



# SSQ

## STRATEGIC STUDIES QUARTERLY

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### What's Wrong with America's Nuclear Hawks?

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Andrew J. Bacevich

Reviewed by: John Coffey, PhD

# Minimum Deterrence and its Critics

Three things came to mind while writing “Remembrance of Things Past: The Enduring Value of Nuclear Weapons.”<sup>1</sup> First, the intent was to reinvigorate debate within the policy-making community regarding nuclear weapons; second, to introduce the idea of minimum deterrence;<sup>2</sup> and third, to sketch out a force structure suitable for the United States to achieve minimum deterrence. Judging from the attention the article received, we were successful in our first bid, less successful in the second, and largely unsuccessful in our third.<sup>3</sup> Before addressing our critics, it is important to clarify the meaning of “minimum deterrence” and specify how the number 311 was derived.

## Minimum Deterrence

Minimum deterrence is an argument about states, security, and nuclear weapons.<sup>4</sup> It makes three assumptions. First, minimum deterrence assumes that all states strive to survive; all statesmen want a state to rule. Second, it assumes that nuclear weapons produce political effects; that is, they compel statesmen to behave cautiously in the face of grave danger. This cautiousness produces restraint, which shores up international stability. Third, minimum deterrence assumes that large arsenals buy statesmen little. As in other areas of competition, there comes a point of diminishing returns, and with nuclear weapons that point comes quickly. This presupposes that statesmen are not sensitive to the actual number of nuclear weapons a state may possess. The mere fact that a state may have a nuclear weapon or seek to acquire one is enough to condition them to act cautiously, even in times of crises. As Steve Walt aptly put it, “American policymakers clearly understand the logic of minimum deterrence or they would not be so worried when a state like North Korea or Iran makes a move to join the nuclear club.”<sup>5</sup> In other words, they freely recognize that a handful of nuclear weapons in the hands of a hostile country can constrain what we can do to that country. If a small number of weapons can produce such sobriety on our part, why do we need thousands?

A small number of nuclear weapons is all that is needed for states to achieve relative security. Security is always relative, and deterrence is no different. As Bernard Brodie once described it, the effectiveness of

deterrence “must be measured not only in terms of the power it holds at bay, but the incentives to aggression which form the pressure behind that power.”<sup>6</sup> In effect, nuclear weapons socialize statesmen to the dangers of adventurism, which conditions them to set up formal and informal sets of rules that constrain behavior. Statesmen do not want to be part of a system that constrains them, but that is the kind of system that results among nuclear powers. Each is conditioned by the capabilities of the other, and the relationship that emerges is one tempered by caution despite the composition, goals, or desires of its leaders. In short, leaders of nuclear powers are risk averse; they must act with deliberate restraint, even if this is not their preference.<sup>7</sup>

Leaders in Russia, China, and the United States understand this. Adopting a minimum deterrent strategy, China’s nuclear numbers remain relatively small compared to those held by Russia and the United States. Yet, despite these rather large nuclear inequities, China continues to modernize its conventional capabilities, extending its influence throughout the region. How does one explain this behavior? China has reasoned that its small nuclear arsenal is sufficient to deter its most powerful rivals. There is little Russia or the United States can do, militarily, to dissuade China from pursuing its armament program. The three countries have, tacitly, entered into a period of mutual deterrence; nothing official has been declared, but all know that the stakes are too high for anyone to make a run, militarily, at the other.

If leaders of the big three understand this, others do too, which is why the slow, steady spread of nuclear weapons is likely to continue. Unlike the spread that occurred during the Cold War, however, where the United States and the Soviet Union raced to increase nuclear stockpiles, new nuclear states will mimic the behavior of India, Pakistan, and North Korea and keep their arsenals relatively small. In other words, as the number of nuclear states in the world increases, the actual number of weapons in the world will decrease. Much has been written about deterrence in the post-Cold War world, but this has been overlooked: The age of minimum deterrence has arrived.

### **311—All the Nukes you Need**

Nothing has drawn more attention than the number 311, so it is important to explain how it was derived.<sup>8</sup> First, we assumed that deterrence and

war winning are not the same thing. Second, we assumed that the nuclear triad is worth maintaining. Lastly, we assumed that the political effects produced by nuclear weapons do not stem from countervalue or counterforce targeting but from the destructive power of the weapons themselves.

A state does not have to demonstrate a capacity to win a nuclear war to deter one, because the devastating consequences of nuclear war are transparent, well understood, and universally recognized. Reflecting on this, McGeorge Bundy commented, "A decision that would bring even one hydrogen bomb on one city of one's own country would be recognized in advance as a catastrophic blunder; ten bombs on ten cities would be a disaster beyond history; and a hundred bombs on a hundred cities are unthinkable."<sup>9</sup> Along these lines, Brodie observed that "few people were unexcited or unimpressed with the first atomic weapons. That something tremendously important had happened was immediately understood by almost everyone."<sup>10</sup> That the United States would propose to turn over its nuclear weapons to an international governing council under the Baruch Plan at a time when it enjoyed an unbroken monopoly of nuclear weaponry testifies to the collective realization that these weapons were, in today's parlance, game changers. From the very beginning, nuclear weapons and policy were devised to prevent the outbreak of a nuclear war, not to win one.

Even in an age of minimum deterrence, readiness, survivability, and flexibility are vital ingredients of nuclear deterrence, and the nuclear triad appears to be the most effective scheme to achieve those aims. That a small state like Pakistan can achieve deterrence without one does not mean that the United States ought to abandon its. On the contrary, if small states could afford a nuclear triad, they would probably opt for one, because it enhances flexibility and complicates an adversary's task.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, it makes sense to maintain a land, sea, and air leg. The land component would be comprised of two ICBM squadrons of 50 Minuteman III missiles located at two different locations. These missiles would be spread over a large area in two wings, complicating enemy targeting. The naval component would be comprised of 192 SLBMs with 24 weapons loaded on each of eight *Ohio*-class submarines, with four in port at any given time. This would allow four fully armed submarines to simultaneously patrol both the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. The air component would include 19 B-2 bombers, which would provide the needed flexibility for escalation control and strategic signaling. While it would be ideal to enable the B-2s

to carry air-launched cruise missiles (ALCM) to give them standoff capability, this is not necessary to ensure a viable triad.

Lastly, the political effect of nuclear weapons does not stem from counter-value or counterforce targeting but from the destructive power of the weapons themselves.<sup>12</sup> Put another way, the mere prospect of the punishment delivered by nuclear weapons tames the most bellicose of statesmen. This cannot be overstated: one 300 Kt weapon is more than enough to destroy a city the size of London. If a bomb of that size were detonated above Trafalgar Square on a workday, approximately 240,000 people would die instantly and 410,000 casualties would be sustained. Nearly everything within a 3 km radius would be destroyed, with burn victims reaching out as far as Victoria Park. The same bomb detonated above Mumbai on a workday would kill over one million people and produce more than two million casualties.<sup>13</sup> Even if one were to assume the worst, a “bolt from the blue” where a state loses 50 percent of its nuclear capability to a first strike, a force of 311 weapons would allow that state to strike back over 150 times before it had to negotiate.<sup>14</sup> There is not a state on the planet that could withstand that sort of punishment or a leader who would run that sort of risk. So why would a state need thousands?

### **311 and Its Critics**

Apparently, there are several reasons.<sup>15</sup> First, critics contend that we overlook or downplay the importance of large numbers when considering deterrence. That Russia holds thousands of weapons and China hundreds makes a force of 311 untenable; fewer weapons means less target coverage, which means less deterrence in an uncertain world. Secondly, they claim a smaller force would be less efficient and more difficult to maintain than a larger one; a smaller force means a smaller industrial base, which means greater dependencies on a relatively small number of suppliers. This would result in a situation where one supplier’s actions could have a devastating impact on its competitors. Lastly, there is the issue of force management. Just how small can a force become before it does not resemble a force at all?

With respect to the first line of criticism, one must ask: How many nuclear weapons are needed to prevent nuclear war? Theoretically, the smallest number is two: one that an adversary might be able to take out with a first strike and one that it knows it cannot. Because deterrence holds as a result of a viable second-strike capability, that capability need



not be large. From a practical perspective, several second-strike nuclear weapons are more than enough to keep the most aggressive adversary at bay. To make this logic dramatic, let us put it to the test. Suppose an adversary was contemplating a first strike. The second question put to the leader would be: And which of our cities are you willing to give up in exchange? The example is illustrative for two reasons. First, strategy is not contingent upon the first move but the following ones.<sup>16</sup> Second, in high-stakes games like nuclear war, there are no viable second or third moves. Everything turns on deterring the first move, which makes the game relatively easy to understand and simple to play. Moreover, leaders understand this, which is why during the Cold War no one dared to move first.<sup>17</sup> But suppose someone did; what then? In a situation where deterrence broke down and an attack occurred, one need be prepared to fight a nuclear war. How many weapons does one need to fight a nuclear war? Again, the answer is simple: enough to muster a viable second-strike capability against your most dangerous opponent. Twenty-five years ago that meant thousands. But if the gradual spread of nuclear weapons has taught leaders anything, it is this: while numbers count, a small number of them are more than enough to deter an adversary, even one with comparatively larger numbers. The relative peace between India and Pakistan illustrates this idea.

Prior to the arrival of nuclear weapons on the subcontinent, India and Pakistan fought three times. In the summer of 1999, one year after nuclear tests were successfully conducted within both countries, another war erupted in the mountains along the line of control in Kashmir. Yet, the war in Kargil did not escalate beyond small-scale fighting. Why? Nuclear optimists stress the pacifying effect nuclear weapons played in resolving the crisis; pessimists claim both sides got lucky by avoiding nuclear war.<sup>18</sup> The truth might be somewhere in between, which is why Kargil should be considered a close call. Even in a close call like this one, both sides opted for something other than nuclear war, which says something about the pacifying effects of nuclear weapons. Because nothing threatens survival more than nuclear war, leaders restrain themselves from engaging in conflicts that could lead to all-out war. Although critics disagree, it seems fair to conclude that nuclear weapons have conditioned leaders on the subcontinent to act cautiously in the face of grave danger, even if they would prefer not to do so. Moreover, leaders on both sides seem to understand that while the use of nuclear weapons is to be avoided, that does not render

them useless. Quite the opposite; nuclear weapons might be the most politically useful weapons a state can possess.

