or fissile material finding its way into the hands of terrorist groups would increase substantially. Finally, there is the prospect that proliferation will beget further proliferation, as the acquisition of nuclear weapons by one state could set off a chain reaction, magnifying each of the problems listed above. Already, fears that Iran is pursuing a nuclear weapons capability have raised the possibility of precisely this effect.¹⁵¹

Given these potential consequences, establishing a strong global counterproliferation regime and limiting, if not rolling back, the number of nuclear-armed states will undoubtedly be one of the most pressing and enduring US national security challenges of the 21st century.

OPERATIONAL CHALLENGES

The principal national security objective with regard to the rise of a proliferated world is to prevent the use of nuclear weapons, either as means of aggression or coercion, against the United States or its allies. Other critical objectives are to defeat a nuclear attack—or failing that, to limit the damage to the United States or its allies—and to maintain the capacity to respond promptly and effectively in the event of a nuclear attack, whatever its source.

If states like North Korea and Iran acquire nuclear weapons, US freedom of action will almost certainly be constrained in parts of the world where America has vital interests and key allies. The United States will no longer be able to presume that in wartime it will have a free hand to attack even a minor nuclear power's strategic assets. It will be vital to develop policies, strategies and capabilities to address these new circumstances, which may involve operations such as a blockade or limited strikes against the target state's externally-deployed forces (for instance those operating in the global commons).

Steady-state, preventive operations include the following operational tasks:

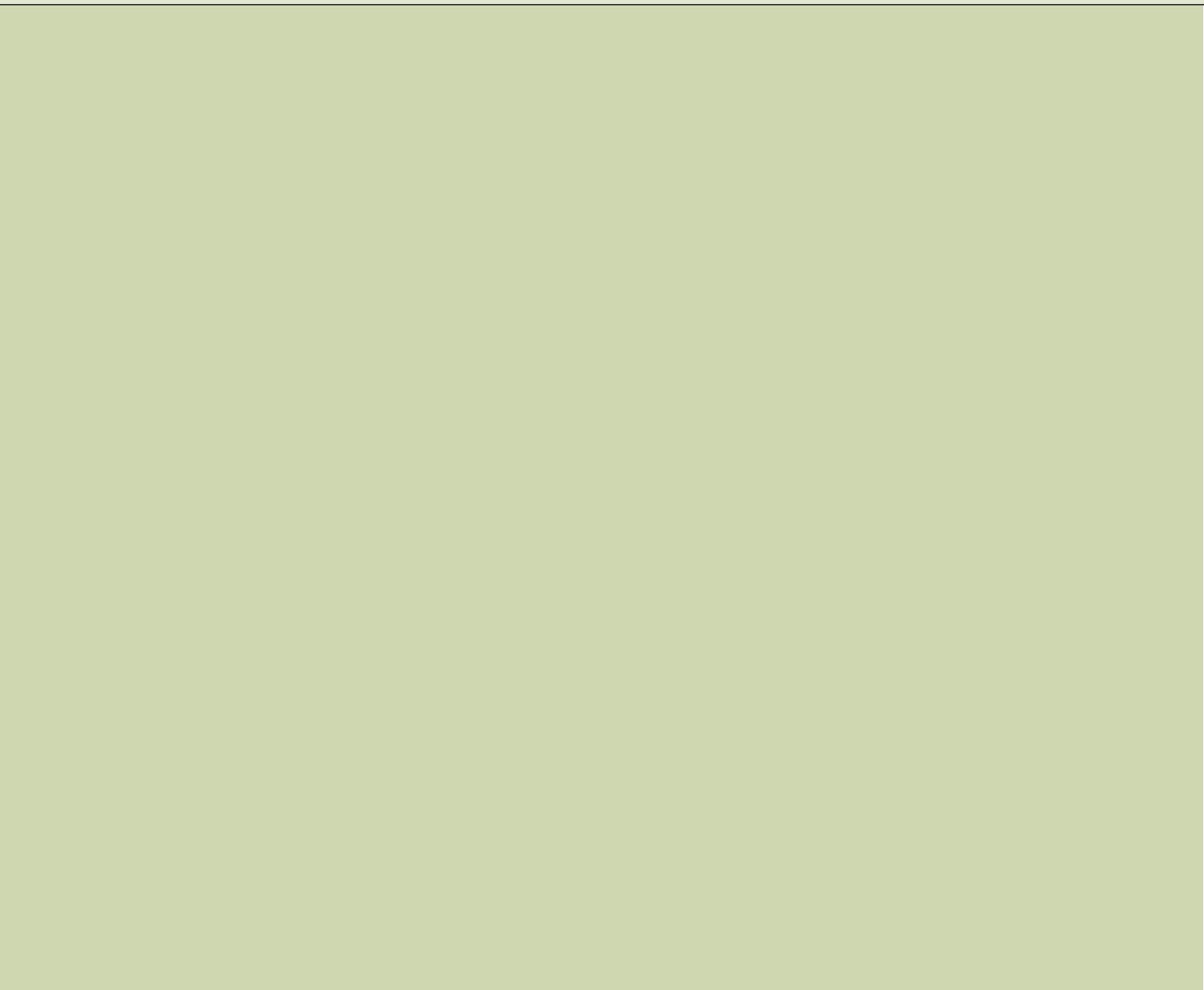
- Maintaining a flexible, survivable nuclear strike capability to respond promptly and effectively to a wide range of contingencies involving preventive, preemptive and retaliatory strikes against both state and nonstate enemies.
- Developing the capability to respond promptly and devastatingly through non-nuclear means (e.g., guided weapons; cyber strikes) to a limited nuclear attack on the United States or its allies, to include the ability to effect regime change against