Related to this idea is extended deterrence. Critics contend that a small number of nuclear weapons will prevent the United States from extending its nuclear deterrent to allies and friends who might be threatened by other nuclear states. One might think, "Thank goodness." Throughout the Cold War, America's policy of containment rested squarely on the shoulders of an extended deterrent regime, but that relationship was not always a happy one.<sup>19</sup> Despite American guarantees, France developed nuclear weapons of its own, highlighting the fact that security considerations are but one of many factors contributing to the development of a nuclear weapons program. In Taiwan, a reluctant America extended a security guarantee that took many forms over time and was reinforced by substantial arms sales and foreign assistance. In South Korea, the United States entered into a bilateral commitment reinforced with a large troop deployment and integrated military command. As is typical with such arrangements, America became something of a junior partner, having to yield to the demands of its ally, which is why alliances should be considered matters of expediency, not principle. Generally, states will shun alliances if they are strong enough to go it alone or think the burden of the commitments resulting from them outweighs the advantages. Therefore, when considering the virtues of extended deterrence, policymakers ought to ask: Are alliances useful?<sup>20</sup>

Alliances can be indirectly linked to the outbreak of war.<sup>21</sup> They have been related to an increase in arms expenditures, and serious disputes taking place during an arms race tend to escalate into wars. Beyond this indirect linkage, alliances have been associated with an increase in the number and types of belligerents who enter a war once it has begun.<sup>22</sup> As scholars have noted, "They engender larger, more complex conflicts, particularly when the war in question involves the key ally of a larger country. Alliances can decrease the interaction opportunities available to states and may stimulate intense competition over the acquisition of additional partners. Additionally, should competition for new allies result in the creation of extremely rigid blocs, the magnitude and severity of any war that is fought will be high, especially if these blocs possess relatively equal capabilities."<sup>23</sup> When nuclear weapons are added to this equation, things do not bode well for any state seeking to avoid nuclear war, which is why policymakers ought to be careful when devising security arrangements

based on alliances. Put another way, alliances might be necessary but they are not always useful. The corollary to this is simple: while extended deterrence might have been our fate, it should not automatically be our policy.

The second charge appears to be more problematic. Presumably, a smaller force would be less efficient and more difficult to maintain than a larger one because a smaller force would result in a smaller industrial base, which means greater dependencies on a relatively small number of suppliers. Theoretically, this is cause for concern, but in reality it is not. The entire nuclear weapons complex has been a government enterprise since the beginning. It currently consists of eight sites that research, develop, produce, procure, assemble, maintain, disassemble, and test the nuclear and nonnuclear components of the arsenal.<sup>24</sup> The production of nuclear weapons requires a very large capital investment and is characterized by the predominance of fixed costs and a single consumer of its products, the US government. Indeed, the same physical plant would be necessary to produce 10 or 1,000 nuclear weapons. This suggests it is a natural monopoly that has been controlled by the government for its entire existence. The supply of delivery vehicles, such as long-range bombers, booster rockets, and SSBNs, however, is subject to the vagaries of the marketplace, as consolidation of the defense industrial base over the past few decades makes clear.<sup>25</sup>

Lastly, there is the question of force management. Just how small can a force become until it does not resemble a force at all? That is a difficult question to answer. Certainly, large numbers can lead to organizational competencies and the development of a professional cadre. However, as originally suggested, a small force can also achieve those aims. The Navy's SEALs are selective, well funded, and effective. One might wonder how a nuclear force with similar qualities might look. For starters, it would attract the best candidates. To enhance recruitment, incentives might be offered; bonuses being one, prestige another. The services are expert at managing both, so this should not be too problematic. Nuclear warriors also deserve the best equipment, which gets back to designing, testing, and deploying new systems, if required. Lastly, there is effectiveness. In the nuclear arena, effectiveness is synonymous with security. Once upon a time the Strategic Air Command had a simple imprimatur: "Peace is our profession, deterrence is our mission." Those eight words galvanized American nuclear policy, operations, and security for some 50 years. What

words are used today to convey a similar message? The answer rests ably in the hands of others to decide.

## Conclusions

Security has always been relative, and deterrence is no different; a small number of nuclear weapons are all that is needed to achieve relative security. To be fair, 311 may not be the answer, but a smaller force is in our future. Importantly, a smaller force does not preclude designing, testing, or deploying new weapons and delivery systems, if required. Moreover, not all of the political or logistical challenges associated with reducing or redesigning the force have been factored into this analysis. These challenges will be substantial. However, if the United States makes nuclear reduction one of its goals, these challenges can be overcome. Small states have found ways to cope with small numbers for some time; countries like Britain and France have effectively sustained small nuclear forces; India, Pakistan, and China do so today. We are living in an age of minimum deterrence; American nuclear strategy can be devised accordingly.

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## Notes

1. James Wood Forsyth Jr., B. Chance Saltzman, and Gary Schaub Jr., "Remembrance of Things Past: The Enduring Value of Nuclear Weapons," *Strategic Studies Quarterly* 4, no. 1 (Spring 2010): 74–89.

2. Minimum deterrence is essentially a realist argument, but there are many realist authors and many forms of realism. The classical argument begins with Thucydides, Thomas Hobbes, and Niccolo Machiavelli. The theological argument is found in the works of Reinhold Niebuhr

and Herbert Butterfield. Nicholas Spykman and Alfred Thayer Mahan represent the geopolitics school. The modern account begins with Hans Morgenthau, E. H. Carr, and George Kennan. The English School is best represented in the work of Martin Wight and Hedley Bull. The contemporary argument is found in Kenneth Waltz, John Herz, Robert Tucker, Robert Osgood, and John Mearsheimer.

3. In major media, see Fareed Zakaria, "GPS: What in the World? Nuclear Magic Number," *CNN*, 4 April 2010, <http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/1004/04/fzgps.01.html>; David E. Hoffmann, "Despite New START, the U.S. and Russia Still Have Too Many Nuclear Weapons," *Washington Post*, 11 April 2010; Gary Schaub Jr. and James Forsyth Jr., "An Arsenal We Can All Live With," *New York Times*, 24 May 2010; and "Letters to the Editor, The Right Number of Nuclear Weapons?" *New York Times*, 31 May 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/01/opinion/101nuke.html>. Internet blog sites that discussed the article include Steven M. Walt, "All the Nukes You Can Use," *foreignpolicy.com*, 24 May 2010, <http://walt.foreignpolicy.com/category/topic/military>; Max Berman, "Air Force Strategists Say US Should Unilaterally Cut Nukes By 90 Percent," *Wonk Room*, 17 March 2010, <http://wonkroom.thinkprogress.org/2010/03/17/air-force-strategists-say-us-should-cut-nukes>; and Charli Carpenter, "USAF Strategists: US Should Drastically and Unilaterally Reduce Nuclear Arsenal," *Lawyers, Gun\$, and Money*, 17 March 2010, <http://www.lawyersgunsmoneyblog.com/?s=Schaub&x=0&y=0>.

4. The idea of minimum deterrence is not new. This version stems from work in security and peace studies, as well as arms control. See Freeman Dyson, *Disturbing the Universe* (New York: Harper and Row, 1979); and Leo Szilard, "Minimal Deterrence vs. Saturation Parity," in *Problems of National Strategy*, ed. Henry Kissinger (New York: Praeger, 1965). For one of the best discussions of the objectives of arms control, see Donald G. Brennan, "Setting the Goals of Arms Control," in *Arms Control, Disarmament, and National Security*, ed. Donald G. Brennan (New York: George Braziller, 1961). For what remains the finest work on the subject of mutual defense emphasis, see David Goldfischer, *The Best Defense: Policy Alternatives for U.S. Nuclear Security from the 1950s to the 1990s* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993).

5. Walt, "All the Nukes You Can Use."

6. Bernard Brodie, *Strategy in the Missile Age* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959), 275.

7. This theme reverberates throughout Kenneth Waltz's writings. See *Theory of International Politics* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1979). For a psychological account of this phenomenon, see Gary Schaub Jr., "Deterrence, Compellence, and Prospect Theory," *Political Psychology* 25, no. 2 (June 2004).

8. See "Letters to the Editor," *New York Times*, 28 May 2010.

9. McGeorge Bundy, "To Cap the Volcano," *Foreign Affairs* 48, no. 1 (October 1969): 9–10.

10. Brodie, *Strategy in the Missile Age*, 150.

11. Indeed, Israel has reported deployed nuclear weapons on submarines. See Martin Sieff, "Israel Buying 3 Submarines to Carry Nuclear Missiles," *Washington Times*, 1 July 1998; and Uzi Mahnaimi, "Israel Stations Nuclear Missile Subs off Iran," *Sunday Times*, 30 May 2010.

12. In "An Arsenal We Can All Live With," we incorrectly calculated the equivalent megatonnage (EMT) of our proposed force posture. It is closer to 190 EMT than 1,900—an arithmetic error that we regret but that does not change the basic logic of our argument.

13. International Commission on Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament (ICNND), *Eliminating Nuclear Threats: A Practical Agenda for Global Policymakers* (Canberra/Tokyo: ICNND, November 2009, December 2009), <http://www.icnnd.org/reference/reports/ent/index.html>. For the general argument, see Barbara G. Levi, Frank N. Von Hippel, and William Daugherty, "Civilian Casualties from 'Limited' Nuclear Attacks on the Soviet Union," *International Security* 12, no. 3 (Winter 1987/88).

14. We include among our 50 percent losses those weapons and their delivery systems that are not available or cannot reach their targets due to reliability and penetration issues. See Albert Wohlstetter, "The Delicate Balance of Terror," *Foreign Affairs* 37, no. 2 (April 1959).

15. We received a number of criticisms from scholars and practitioners and have clumped them together into three categories. Many insist that minimum deterrence is vague and insufficient to deter America's adversaries or secure American allies. See Lt Col Andrew S. Kovich, "The Arsenal We Need: A New 'New Look'," *The Wright Stuff* 5, no. 12 (10 June 2010), <http://www.au.af.mil/au/aunews/archive/2010/0512/0512Articles/Kovich0512.pdf>; and Ernie Regehr, "The Appeal, and Folly, of Minimum Deterrence," *CIGIOnline.org*, 19 March 2010, <http://www.cigionline.org/blogs/2010/3/appeal-and-folly-minimum-deterrence>; ). Others claim 311 is too large a number for current requirements. See William Hartung, "The Gravest Danger," *TPMCafe*, 28 May 2010, [http://tpmcafe.talkingpointsmemo.com/2010/05/28/the\\_gravest\\_danger/](http://tpmcafe.talkingpointsmemo.com/2010/05/28/the_gravest_danger/); and "Letters to the Editor: The Right Number of Nuclear Weapons?" *New York Times*, 31 May 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/01/opinion/l01nuke.html>. Additionally, we received a number of e-mails from officers and civilians regarding industrial base and force management issues. We have chosen to respect their privacy and have kept their names anonymous.

16. We credit and thank Everett Dolman for this statement.

17. During the Cuban missile crisis, President Kennedy and his team were not as interested in the number of weapons the Soviets might have placed in Cuba as they were in the fact that the Soviets had put any there in the first place. As the crisis evolved, each leader—Kennedy and Khrushchev—tried to avoid nuclear war.

18. See Kenneth Waltz and Scott Sagan, *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: A Debate Renewed* (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 2003).

19. See Parker H. Wright, "Bombs and Umbrellas: Defending U.S. Middle East Allies from a Nuclear Armed Iran" (Unpublished master's thesis, School of Advanced Air and Space Studies, Air University, June 2010).

20. See Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987); Glenn H. Snyder, *Alliance Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997); Jack Levy, "Alliance Formation and War Behavior: An Analysis of the Great Powers, 1945–1979," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 25, no. 4 (December 1981); and Michael Wallace, "Alliance Polarization: Cross-Cutting and International War, 1815–1964," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 17, no. 3 (December 1974).

21. The great powers in 1914 saw alliances as necessary, but most scholars believe the cataclysmic war that followed to have been at least in part caused by those very alliances. In both World Wars, Germany was emboldened to act by the presence of allies, who as the war progressed became more and more of a liability. This was especially true of Austria-Hungary (1914–18) and Fascist Italy (1940–43).

22. Jack S. Levy, "The Contagion of Great Power War Behavior, 1495–1975," *American Journal of Political Science* 26, no. 3 (August 1982).

23. See Charles W. Kegley and Gregory A. Raymond, *Alliances and the Preservation of the Postwar Peace: Weighing the Contribution in The Long Postwar Peace*, Charles W. Kegley Ed. (Harper Collins, 1991), pp. 270–290.

24. Charles R. Loeber, *Building the Bombs: A History of the Nuclear Weapons Complex*, 2d ed. (Albuquerque, NM: Sandia National Laboratories, 2005), 174–75.

25. See Eugene Gholz and Harvey M. Sapolsky, "Restructuring the U.S. Defense Industry," *International Security* 24, no. 3 (Winter 1999/2000); John Deutch, "Consolidation of the U.S. Industrial Base," *Acquisition Review Quarterly* (Fall 2001); and William E. Kovacic and Dennis E. Smallwood, "Competition Policy, Rivalries, and Defense Industry Consolidation," *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 8, no. 4 (Fall 1994).

# National Security Acquisition Challenges

*Jacques S. Gansler and William Lucyshyn*

THE NATIONAL security environment for the United States, and most other nations, in the coming years will experience a period of dramatic change. These changes have created urgency for transformation within the defense establishment—most particularly in acquisition. Specifically, three forces are driving this need for change: budgetary challenges, changing security requirements, and a changed military environment.

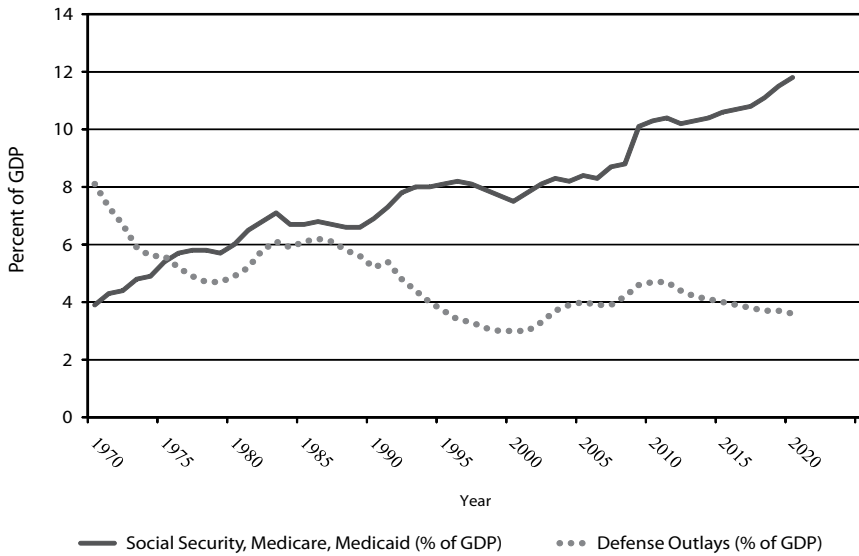
The United States faces several long-term budgetary challenges, and the impact they will have on the domestic economy will directly contribute to the ability of the DoD to modernize and transform for the twenty-first century. Since 9/11 the US defense budget has skyrocketed, reaching around \$700 billion in 2010, including “supplementals.” Perhaps most important will be the projected rapidly increasing mandatory spending on programs such as Social Security and Medicare as baby boomers age. The US Census Bureau projects that by 2020 the number of people in the US population between the ages of 65 and 84 is expected to rise by nearly 50 percent. Since spending on these programs is directly tied to rising cost-of-living and health care costs (see fig. 1), it has outpaced defense spending as a percent of GDP. Although defense spending has increased in real terms since the post–Cold War drawdown, it has been nowhere near

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The Honorable Jacques S. Gansler, former undersecretary of defense for acquisition, technology, and logistics, holds the Roger C. Lipitz Chair in Public Policy and Private Enterprise in the School of Public Policy, University of Maryland, and is director of both the Center for Public Policy and Private Enterprise and the Sloan Biotechnology Industry Center. As the third-ranking civilian at the Pentagon from 1997 to 2001, Professor Gansler was responsible for all research and development, acquisition reform, logistics, advanced technology, environmental security, and numerous other security programs.

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**Figure 1. Defense and selected entitlement spending as a percent of GDP**  
(Adapted from *Budget of the United States Government*, Historical Tables, FY-2010.)

historic record levels as a percentage of GDP. Moreover, supplemental funding will likely be eliminated or significantly reduced as early as FY-2011. Given the rising costs of military personnel compensation costs, DoD health care costs, and facilities programs, it is clear that a sizable portion of “defense discretionary” spending is not really available; it is already earmarked for future requirements.

The rising costs of these mandatory entitlement programs, coupled with enduring projected budget deficits and required interest payments on the related debt, will create an inevitable downward pressure on the DoD budget. As Secretary of Defense Robert Gates pointed out, defense budget growth experienced over the last decade is no longer affordable.<sup>1</sup> The Defense Department must now plan to live within a much more resource-constrained environment, despite dramatic changes in security requirements.

Today the United States faces an incredibly broad spectrum of security missions: preparations for potential peer or near-peer competitors, such as China, India, or Russia; missions related to maintaining security against weapons of mass destruction (WMD), including the threats of rogue nuclear states such as North Korea and Iran; and, finally, a wide variety of nontraditional national security challenges such as global pandemics, cyber attacks (including those against the civilian infrastructure), pirates in



critical sea lanes, natural disasters, or energy security dilemmas, all of which could require DoD intervention. Importantly, each of these requires not just a military perspective but also a holistic view of security, combining inputs and capabilities from the DoD, State, Homeland Security, the Director of National Intelligence, and others—using both “hard” and “soft” power. The need for such a coordinated multiagency response has resulted in increasing demands for military involvement in new missions. Since none of these concerns can be addressed on a unilateral basis and often require multinational agreements and actions, future security planning must be done on a multiagency and multinational basis.

One important aspect of today’s “globalized” world is that advanced technologies and industries have spread worldwide, and in many cases the United States is no longer in the lead. As a result, the nation must be able to take advantage of advanced technologies, wherever they come from, and abandon the assumption that it can be self-sufficient. It is essential to recognize that national security, in the broader context, now includes such issues as the global financial crisis, climate change, and the challenge of global demographics. In early 2009, the director of national intelligence (DNI) stated that worldwide instability from the financial crisis was the “number one national security challenge.”<sup>2</sup>

Another major change driving national security in the coming years is the changed military environment itself. As JCS chairman ADM Michael Mullen stated in the *Capstone Concept for Joint Operations*, “The future operating environment will be characterized by uncertainty, complexity, rapid change, and persistent conflict.”<sup>3</sup> Each of these characteristics drives significant change. For example, *uncertainty* means both the forces and the equipment must be capable of adapting to the very broad spectrum of potential operations. Clearly, the nation will not be able to afford a force that is individually designed for each of the broad spectrum of threats from terrorism to peer conflicts. Rather, the force must be designed in terms of personnel and equipment to be fully adaptable, with open architecture and “plug and play” elements to provide the required capability any time. Similarly, the *complexity* of future “war among the people”<sup>4</sup> requires far greater integration among distributed sensors and distributed shooters, paying great care to collateral damage. These integrated “systems-of-systems” will most certainly require a heightened concern for cyber security. Advances in information technology and the proliferation of related products have given a large portion of the world’s population access to

information and advanced technologies. This phenomenon has, however, provided adversaries and potential adversaries increased access to sophisticated technologies and sensitive information. As a result, threats can change rapidly, leveraging the latest global commercial technologies.

The DoD's normal way of doing business, taking up to 20 years to develop new weapon systems, is totally incompatible with adversaries using available commercial technologies in new and different ways. It is also incompatible with the 9–18 month cycle of software changes that adversaries take full advantage of for cyber warfare. As a result, there is a real requirement for *rapid change*. When a combatant commander identifies an “urgent need” for new equipment in the field, the acquisition structure cannot take years to respond. There must be processes and funding in place able to respond in months or less.

The recognition of *persistent conflict*, as represented by the current wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, means our force planning and equipment planning must assume the need for sustained operations. Persistent missions of stability and reconstruction have now assumed a high priority.

To address this twenty-first-century world of national security, four top-level changes are required: a restructured National Security Council; a new, holistic national security strategy; a fiscally constrained DoD long-term budget, with matching force structure; and, most important, a major thrust for acquisition reform.

## The Acquisition Challenge

The DoD acquisition system must be significantly improved to achieve greater overall mission effectiveness with significantly fewer dollars. The administration and the Congress are attempting such initiatives with full recognition that there will be enormous resistance to the needed cultural change. This includes changes to the post-9/11 DoD budget explosion—the military and the defense industry are now structured on the assumption that it will be maintained. Essentially, it means changing the historic DoD paradigm, which accepts that “to get higher performance you have to pay more for it.” The belief, supported by decades of defense weapons cost growth, has been that we can continue to get higher and higher performance but only at greater and greater individual weapon costs. Yet, commercial electronics and information technologies have dramatically demonstrated the opposite; for example, computers today offer higher and

higher performance at lower and lower costs through the use of both product and process technology driven by market demand. Change is clearly required in the coming decades, since the national security market demand will require higher and higher performance at lower and lower costs.

To meet the new market demand, the acquisition paradigm of defense goods and services requires dramatic changes. Four essential issues surrounding our interrelated acquisition process must be addressed:

- *What* goods and services to buy (the requirements process),
- *How* to buy them (acquisition reform),
- *Who* acquires them (the acquisition workforce), and
- *From whom* are the goods and services acquired (the industrial base).

### **Requirements (What is Acquired)**

To meet the wide range of challenges within a resource-constrained environment, the United States needs an effective, agile, and affordable joint (i.e., multiservice) military force. It is absolutely necessary to focus on lower-cost systems and services while still achieving the required performance. The focus of twenty-first-century acquisition will include:

- Optimized, net-centric systems-of-systems, necessitating a movement away from the platform-centric thinking of the past to more network-centric thinking. These will be integrated systems-of-systems with large numbers of inexpensive, distributed sensors and shooters, all interlinked with complex, secure command, control, and communication systems.
- The new, holistic view of national security, combined with the projected twenty-first-century threats, will require a more flexible and adaptive force structure and a more balanced allocation of resources designed to address widespread needs. Some examples include improved C3ISR, more unmanned aerial systems, special operations forces, “land warrior” systems, missile defense, and cyber defense.
- New systems must be interoperable with those of other military services in a joint environment, with other US government agency systems, and with our coalition partners. The only way to ensure this is

to plan and exercise as we will fight—together with our allies, other agencies, and contractors on the battlefield. Today in Iraq and Afghanistan there are well over 200,000 contractors in the war zone, and yet there has been totally inadequate planning, exercising, and education on this likely future mixed force.