If states like North Korea and Iran acquire nuclear weapons, US freedom of action will almost certainly be constrained in parts of the world where America has vital interests and key allies.

¹⁵¹ William J. Broad and David E. Sanger, "With an Eye on Iran, Rivals Also Want Nuclear Power," *New York Times*, April 15, 2007; Joby Warrick, "Spread of Nuclear Capability is Feared," *Washington Post*, May 12, 2008, p. 1.

minor nuclear powers. This may involve conducting long-range, distributed combined-arms insertions against an enemy who retains the ability to threaten nuclear attack.

- > Developing the full range of defenses against nuclear attack, to include attacks by traditional means (e.g., ballistic missiles; aircraft and cruise missiles) and non-traditional means (e.g., covert insertion).
- > Creating the ability to mitigate the consequences of a limited nuclear attack on the United States or its allies in such a manner as to maintain freedom of action to preserve collective interests at home and abroad.
- > Fielding the capability to provide significant disaster relief to third-party countries following a nuclear exchange.
- > Improving the ability to identify the source of a nuclear attack, in part by improving nuclear forensics, but also through enhanced intelligence.
- > Building and expanding global counterproliferation partnerships, strengthening NPT compliance and enforcement regimes, and improving human intelligence dedicated to counterproliferation.
- > Helping friendly governments improve their controls over their nuclear weapons, fissionable materials, and weapons production infrastructure.
- > Enhancing the ability to detect, identify, locate, tag and track nuclear weapons and materials promptly and over extended periods of time.



CONCLUSION

The United States is confronted by three principal, most likely protracted, challenges to its national security: the ongoing war with radical Islamist groups, a potentially more assertive and confrontational China as it rises to great power status, and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, especially nuclear weapons.

These challenges to US security diverge widely from those confronted in the Cold War, now nearly two decades in the past. They also bear little resemblance to the major combat operations fought since the end of the Cold War, particularly the two Gulf Wars that resulted in overwhelming US victories. Indeed, they differ significantly in form from all the major threats the United States confronted in the 20th century, instead assuming competitive forms that avoid confronting the US military in conventional warfare.