To address affordability, we must include cost as a design/military requirement. Cost, in a resource-constrained environment, translates directly into the number of systems that can be bought. One example of what can be done using this approach is the joint direct attack munition (JDAM). For that program, the chief of staff of the Air Force wrote the total requirement on a small piece of paper. The requirement had three elements: (1) “it shall hit the target” (an accuracy requirement), (2) “it should work” (a reliability requirement), and (3) “it should cost under \$40,000 each.” It currently hits the target, works well, and costs around \$17,000 each. It satisfied the military’s need not only in accuracy and reliability but also in the quantities required, at an affordable price.

## **Acquisition (How Goods and Services are Acquired)**

Achieving higher performance—faster and at lower costs—will require significant changes in the overall acquisition process. Major aspects of the changes in how goods are acquired include competition, commercial off-the-shelf (COTS), enterprise-wide information technology (IT), rapid acquisition, spiral development, and continuous improvement.

Competition is a driving force in the US economy and a vital component of efficiency and improved market performance in both the public and private sectors. It has been widely held among economists that competition provides incentives to produce better products faster, at lower costs, and with better quality while focusing more attention on customer needs. Congress recognized the benefits of competition and mandated its use with the Competition in Contracting Act of 1984. From a defense perspective, the mandate is, simply stated, “Competition is very beneficial; maximize its use.”

Competition built in from the beginning of a product’s or service’s acquisition planning is critical to ensure benefits can be harnessed throughout the process. Because of the phased design, development, production, and support requirements for system acquisition, natural cutoff points

exist where competition can be introduced into the process. Competition is largely accepted at the initiation of development; however, it is often resisted during production, even though it is the key to ensuring a real incentive for contractors to ensure they meet cost, schedule, and performance requirements. The level of net cost savings that can be achieved with competition can be significant and should be encouraged in all its various forms and options. The DoD needs to ensure that funds for dual-source production are available when the development and planning process begins and that the necessary oversight and management structures exist to support a dual-production environment across the services.

Competition during support should also be expanded across DoD programs. There is a potential here to significantly lower the total ownership costs of weapon systems, which can free up needed funds for force modernization. Within the over-\$200 billion annual DoD logistics budget, performance improvements are required, and savings potentials are significant.

While most of the federal regulations are written for acquisition of products, services now make up well over 50 percent of DoD purchases, and competition for services is very different from competition for products. Because of the various types of services—ranging from logistics services to security services to food services—and the numerous sources available, agencies and departments within the DoD need to understand the costs, benefits, and differences of each. The benefits from competition for services can be significant, with much flexibility available in exactly how the services are provided and who provides them. The important factor is to provide an incentive for those supplying the services to be efficient and effective.

Contractors who continue to provide increasing performance at continuously lower costs should be rewarded with follow-on contracts. Thus, competition should not be a requirement throughout a program, but simply maintained as a credible option in the event the supplier does not provide continuously higher performance at continuously lower cost. It is the “threat” of competition that is a sufficient incentive to motivate even sole-source suppliers to continuously lower their costs.

Another option is commercial off-the-shelf procurement. There are examples of COTS being used as far back as the 1970s. With the advent of the information age and widespread commercial technological advances, growing DoD emphasis on information systems heralded a shift in acquisition policy that strongly favors the use of COTS products. Considered a

seminal document in setting recent COTS policy, the “Perry Memo,” written by then–secretary of defense William J. Perry, called for the military to increase the purchase of commercial items and systems.<sup>5</sup> Perry also called for increased use of commercial practices and specifications. The requirement to consider and use COTS was officially enacted into law in the Federal Acquisition Streamlining Act (FASA) of 1994 and is also addressed in the Clinger-Cohen Act. COTS policies are contained in the *Federal Acquisition Regulation*, the *Defense Federal Acquisition Regulation Supplement*, the basic DoD acquisition policy (5000-series), and several other instructions, directives, and statutes. Using COTS, programs can leverage the massive technology investments of the private sector and reap the benefits of reduced cycle times, faster insertion of new technologies, lower life-cycle costs, greater reliability and availability, and support from a robust industrial base. Although the requisite policies are in place to mandate considering commercial solutions, there is still much organizational resistance and significant regulatory barriers.

Use of commercial products and services can be especially important at the lower tiers, since developing, manufacturing, and integrating COTS components are within the capability of a much greater number of smaller firms—firms that normally could not overcome the high barriers-to-entry into the defense industry. This has the effect of creating a much broader business base, and this competitive environment will increase innovation as well as help ensure continuous price competition. With commercial firms, it may be most desirable to contract using “other transactions authority,” including best commercial practices, rather than unique government requirements. This initiative would help encourage commercial suppliers to do business with the DoD. In many cases, the prime contract will utilize the *Federal Acquisition Regulations*, but the prime contractor should be encouraged to pass on the contractual terms for “other transactions authorities” when the subcontractors can be commercial suppliers. To gain the full benefits from the use of COTS, program managers need greater funding flexibility, since “color of money” conflicts can create problems. For example, COTS modifications may be bought with procurement dollars but may need some developmental testing. The supplier is not able to use procurement dollars for developmental test and evaluation.

While greater use of COTS will significantly reduce acquisition cycle times, the government should also implement modern, enterprise-wide IT systems. These systems—including logistics, business, personnel, and

finance—should link the government and industry, as appropriate. Although there are many cases of successful private sector business systems transformation, the transformation of DoD's business systems has proven to be very challenging. The DoD still relies on 4,700 stove-piped, non-integrated, noninteroperable business systems, creating a great deal of inefficiency. These inefficient "legacy" systems were created over the past several decades as organizations within DoD independently developed specialized systems. Each organization used unique processes, objectives, and functions designed to best support their individual mission area. As information systems have evolved, many of these specialized systems have become outdated. Moreover, the lack of data standards, obsolete computer languages, and noninteroperability are frequent causes of errors, redundancy, and growing maintenance costs. For over a decade, the DoD has attempted to integrate new information technologies to improve business management but with limited success.

The same level of success pertains to the rapid acquisition process. Rapid acquisitions take place within a number of ad hoc organizations but are ultimately shackled to the traditional acquisition system. This system is linear, stove-piped, and designed for risk minimization during extended development of technologically sophisticated equipment. Rapid acquisitions are generally of a completely different character—imperfect solutions, required immediately, using currently available technology. This tension will always exist between rapid and deliberate acquisitions. The need for rapid acquisitions is unlikely to decrease. When combatant commanders have an urgent need, there should be an institutionalized process, utilizing available contingent dollars to dramatically reduce the acquisition cycle time. One tool available to help reduce acquisition time is spiral development.

The DoD has historically used a linear acquisition strategy, often referred to as the "waterfall" method. The waterfall method gave military planners the illusion of stability, as firm, "final" requirements would be determined early in the development process. As a result, key development decisions would be made before sufficient knowledge was available to make accurate assessments. Recognizing the benefits of a concept developed by Barry Boehm to improve the software development process, which he called "spiral development,"<sup>6</sup> a growing number of senior DoD officials came to believe it should be extended to the acquisition of software-intensive weapon systems and, subsequently, to all weapon systems. In a military context, spiral development is understood as a cyclical development strategy

where a basic capability is rapidly fielded and incremental capability improvements are periodically made in subsequent “blocks.” The DoD officially endorsed spiral development as a key implementation process for the preferred evolutionary acquisition strategy in the 2003 version of DoD Instruction 5000.2, *Operation of the Defense Acquisition System*.

One of spiral development’s primary attributes is that it can help ensure a more rapid deployment of weapon systems. Specifically, when systems are developed incrementally and technology is mature enough to be integrated, risk is minimized. As a result, delays in development are reduced, keeping cost growth in check as well. Because spirals are flexible and can be changed as the program progresses, spiral development permits constant refinement over time, allowing the user and the developer to hone in on evolving requirements. Finally, spiral development can help foster a robust defense industrial base. The potential for competition at the beginning of each spiral creates broader opportunity and leads to increased pressures on private industry to be more efficient, while simultaneously encouraging innovation. Although it is DoD policy to utilize spiral development fully in both hardware and software practices, it is still far from common practice.

So, too (unfortunately), is the practice of incentivizing continuous improvement. Contractors must be incentivized to achieve continuous performance improvements at continuously lower costs. The benefits of the lower-cost systems must be shared with contractors through greater use of value-engineering (shared savings) clauses in contracts, as well as through awards of follow-on business when the desired results are achieved.

It must be noted that the acquisition approach of the Obama administration during its first two years has frequently been referred to as a “global war on contractors.” An adversarial atmosphere between the government and suppliers has been created by establishing a quota of 33,000 in-sourcing positions, a 10–13 percent mandated reduction in contracted dollars, a Defense Contract Audit Agency practice of withholding 10 percent of the cash payments, an emphasis on fixed-price development contracts, and efforts to cut back defense industry profits. Rather than creating a partnership between buyer and seller to achieve the common objectives of higher performance at lower cost, as in the commercial computer business, just the opposite has occurred. When proper market incentives are presented, such results should be achievable within the defense marketplace.

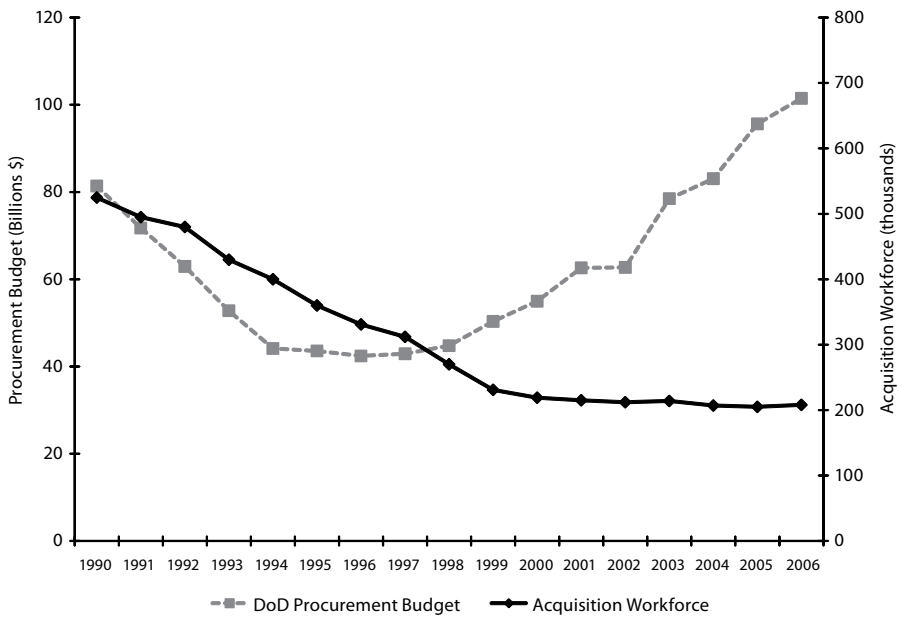


Many of these government initiatives are well intended, but implementation has been carried to an extreme. In the case of the in-sourcing initiative, ample evidence shows that inherently governmental functions in the acquisition workforce have been grossly undervalued, and there is an extreme shortage of government people (particularly at the senior levels) in the contracting community—clearly an inherently governmental function. However, there has been a move within the services to bring a significant portion of their equipment maintenance in house, with the argument that it will save money. In fact, the Air Force has realized an estimated 40-percent cost savings for this move, although Congressional Budget Office analysis states that “over a 20-year period, using military units would cost roughly 90 percent more than using contractors” for this function.<sup>7</sup> While the management, oversight, and budgeting of this work is clearly “inherently governmental,” the wrench turning is not an inherently governmental function. There are distinct advantages (besides the 90-percent cost savings) to using contractors who are trained, can surge as required, are incentivized (through competition) for higher performance at lower cost, and can be terminated when not needed. Overwhelming data shows that using performance-based logistics contracting results in significantly higher performance in such measures as readiness and responsiveness, as well as lower cost. Inherently governmental functions must be conducted by the government acquisition workforce, but the rest should be done in a competitive environment (between the public and private sectors or between competitive firms).

### **The Acquisition Workforce (Who Does the Acquiring)**

A flexible, responsive, efficient, and effective acquisition program for sophisticated, high-tech goods and services requires “smart buyers.” This includes both the quantity and the quality of senior and experienced military and civilian personnel. Unfortunately, in the last decade this requirement has not been met. As the defense budget plummeted in the post-Cold War period of the 1990s, it was natural for the DoD to make significant cuts in the overall acquisition workforce. Then, in the Defense Authorization Act for FY-1996, Congress mandated that the DoD further reduce its acquisition workforce by 25 percent by the end of FY-2000. In total, the acquisition workforce fell from approximately 500,000 to

around 200,000 (see fig. 2). However, as the defense budget increased rapidly after 9/11, the DoD maintained the same lower level of acquisition workforce. By the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century, the budget, including the supplemental, had effectively doubled while the acquisition workforce remained constant.



**Figure 2. Decline in acquisition workforce and increased defense spending** (Reprinted from Jacques S. Gansler et al., *Urgent Reform Required: Army Expeditionary Contracting*, Commission of the Army Acquisition and Program Management for Expeditionary Operations, 1 October 2007.)

Perhaps even more significant, many experienced senior civilians were retiring, while at the same time, acquisition general officer positions were not being filled with acquisition personnel. In 1990 the Army had five general officers with a contracting background; in 2007 it had zero. Similarly, in 1995 the Air Force had 40 general officers in acquisition; today it has 24. Senior executive service (SES) leadership in the contracting career field decreased from 87 to 49 positions in the same time period. In the Defense Contract Management Agency, which is responsible for oversight of contracts, total personnel count declined from 25,000 to 10,000 and from four general officers to zero.<sup>8</sup>

The second issue affecting the acquisition workforce is the age of its members. A significant proportion of the workforce is at or near retire-

ment age. Without careful planning, the potential exists for a major turnover of personnel in the near future, ultimately leading to a severe decrease in institutional knowledge as well as the short-term possibility of an increased workload for those employees who remain. While about 31 percent of the private sector workforce is 50 or older, some 46 percent of the federal workforce is 50 or older.<sup>9</sup> Within the DoD, an even higher percentage of its workforce is at or near retirement age. In 2005 the “baby boomers” and “silent generation” within the DoD made up roughly 76 percent of the acquisition workforce; thus, a disproportionate number of employees are either ready to retire or approaching retirement age, as is illustrated by figure 3.<sup>10</sup>

Generation	National (2005)		DoD-wide (2006)		DoD AT&L Civilian Workforce (2006)	
	Workforce (millions)	Percent Workforce	Workforce	Percent Workforce	Workforce	Percent Workforce
Silent Generation (Pre-1946)	11.5	7.5%	45,625	6.7%	8,322	7.4%
Baby Boomers (1946–1964)	61.5	42.0%	438,971	64.5%	77,779	68.7%
Generation X (1965–1974)	43.5	29.5%	132,948	19.5%	17,581	15.5%
Generation Y (1977–1989)	31.5	21.0%	62,676	9.2%	9,394	8.3%
Millennium (1990–Present)	51.0	0.0%	153	0.0%	0	0.0%
		100.0%		100.0%		100.0%

**Figure 3. Distribution of workforce by generation** (Reprinted from Ken Kreig, *Human Capital Strategic Plan* [Washington: Undersecretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics, 2007].)

When comparing new hires to retirements, it is evident the replacement rates are not great enough to stem the upcoming tide of older workers who will retire. Some 13 percent of the DoD civilian acquisition workforce in the contracting series were eligible to retire in 2008; however, 30 percent will be eligible to retire in 2013, and about 50 percent will be eligible in 2018. Furthermore, in 2008 the DoD hired only 2,228 new employees in the contracting series (many with little experience), while they lost some 2,291 to agency changes or occupation series changes. The result is not only a net loss in contracting series personnel for the year, despite both increasing requirements and spending, but also a net loss in experience.<sup>11</sup>

The need for hiring people with contracting and management experience into inherently governmental positions is widely recognized by both the Congress and the administration. It is important that these positions be filled with the highest caliber of personnel and that they be given ample training and opportunities for maximum experience. However, it must be recognized that it will take time for these new hires, many of whom are young interns, to develop the necessary experience. Thus, the government should consider special programs for hiring acquisition experts from industry for three-year, term-limited periods, with careful attention to avoiding any conflicts of interest. On the military side, it is also critically important that general officer positions be filled with people who have experience and knowledge in the field to lead the acquisition workforce. Overall, the acquisition personnel function has been grossly undervalued over the last decade, resulting in inefficiencies and even a number of scandals.

### **The Industrial Base (From Whom Goods and Services are Acquired)**

The defense industrial base has experienced considerable difficulty in meeting cost, schedule, and performance objectives. It is increasingly isolated from the broader domestic and global economy and is less agile and innovative than necessary. A Defense Science Board (DSB) report on the twenty-first-century defense industry stated: “The last two decades have seen a consolidation of the defense industry around Twentieth Century needs. The next step is DoD leadership in transforming to a Twenty First Century National Security Industrial Structure.”<sup>12</sup> To achieve the desired industrial base it will be necessary to first transform the way the DoD conducts its business. Transforming the demand side will force a change in the structure of the supply side. As the DoD makes acquisition changes, the defense industrial base will begin to transform. The focus must be on achieving several lofty goals: the industrial base must be efficient, responsive, technologically advanced, and highly competitive at all levels. As the DSB emphasized, this overall industrial base must include not only the private sector but those facilities and operations of an industrial nature in the public sector (e.g., Navy shipyards, Army arsenals, Air Force depots, etc.) as well.

The twenty-first-century industrial base must also be viewed as a global base, where the “best in class” is fully utilized. Globalization offers the

DoD many benefits. Perhaps most important is the increased use of commercial products, technologies, and services—none of which can be separated from the globalization phenomenon. Moreover, the use of the global industrial base has substantially lowered the cost of selected new systems, system upgrades, and operational support. Foreign sourcing can also provide competition for, and improve innovation in, domestic firms. The DoD cannot turn back the clock on its increased dependence on the global commercial sector without major setbacks in capability.

Leveraging the global industrial base requires changes in US export and import laws and certainly requires ensuring that potential vulnerabilities are explicitly addressed. This is the approach being taken on the joint strike fighter, to be acquired by 11 nations—using the best-in-class equipment available worldwide for all of the subsystems. It is interesting to observe that today every US weapon system has parts from foreign suppliers, and these were selected not because they were the lowest cost but because they were the best performance available. With the global spread of technology and industry, it is important that we think globally in providing the best possible equipment to our fighting forces.

For industries to invest in independent research and development (IR&D) and capital equipment modernization, it is essential they are “healthy” (i.e., profitable). Government contracting personnel often strive to reduce profits rather than working with industry on reducing costs, not acknowledging that profit is a very small percentage of a program’s total costs (nominally in the 5–8 percent range, but often even less). The government’s primary objective must be to incentivize contractors to continually increase performance while reducing total costs.

In many areas today, the commercial world has more-advanced technology, higher performance, and lower-cost equipment of which the Defense Department must take full advantage. It must consider commercial suppliers of goods and services as part of its industrial base. In fact, the ideal situation is to have suppliers that have integrated commercial and military operations (i.e., “dual use”). Such dual-use operations provide increased volume; thus, not only lowest cost but also the capability for surge in goods or services during wartime. This combined operation does necessitate the waiver of some specialized DoD requirements (e.g., unique cost accounting), but it has huge payoffs for higher performance at lower cost and is certainly worth doing.

Prime contractors performing system-of-systems integration support functions have an inherent conflict of interest that creates perverse incentives which may benefit the company's bottom line at the expense of the government; for example, in the selection of platforms and subsystems. As the DoD moves toward system-of-systems, it is important it have independent firms capable of doing the systems architecture and systems engineering of the overall system without conflicts of interest. In the past there were large numbers of mid-size, independent firms with this characteristic, but they were largely acquired by prime contractors during the post-Cold War mergers and acquisitions period. Now it is up to the government to recreate that industrial base to support it directly in developing the best possible overall system-of-systems.

To gain the benefits of competition, it is clearly desirable to have multiple firms at all tiers in all critical sectors of the industry as subcontractors and parts suppliers. This becomes particularly important if there is a reduction in the future overall DoD budget. Considerations of future mergers and acquisitions must be reviewed carefully with these objectives in mind.

In the past when non-inherently governmental work was done by government employees and competed between the public and private sectors, the data showed overwhelmingly that the government got higher performance at significantly lower costs, no matter who won the competitions. In fact, the average savings were over 30 percent and, in many cases, significantly higher—even though more than 50 percent of the time, the government won these competitions.<sup>13</sup>

In 2009, under government union and depot caucus pressure, Congress stopped these competitions. Although it did not officially kill public/private competitive sourcing, the FY-2009 Omnibus Spending Bill put a temporary halt to these job competitions. While this bill may be the final nail in the coffin of competitive sourcing, the program had been slowly dying since 2006.<sup>14</sup> Prior to cessation of competitive sourcing, however, the government won two extraordinary competitions with cost reductions of 70 percent and 82 percent respectively—both within the Internal Revenue Service.<sup>15</sup> With such overwhelming evidence (of achieving higher performance at lower costs), it would seem highly desirable that all future non-inherently governmental work be contracted in a competitive fashion.