In addition, while the United States' principal strategic focus throughout the 20th century accorded Europe top priority, today's challenges reside principally in an extended arc stretching from the Maghreb to the Korean peninsula. In Southwest and Central Asia, both Salafi-Takfiri and Khomeinist Groups seek to undermine or overthrow the existing order in the Middle East and to replace it with a Muslim-dominated "New Order" which presumes Israel's dissolution. The New Order would exclude all foreign influence, to include allowing the United States access to areas of vital interest, such as the Persian Gulf.

To achieve their goals, both groups hope to mobilize mass support from alienated, frustrated and disadvantaged Muslim populations and leverage modern information technologies and increasingly modern weaponry to undermine the governance abilities of local governments, eventually exhausting their opponents, to include the United States.

These groups have been effective in pursuing cost-imposing strategies against the United States, inducing Washington to divert major resources to defending the US homeland, as well as to the populations and infrastructure in countries like

Stretching from Southwest to Northeast Asia, the United States faces the prospect of a nuclear “arc of instability.”

Afghanistan and Iraq. While the United States is actively at war with Salafi-Takfiri militant Muslim groups, America (with Israel) is also engaged in a war with Iran’s Khomeinist proxies in Lebanon and Palestine (Hezbollah and Hamas, respectively) and Iraq (e.g., Mahdi Army).

In the East Asian littoral, the United States also confronts a challenge from a rising China. While US strategic interests would be served by a strong China that worked with the states of the developed world to address the dangers posed by radical Islamism and WMD proliferation, the United States must also hedge against a China whose priority is to create a hegemonic “New Order” of its own in Asia, or to work more actively and directly against US global interests. Unfortunately, there is considerable evidence that Beijing’s priority is to pursue both objectives. China not only seems intent on surpassing the United States economically, but on challenging its security (and those of its allies) through military means. Specifically, the PLA is aggressively pursuing capabilities to field extensive anti-access/area-denial capabilities designed to keep the United States from assisting in the defense of its East Asian allies. China is also fielding systems capable of denying the United States access to the global commons — space and cyberspace in particular — which are crucial to America’s security and economic well-being.

Stretching from Southwest to Northeast Asia, the United States faces the prospect of a nuclear “arc of instability.” Israel, Pakistan, India, China, and now North Korea are all either announced or suspected nuclear powers. Iran is actively pursuing nuclear weapons, despite vigorous diplomatic efforts to dissuade them from pursuing this path. If Iran succeeds in its efforts, other nations — Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Turkey among them — may feel compelled to follow suit in order to have a national deterrent against an Iranian bomb.

These states are pragmatic in their strategic reasoning; this is why it may prove very difficult, if not impossible, to prevent them from acquiring a nuclear arsenal. They seek to gain an advantage over local adversaries (e.g., Iran over Israel), to keep the United States out of areas of vital interest, and to acquire greater operational flexibility, such the use of ambiguous aggression (as seen in Iran’s support of Hezbollah, Hamas, and Iraqi Shia militias) as a means of exhausting US efforts to bring stability to the region. However, the nations that possess these weapons are also exceedingly nationalistic, and may therefore be more unpredictable in nuclear crises.

These three challenges are interrelated in significant ways. A number of existing or prospective nuclear-armed states are linked to both brands of radical Islamist extremists. There is no shortage of worrying scenarios. North Korea could sell fissile material to terrorist groups, or Pakistan could lose control of its nuclear arsenal. Should Iran gain access to nuclear weapons, it might be emboldened to more aggressively spread its Khomeinist vision, and spur a new round of nuclear proliferation. China has links to Iran by virtue of its energy interests, and could form a cross-cutting alliance with Iran. Indeed, energy links all three of these challenges.