There has also been a breakdown in government-industry dialog. During the Clinton administration, semiannual meetings were held between a significant number of defense industry CEO's (including small and minority

firms) and senior leaders of the DoD; two-way industry-government communications was encouraged. During the Bush administration, these meetings were discontinued. For the industry to fully understand the government's needs and initiatives and the government to fully understand the concerns and needs of the industry, such communication must not only continue at the senior-most levels but also within all areas of specialization. This can be done at the generic level without any conflicts or special contractual considerations, and the results can be made public to allay concerns over fairness or ethics. The government can benefit significantly from such exchanges.

It is critically important throughout the overall acquisition system that there be no conflicts of interests. This became an issue of increasing importance as a result of consolidations in the defense industry in the post-Cold War period. After initial consolidations at the prime contractor level, many firms began vertical acquisitions. In some cases, prime contractors acquired firms that had personnel working directly in government program offices involved in programmatic decisions. On occasion these decisions involved hardware supplied by other divisions of the same prime. Due to their acquisitions of subsystem suppliers, prime contractors were making make-or-buy decisions between their own divisions and competitors when purchasing the "best" subsystems. It is therefore important for the government to have significant visibility into such vertical integration issues—not to decide the make-or-buy choice, but to assure the openness of the process.

## **Summary**

Acquisition has reached a critical period. Many even compare it to the period following the launch of Sputnik or the fall of the Berlin Wall. Today, the security world is changing so dramatically that a holistic perspective is clearly required in terms of a multiagency and multinational approach. Moreover, after a decade of solid defense budget growth, which will almost certainly change, many difficult choices and shifts remain. Secretary Gates began that shift with his termination of the F-22 fighter production and cutbacks of the Army's Future Combat System program. However, he has argued for an even greater shift in the balance of resources toward more intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) systems and greater use of unmanned systems and robotics.

In spite of this dramatically changed national security environment, the controlling acquisition policies, practices, laws, military budgets, and requirement priorities have not been transformed sufficiently to match the needs of this new world. In fact, there is still an emphasis, in many cases, on resetting of the equipment that has been used in Iraq and Afghanistan versus modernization.

To address these challenges, we offer four summary recommendations. First, in an effort to focus the requirements process and improve affordability, the undersecretary of defense (acquisition, technology, & logistics) should mandate that cost be included as a design/military requirement for weapon systems. Second, although the requisite acquisition policies are in place to mandate the consideration of competition and the use of commercial solutions, they are frequently not used effectively. DoD leadership must work to ensure the option of credible competition is present during all phases of acquisition and exercised if the current contractor is not achieving desired performance, cost, and schedule objectives. Also, the use of commercial technologies and services should be maximized through active efforts to remove the many current barriers to their use. Next, the DoD's senior leaders must focus on developing a world-class acquisition workforce in sufficient numbers with the necessary skills and experiences to successfully support defense acquisition in the twenty-first century. Finally, the DoD must foster a defense industry that is flexible, adaptive, agile, innovative, low-cost, high-quality, and satisfies twenty-first-century security needs. To achieve the desired industrial base, it will be necessary to first transform the way the department conducts its business to allow for the effective acquisition, management, and support of complex systems, systems-of-systems, and services required of the nation's capabilities-based military forces.

Clearly, adopting these recommendations will be a difficult transition, since what is required from DoD military and civilian employees is a "cultural change." The literature is very clear on what it takes to achieve a cultural change. First, there must be a clear recognition of the need for change (a crisis). The combination of anticipated downward budgetary pressures and acquisition workforce issues creates such a forward-looking crisis. Second, and perhaps most important, is the need for leadership with a vision, a strategy, and an action plan to achieve the required changes. As evidenced by speeches and statements, there is widespread recognition within the Congress and the executive branch of this need for change. The



question is whether the changes being enacted now and those proposed are the right changes to achieve the desired objectives. Namely, will they satisfy the twenty-first-century needs for higher performance at lower costs with greater agility and speed?

Achieving the desired changes will take political courage and sustained, strong leadership by both the executive and legislative branches working together. The American public, and particularly our fighting men and women, deserve nothing less; the nation's future security depends upon it. It can be done, and the time to start is now. ■■■

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# NATO's Next Strategic Concept

## How the Alliance's New Strategy will Reshape Global Security

*Christopher R. Davis, Captain, USN*

CAPPING MONTHS of diplomatic signaling—and to no one's eventual surprise—the declaration capping the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's most recent summit at Strasbourg and Kehl confirmed what members have been saying for some time: "The organization needs a new strategy."<sup>1</sup> The last one, signed over a decade ago, followed on the heels of the NATO intervention in Kosovo and Bosnia. Since then the United States has endured a traumatic terrorist attack and become bogged down in Afghanistan and Iraq with a handful of increasingly reluctant NATO partners. Born as a bulwark against the Soviet Union in 1949, the alliance survived the fall of communism by expanding its portfolio from the mere static defense of each other's borders to enhancing regional stability through engagement and enlargement. Now NATO is facing a new reality, and the call for a new strategic concept goes to the heart of its relevancy.

While NATO has grown from a cozy club of 16 nations to a community of 28—welcoming Albania and Croatia into the fold at Strasbourg and Kehl—it is precisely this growth that some perceive as crippling its ability to gain the consensus necessary for decisive action. Declining demographics and the current economic crisis are leading Europeans to prioritize social spending over defense expenditures. Few nations spend anywhere near NATO's informally agreed upon 2 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) on defense. While yesterday's flagship operation was peacekeeping in the nearby Balkans, today's challenge is nation building in far-flung Afghanistan. In part as a distraction from its domestic woes—and further complicating the matter—a newly resurgent Russia is increasingly antagonistic towards the Euro-Atlantic partnership. This has created a rift

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between newer NATO affiliates who favor the traditional focus on territorial defense over their long-tenured colleagues' preferences toward preparing for newer, more salient challenges.

All this has led, once again, to calls for the alliance to reinvent itself through a refreshed strategic concept, and in its discernment the alliance will rely upon the collective wisdom of the "group of experts" led by former US ambassador Madeleine K. Albright.<sup>2</sup> NATO will only continue to be relevant if the United States views its European partners as capable of assisting with the global security workload and if Europe views the United States as a guarantor of European stability and prosperity. Recent events have demonstrated the limits of European aspirations—which remain regionally focused. Their lack of global ambitions, nevertheless, should not dissuade the United States from seeing its European partners as integral to American security. Leveraging NATO's capabilities will provide America a strategic buffer and democratic bulwark against emerging threats. Getting NATO's next strategy right, therefore, has important implications for American and European security.

## **Strategic Conceptualization within NATO**

Since the alliance's beginning, strategic concepts have focused almost exclusively on providing the idea, or notion, of how national militaries would align themselves to achieve tangible operational objectives that translate into political gains. The lineage of strategic concepts has its roots in "The Strategic Concept for the Defense of the North Atlantic Area" (DC 6/1), dated 6 January 1950 and drafted by the now-defunct North Atlantic Defense Committee (composed of each nation's minister of defense).<sup>3</sup> While other strategic concepts date from the founding of the alliance, this was the first document to receive ministerial sanction. This classified document, like all subsequent strategic concepts until the end of the Cold War, reflected a purely defensive posture within national borders by military contributions "in proportion" to national means.<sup>4</sup> Mutual aid and self-help were the cornerstones of this notional strategic arrangement.

While describing the alliance's strategy in broad terms, DC 6/1 nonetheless articulated the need to extend territorial defense as far to the east as possible—a clear nod to the unspecified Soviet threat—and delineated specific roles and responsibilities to those best suited. For example, the United States understandably assumed responsibility for providing the

nuclear shield. At its core, however, DC 6/1 stressed the importance of economic stability and recovery by laying out an economy-of-force approach that assumed a warning sufficient for mass mobilization. This latter assumption had the added benefit of reducing the obligation to maintain a large standing force. The formation of an integrated NATO military structure under the centralized command of GEN Dwight D. Eisenhower led to the next strategic concept.

Drafted by the newly empowered Military Committee and approved in December 1952, MC 3/5 in essence maintained continuity with DC 6/1. While articulating broad principles, these early strategic concepts were short on the detail needed for adequate planning. This necessitated drafting detailed strategic guidance, which set about nesting a subregional approach to defense within a phased concept of operations.<sup>5</sup> Upon assuming the American presidency, Eisenhower surveyed the strategic landscape and shifted the US military posture—and by extension NATO's—away from expensive conventional forces toward a less-costly nuclear umbrella.<sup>6</sup> The alliance's first top commander was well aware of the fiscal and political inability of the Europeans to generate adequate military force—a theme that continues to resonate today. Eisenhower was fearful that a large conventional force would bleed the United States to the point of exhaustion and collapse.<sup>7</sup> Conventional forces would remain, however, as forces-in-being to address “alternate threats” posed by the Soviets.<sup>8</sup>

This led to the May 1957 iteration of NATO's strategic concept, which sought to deter an attack on Western Europe by threatening a massive nuclear retaliation—to include first-use of nuclear weapons. Representing an extension of the American new-look policy, MC 14/2 repudiated the concept of limited war. If deterrence failed, the assumption was that the initial violent nuclear spasm would result in the exhaustion necessary for a strategic pause of sufficient duration to allow the United States to mobilize. MC 14/2, nevertheless, provided more-comprehensive direction than its predecessor by including a strategic assessment of European regions under its protective umbrella. Incorporating a detailed analysis of strategic factors and objectives eliminated the need for subordinate strategic guidance that traditionally followed previous concepts.<sup>9</sup>

The Berlin standoff, the Cuban missile crisis, and military involvement in Indochina resulted in a strategic reassessment that led the Kennedy administration to adopt a policy of flexible response. The Americans recognized that a greater range of Soviet options at the lower end of the

conflict spectrum required a credible response by a wider assortment of alternatives.<sup>10</sup> The French withdrawal from NATO's integrated military structure made possible the adoption of the alliance's next strategic concept in January 1968.<sup>11</sup> MC 14/3 opened the door to limited war through the balancing of nuclear and conventional forces while maintaining a forward defensive posture in Western Europe.<sup>12</sup> The intent was to deter Soviet provocations by seeding the Kremlin with uncertainty over NATO's response. MC 14/3 called for the formation of a high-readiness, forward-deployed force that could provide a shield sufficient to allow consultation on escalatory responses in case of an attack.<sup>13</sup> This strategic concept would take the alliance through the end of the Cold War and the fall of the Berlin Wall.

As Soviet forces receded from Eastern Europe, the breakup of the Warsaw Pact dramatically altered the security environment. The near elimination of a direct military threat to European sovereignty ushered in a period of deep reflection within the alliance that resulted in the New Strategic Concept (NSC) in 1991. The NSC shifted the focus to crisis response and conflict prevention through dialog and cooperation, calling upon members to increase their use of nonmilitary power to address collective security concerns.<sup>14</sup> The NSC hedged against the return of conventional military threats, albeit at a much-reduced force posture. The approach outlined in the NSC, for example, called for cuts to—but not the elimination of—forward-stationed forces, nuclear weapons, and military readiness. Arms control and disarmament were key to mitigating the risk of armed confrontation under the NSC as the alliance expanded its posture of tiered readiness. There was also the glimmer of hope that the Europeans would shoulder a greater share of the security and defense burden, although at a greatly reduced level, in anticipation of a peace dividend.

Absent the global restraints imposed by Soviet-American antagonism, however, political and social instability manifested itself in Europe. To counter the resulting insecurity, NATO began acting outside its traditional boundaries in the mid 1990s to thwart threats at their source.<sup>15</sup> The poor performance of European forces on the ground in Kosovo and the Balkans—leading to the eventual intervention by the United States under the auspices of NATO—revealed European military shortcomings. This recognition—coupled with the rise of regional organizations like the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the European Union, along with a European desire to free itself from military dependence

on the United States as witnessed by the call for a separate and distinct European Security and Defense Identity—led to a rethinking of NATO’s role yet again.

Signed in 1999, NATO’s current strategic concept (SC-99) retained a conventional focus but acknowledged the continual spread of unconventional challenges—such as mass migration and organized crime—and the need to keep these threats at a distance. Recognizing that insecurity and instability outside their collective borders could spread and destabilize all European nations, SC-99 focused more intently on “non–Article 5” activities like conflict prevention and crisis management. The aim was to enhance security and stability by dealing proactively with potential crises.<sup>16</sup> SC-99 acknowledged the requirement for operations beyond the allies’ territories, outlining, for example, the necessity of a combined joint task force (CJTF) to project force “out of area.” Strategic nuclear forces remained the “supreme guarantee of security”; however, SC-99 all but phased out substrategic nuclear forces while retaining its predecessor’s focus on threat reduction through arms control and disarmament.

More importantly, SC-99 institutionalized the ongoing formation of cooperative partnerships through multinational dialogue. This occurred on two planes. The first was outside the Euro-Atlantic area, where the alliance created forums for cooperation with states in North Africa (through the Mediterranean Dialog) and in the Middle East (under the auspices of the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative). These venues offered NATO the opportunity to collaborate on regional security issues outside the alliance’s traditional purview. The second was closer to home, where the alliance bet that the enticement to join NATO would provide the leverage necessary to nurture the emergence of liberal democracies. While this was not always the case, it nonetheless unilaterally extended a standard membership roadmap to European states before subsequently modifying its Partnership-for-Peace program to accommodate differing social and political proclivities.

Surveying the post-9/11 geopolitical landscape, the United States responded by significantly adjusting its global military posture. While the United States continued to view NATO as an important mechanism for Euro-Atlantic security and cooperation, meeting new threats required an adjustment in US military commitment to Europe. America shifted away for an ensconced heavy force designed for massive armor engagements toward a rotational forward-based force capable of rapid deployment and

early entry into conflicts beyond Europe. It, in essence, slated Europe to become a secure base for US operations in central and southwest Asia and Africa.<sup>17</sup> Europe's excellent training facilities and centrally located logistics infrastructure could contribute significantly to maintaining America's global freedom of action. In exchange, the Europeans retained a committed partner willing to support their individual and collective military needs.<sup>18</sup>

## **Surveying the New Strategic Landscape**

Following the signing of SC-99, the alliance experienced three consecutive waves of expansion that first brought the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland into the fold in November 2002. Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia joined at the conclusion of the Prague Summit in March 2004, followed by the aforementioned Albania and Croatia at the most recent summit. For an alliance built on achieving consensus, the addition of each new member increases the risk of paralysis. It is now a near certainty that NATO's open-door policy will close in the face of Ukraine and Georgia—the former due to Russian-instigated political indecision and the latter because of a border dispute with Russia. Regardless of official proclamations to the contrary, NATO has lost its nerve in the face of Russian bellicosity.<sup>19</sup>

The fall of the wall left Russia dazed, confused, and dispirited. The quick absorption of ex-Soviet republics and former communist states into NATO during this period now engenders Russian hostility. With their brief flirtations with democracy and market economics now behind them, the Russians have emerged as a continental power willing to exert hard power to stake a historic claim on their near abroad. Russia is now firmly opposed to NATO expansion into the former Soviet Socialist Republics and seems willing to not only use military force (as in the case of Georgia) but also economic leverage (for example, cutting off gas supplies to Europe as it did a year ago January) to weaken NATO solidarity. Russia's transformation from a capital-based command economy to a natural resource-based oligarchy insures the endowment necessary to finance its ambitions. At the same time, the US relationship with Russia has grown increasingly complex. While simultaneously seeking their cooperation in curtailing Iran's nuclear ambitions and maintaining open lines of communication

regarding Afghanistan, US plans for a European antimissile system antagonized the Russians.

The strategic environment that gave rise to SC-99 stands in stark contrast to the one the alliance now inhabits. In an attempt to provide the group of experts with the perspectives of senior NATO military leaders on this new environment, Allied Command Transformation (ACT) commissioned the Multiple Futures Project (MFP).<sup>20</sup> Its role is similar to that of the US *Joint Operating Environment (JOE)* signed out by Joint Forces Command. Both seek to provide a contextual backdrop for defense planning—not only identifying key strategic drivers and risks but also postulating alternate futures to visualize shifts in the strategic landscape. While the depth of analysis presented in the *JOE* outpaces that of the MFP, the latter integrates and presents the implications in a manner that provides greater insight into current and future strategic dilemmas. These documents display considerable alignment in the dangers they identify, and to the extent they differ, it is in the emphases of specific attributes of the emerging international environment. Shifting perspectives, moreover, have brought converging transatlantic views on emerging security challenges.<sup>21</sup> The group of experts grasps the emerging perils but, nonetheless, counsels caution in straying from NATO's conventional legacy—choosing to limit the allies' focus on unconventional threats like terrorism, cyber, and ballistic missile attack (of which the latter is arguably conventional).<sup>22</sup> While the concentration on a bounded set of threats provides strategic focus, there is a danger that in doing so the alliance may expose itself to strategic surprise from unexpected quarters.

Super-empowered individuals now wield asymmetric conventional weapons of hitherto unseen lethality. Melting polar ice caps are exposing new sea lanes and rich natural resources on NATO's northern flank that have polar powers (Russia, Canada, Norway, Denmark, and the United States) jockeying for position. Traditionally representing the alliance's soft underbelly, the Mediterranean waters provide a bulwark against southern threats. Water scarcity, famine, powerful nonstate actors, endemic local conflicts, and globalization all combine to create an impetus for uncontrolled migrations that threaten European stability. Increasing desertification has drawn NATO into the Darfur region where scarce resources led to a nomadic-agrarian clash. The eastern approaches, anchored by Turkey and Greece, present a changing geopolitical landscape with the potential to harbor nontraditional threats ranging from transnational criminal gangs



to rampant extremism and nuclear-tipped missiles. In addition to regional conflicts, cyber threats—like the denial-of-service attack on Estonia—are increasingly threatening alliance economic security. Energy security, both human and mechanical, is leading NATO to lend a hand in the multinational effort to suppress piracy. Although the geographic sandwiching of the Atlantic between its two North American members and the remaining 26 would appear to ensure a secure western flank, perils from humanitarian disasters, infectious diseases, dwindling fisheries, and terrorism are closing in from all cardinal points.

In the face of an aging population in need of social services and a continental economy in disarray, NATO's European partners increasingly focus inward. Disengagement is evident in their inability or unwillingness to invest sufficiently in defense. While Bulgaria, France, Turkey, Greece, and the UK exceed the defense spending target, Europe overall manages to spend only 1.7 percent of GDP on defense—with half going to personnel expenditures—while the United States devotes 4 percent of its GDP to defense, of which roughly 30 percent covers personnel costs.<sup>23</sup> Deaths now outpace births at an accelerating rate in Western Europe, and the percentage of the population over 65 will grow from just under 18 percent today to over 28 percent by 2050.<sup>24</sup> Shrinking and aging populations will result in fewer resources available for defense as well as an increasing aversion to placing precious lives at risk.

Within NATO there exist considerable differences in national military capabilities, ranging from ponderous conscripted legacy forces incapable of deployment outside national borders to highly lethal and globally employable militaries. Former Warsaw Pact members that have recently joined NATO—as well as future aspirants—retain Soviet hardware, systems, and doctrine. In most cases, however, the orientation of NATO forces—including the United States—remains on symmetrical force-on-force engagements with similarly arrayed adversaries. Furthermore, European nations, in shifting from military conscription to voluntary recruitment, have created smaller militaries—but of increased professionalism. Even so, given European demographics, they will face increased recruitment challenges and retention costs. Paradoxically, widening capabilities disparities cut two ways, either threatening a dysfunctional response to “high end” conventional threats that could doom the alliance's relevance or facilitating a “low end” approach suboptimized to meet today's challenges.

Reacting to the need to transform its collective capabilities and harmonize diverse national potentials, the alliance created the NATO Response Force (NRF). The aim was to field a conventional combined-arms force capable of employing precision munitions, networked systems, and advanced surveillance systems against a similarly arrayed adversary. In addition to a highly ready force capable of instantaneous action, the NRF was to become the conceptual framework for NATO's military transformation—in essence the paradigm shift necessary to maintain relevance.<sup>25</sup> Operations in Iraq and Afghanistan increasingly support the notion that focusing transformational efforts on purely technological perfection of a high-end conventional force is an unnecessary luxury that drains resources from more pressing missions. First-tier military allies—like the United States and Great Britain—already dominate this type of warfare and possess overwhelming capabilities.

NATO binds members to a common cause against a mutual threat; however, as the first Gulf War demonstrated, all allies may not perceive a threat as sufficient to trigger a collective response. In this case, coalitions of members may emerge to address a threat that, while proximate, is technically outside the boundaries of the treaty but salient enough to justify a mutual response for either the sake of efficiency or political legitimacy. NATO's involvement in the Balkans falls into this category, as exemplified in Operation Provide Promise in 1992 where US leadership provided the impetus for the longest humanitarian airlift in history to various Bosnian cities. While the alliance's collective response in the former Yugoslavia began with the gradual escalation of air and maritime operations—including Sharp Guard, Maritime Guard, Deny Flight, Deliberate Force, and Dead Eye—it eventually culminated in Operation Joint Endeavor following the 1995 Bosnian Peace Agreement. This accord capped NATO's response with a protracted ground intervention by the Implementation Force (IFOR) and subsequently by the Stabilization Force (SFOR).<sup>26</sup>

With past action as a guide, future NATO ambitions will incubate within a coalition structure until a universal consensus for collective action is forged. If a rogue or nonstate actor presents an immediate threat to a vital interest, likely those nations with the capability to respond will act in the breach while the consensual process critical to allied unity of effort laboriously grinds toward a collective response. Similar to the Afghanistan experience, promptly mitigating the threat provides the necessary impetus for alliance involvement and the time necessary to garner united

action. Future contingencies will involve, therefore, a network of NATO and non-NATO members. This is borne out in former NATO secretary-general Lord Robertson's statement that the alliance is "the world's largest permanent coalition."<sup>27</sup>

Modeling this new reality is the Afghan experience. Initial entry into Afghanistan occurred using a high-end military force engaged in conventional combat operations. Once heavy combat subsided, US leadership and UN Security Council resolutions cleared the way for NATO forces to conduct security and stability operations. Today over 40 NATO and non-NATO nations participate—to one degree or another—in this mission. The conduct of actual military operations by the NRF, moreover, appears increasingly unlikely, as the alliance's *de facto* strategy relies upon an *ad hoc* coalition network under UN mandates and US leadership. NATO's response to the African Union's request for assistance in mounting military interventions in Darfur and Somalia are the exceptions that prove the rule. Absent American leadership, NATO's support to the African Union is anemic. The group of experts, in contrast, advocates expanding the authority and decision-making power of the secretary-general. While maintaining the fundamental principle of consensus rule, the group also recommends preserving it for only the most important decisions—to include those involving finances, membership, and new missions. While there is broad agreement that decision making within NATO is an arduous process, it is not clear that shortcuts involving the surrender of sovereignty will curtail national attempts to veto, compel participation, or contribute to the legitimacy prized by the group of experts.