In sum, the core challenges identified above are sufficiently severe, their potential to threaten the American people's security, institutions, and way of life sufficiently great, and their character sufficiently enduring as to require a comprehensive strategy similar to that which emerged from the Truman Administration's NSC-68 report and the Eisenhower Administration's so-called Solarium Project in the early Cold War period.¹⁵² This new strategy's objective should be to place the United States in the best possible position relative to each of these challenges, and, given the enduring character of these challenges, do so in a way that can be sustained over an extended period of time

This report elaborated on the key operational challenges that our military must be prepared to address. Making these adjustments will not be easy; the rapidly changing character of threats to US security over the past decade has not been matched by an equally rapid shift in the country's defense strategy and program. For instance, despite some notable exceptions, the Defense Department was slow to identify the emerging insurgency in Iraq following the end of major combat operations; slow to respond to the threat of improvised explosive devices; slow to accept the need for a larger Army to sustain an adequate rotation base between deployed and refitting brigades; slow to publish a counterinsurgency doctrine; and slow to replace worn-out or destroyed equipment. If the United States is this sluggish in adapting to existing threats, how well is the Defense Department preparing to address emerging threats?

Answering this question will be central in the 2009 Quadrennial Defense Review, as it will determine the urgency and scope of future change. Answering this question will also be at the center of forthcoming Long Haul reports. To fulfill its role in providing for the country's security, the US military must reorient itself to meet new challenges at the operational and tactical levels of war. Given the energies being devoted by the United States' rivals, both existing and prospective, it is imperative that the incoming administration take steps to adapt our military to the realities of a new competitive environment. For, as Sir Francis Bacon observed, "He who will not apply new remedies must expect new evils."

The US military must reorient itself to meet new challenges at the operational and tactical levels of war.

¹⁵² President Truman directed a major review of the US strategic posture following the Soviet Union's testing of an atomic bomb in August 1949. The resulting report, titled NSC-68, had a major and enduring influence on US Cold War era strategy. The Solarium Project was undertaken at the direction of President Eisenhower shortly after he took office. Its findings exerted a significant influence on NSC 162/2, which also exerted an important and long-term influence on America's Cold War strategy.

About the Authors

Andrew F. Krepinevich, Jr., President, is an expert on US military strategy, policy and operations, military revolutions, and counterinsurgency. He gained extensive strategic planning experience on the personal staff of three secretaries of defense, in the Department of Defense's Office of Net Assessment, and as a member of the National Defense Panel, the Defense Science Board Task Force on Joint Experimentation, and the Joint Forces Command's Transformation Advisory Board. He is the author of numerous CSBA reports on such topics as the Quadrennial Defense Review, alliances, the war in Iraq, and transformation of the US military. He has provided expert testimony before congressional committees, as well as academic and other professional groups. His work has been published in *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *The Washington Post*, and professional and public policy journals, including *Foreign Affairs* and *Issues in Science and Technology*. He received the 1987 Furniss Award for his book, *The Army and Vietnam*. He is the author of the forthcoming book, *7 Deadly Scenarios*. A graduate of West Point, he retired from the US Army in 1993. Dr. Krepinevich holds a Master of Public Affairs and Ph.D. from Harvard University.

Robert Martinage, Senior Fellow, is an expert on defense strategy, military modernization, special operations, military revolutions, and advanced technology and future warfare. He has over 14 years of experience designing, conducting, and analyzing wargames for the Department of Defense (DoD). He has written several research papers that have been circulated widely among senior DoD officials. He recently authored *The Global War on Terrorism: An Assessment*, which was highlighted by the Council on Foreign Relations as a "must read," and co-authored *Dissuasion Strategy* (with Andrew Krepinevich). He has served as a consultant to the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) for seven years. Mr. Martinage received his Bachelor of Arts from Dartmouth College and holds a Master of Arts from The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University.

Robert Work, Vice President of Strategic Studies at CSBA, is an expert on defense strategy, defense transformation, and maritime affairs. During his 27-year career in the Marine Corps, Mr. Work held a range of key command, leadership, and management positions, including Senior Aide to Navy Secretary Richard Danzig. He has authored a series of reports on future defense challenges, undersea warfare, power projection against regional nuclear powers, and future anti-access/area denial networks. Mr. Work earned a Master of Science in Systems Management from the University of Southern California; a Master of Science in Space Operations from the Naval Postgraduate School; and a Master in International Public Policy from the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies.

Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments

1667 K Street, NW, Suite 900

Washington, DC 20006

Tel. 202-331-7990 • Fax 202-331-8019

www.CSBAonline.org