## **Where the Alliance Goes from Here**

The next strategic concept will outline the alliance's purpose and the features of the new security environment.<sup>28</sup> It will define NATO's tasks and outline the elements of a broad approach to their achievement. While its outline remains opaque, the group of experts suggests several contours. They advocate the continual evolution from defense to security, thereby maintaining continuity with past strategic concepts by, for example, reaffirming previous levels of NATO political and military ambition. The group urges deeper engagement with a wider array of organizations—from the European Union and the United Nations to the Organization of American States. Arguably, there is benefit to building on previous success;

however, while the group notes chronic shortcomings in the partnership programs, it gives short shrift to correcting past deficiencies. It provides a service, regardless, in not shying away from naming potential adversaries (Iran and North Korea, in particular) and specific recommendations to counter them.

Clearly NATO intends to continue evolving its comprehensive approach.<sup>29</sup> This is its version of the “whole of government” or “interagency” whereby the synergistic application of all instruments of power—diplomatic, information, military, and economic—is the basis of security. Along these lines, one can expect a call to deepen and broaden cooperation with other international and quasigovernmental organizations. These groups bring resources NATO lacks; for example, the EU’s civilian capabilities. Primacy of consultation and international legitimacy will remain the basis for collective action. Regardless of the priorities set forth, the strategic concept must deal with hybrid threats now eclipsing conventional hazards, providing the military guidance necessary to align national ambitions with available resources.

Differing allied sensitivities result in divergent views on the means necessary for today’s threat environment—while the United States tends to prefer hard power, the Europeans generally favor soft.<sup>30</sup> These preferences have resulted in a contentious debate over what constitutes a balanced-security workload and the corresponding level of equitable contributions. This issue has the potential to divide the alliance and embitter security cooperation. Where Americans see underinvestment, the Europeans counter that defense spending is not an accurate measure of a nation’s commitment to security.<sup>31</sup> Europeans contend that by focusing purely on hard-power metrics, Washington overlooks nonmilitary investments in, for example, deployable law enforcement capabilities found in the European Gendarmerie Force (EGF).<sup>32</sup>

Divergent views on security and defense also punctuate the transatlantic divide, creating differing perspectives on how best to meet emerging security threats. Contrast, for example, America’s dramatic increase in defense spending in the wake of 9/11 (notwithstanding the creation of the Department of Homeland Security) with the Spanish boost in internal security spending (while holding the line on defense expenditures) in the aftermath of the 2004 Madrid bombing.<sup>33</sup> In response to their respective attacks, Spain demurred invoking Article 5 while the United States accepted the first-ever such declaration. The internal European focus on

security juxtapositioned against the external US orientation on defense calls into question the relevancy of an alliance based on a military response. This dichotomy also threatens to reinforce the European tendency to favor social spending at the expense of defense outlays.

The United States has been singularly unsuccessful, moreover, in achieving its strategic objectives using high-tech military capabilities in the manpower-intensive conflicts it now confronts—and it is unlikely a collective NATO force organized along the same lines can fare any better.<sup>34</sup> A case in point is the civil war in Iraq and the continued insurgency in Afghanistan. In both conflicts, technology has proven indecisive and even counter-productive—initially lulling America into a false sense of success while ceding the initiative to the enemy. Any investment to transform NATO military capabilities along conventional lines merely to have our current or future adversaries asymmetrically exploit the vulnerabilities we are inadvertently creating is not in anyone's interest—except maybe our enemy. Instead, greater emphasis on security and stability capabilities required for the complex, low-intensity crisis response operations NATO is more likely to encounter is the key to improving collective security.

The form in which collective defense and security are manifest in the new strategic concept has important implications. While the former is traditionally the military's domain and the latter a civilian policing function, their practitioners must work cooperatively to address threats which blur confessional classification. Collective defense against an armed attack is the core task of the alliance—as codified in Article 5. It represents a conventional posture rooted in the primacy of military power and the assumption that the state is the primary actor. In this context, peer militaries represent the national security benchmark. Although it is unlikely the allies will alter Article 5, it is increasingly likely NATO will expand its definition to include a wider array of threats. It is, nevertheless, doubtful the alliance will face off against a regional peer—even if one existed. Collaboration, therefore, will increasingly eclipse confrontation in the alliance's strategic calculus.

While the group of experts advocates maintaining a substrategic nuclear option, the alliance is well served by exiting this business altogether. There is nothing “substrategic” about nuclear weapons. They are strategic in the first order, and the decision on their employment is the sole rightful province of the national leaders that possess them. The implications of their use cut to the core of national survival, and it is a decision over which no

nation tolerates anything less than complete authority. It is delusional to believe the alliance will ever achieve the consensus necessary to employ nuclear weapons when such discord exists over their mere deployment. Instead of insisting on the inclusion of a wedge issue that will further erode unity, the allies are better served by focusing their limited attention and scarce political capital on countering proliferation and building a missile shield.

The unification and integration of civilian and military capabilities is paramount regardless of whether NATO functions within the context of combat, security, stabilization, reconstruction, peacekeeping, peacebuilding, or counterinsurgency. More weapons do not necessarily equate to more security, and diplomacy is impotent without a military threat. The challenge, as seen in Afghanistan, is how best to achieve equilibrium. This does not imply the existence of a formal division of labor between Europe and the United States—whereby the former delivers soft civilian capabilities essential to build stability and security while the latter focuses on the hard military power necessary to destroy an adversary. Both the *European Security Strategy (ESS)* and the *US National Security Strategy (NSS)* call for a blended civil-military response that includes a mix of combat and noncombat capabilities. This balanced approach provides a broad political and practical base for addressing threats, but it requires improved integration of niche civil-military capabilities—and agreements to add any missing abilities to the alliance's portfolio.

In an effort to gain asymmetrical advantage, our adversaries will increasingly blend multiple combinations of capabilities into a type of hybrid warfare that challenges our assumptions about the character of war.<sup>35</sup> This requires the alliance to approach the convergence of threats in new ways and to accept new tasks. The tighter integration of military, political, economic, and informational power is now critical. This realization is behind the alliance's stillborn efforts to develop the doctrine of comprehensive approach (CA), which posits that by acting along multiple axes in which government civilians, private contractors, and the military combine efforts to promote civil reconstruction, encourage good governance, and support economic development, the alliance can spread security and stability. In Afghanistan, this translates into quashing the opium trade and doubling the number of police and soldiers while pushing Pakistan to exercise its sovereignty in tribal areas. Although nebulously defined, CA at least points to the need to synergize military and civilian efforts.<sup>36</sup>

The political ends toward which it seeks to focus national efforts should remain the central focus of the strategic concept, and since NATO's inception, these remain the expansion of free markets and the growth of democracies. This suggests an expeditionary force that will

- contain and control threats to international security and stability through limiting crisis expansion and facilitating a return to normality;
- preserve the Western political identity and institutions by maintaining open sea, air, and cyber lines of communication; and
- ensure continued economic prosperity through fair and reasonable access to natural resources and global markets.

This represents a broader foundation than articulated by the group of experts; however, like the North Atlantic Treaty itself, these aspirations flexibly bind members to “such action” as each signatory “deems necessary.”<sup>37</sup> Any collective response, therefore, remains contingent on the nature of the threat and each member's willingness to act. This leaves the alliance a wide berth. At one end of the spectrum is global crisis management at the request of the UN—regardless of the degree to which member states are affected. At the other is only acting when a member's sovereignty is imperiled. The former lacks sustainability while the latter lacks relevancy. Popular resolve and commitment to the collective maintenance of international peace and stability by Western democracies can be uncertain and limited, especially when entanglements are not central to national interests or diverge from liberal values. In these cases, tolerance for the loss of talent and treasure is low. Consequently, the legitimacy conferred by the establishment of the rule of law, the promotion of economic growth, and the institution of democratic values must underpin the alliance's next strategic concept.

While US security is reliant on its capacity to act globally, NATO is but one actor in a globalized world and not a global actor. Some have urged the expansion of NATO into a global alliance, but this will quickly exhaust the Europeans and, in so doing, jeopardize transatlantic security.<sup>38</sup> Many of the most salient threats to the globalized world are on Europe's doorstep—specifically the arc that runs from Africa through Southwest and then Central Asia—which should circumscribe NATO's geographic ambitions.<sup>39</sup> If Europe succumbs, America's odds grow longer. NATO provides a European buffer, allowing the United States strategic defense in depth. While America will remain the ultimate security guarantor for

some time, Europe will continue to provide it a continental cushion. The ability to deter instability at a distance, therefore, is at the core of our investment in collective security.

Washington's leadership and commitment to the Euro-Atlantic pact remains critical to defending the American homeland, gaining market access, supporting kindred liberal democracies, and eliminating weapons of mass destruction. While the United States remains the security provider of last resort, NATO is up to addressing contemporary security concerns—but only under American leadership respectful of the limits of European power. The alliance must regain its central role as a forum for transatlantic security. To achieve this, both the United States and its European partners must commit to a NATO-first policy under which the United States defers from unilateral action and achieves a civil-military balance while respecting a lower level of European ambition. Europe, in turn, must reciprocate with fewer caveats and more capabilities. NATO must return to the principle—laid out in DC 6/1—that national means provide the basis for contributory equity. The European Union, furthermore, must complement NATO while refraining from competing with the alliance.

Global security is dependent on the emergence of peaceful, stable, prosperous, and self-confident democratic societies able to protect civil rights, combat terrorism, and contain illegal immigration. NATO's next strategy, therefore, must focus on integrating newly emancipated nations into a liberal geopolitical order. Direct Western involvement in countering militant fanaticism endemic in Southwest Asia and reviving failed or failing African states is often portrayed as neocolonialism in disguise. This requires NATO, therefore, to shift its focus from providing security directly to building national capacities. This would entail, for example, capacity building in Pakistan and Afghanistan, while working with India and Iran to address their legitimate security concerns. Closer to Western Europe, the alliance must manage Russia's imperialist fade by simultaneously drawing the line against lingering nostalgic ambitions and encouraging more constructive international relationships.

NATO success is dependent on the spread of ideals. The alliance, for example, faces an ideological battle in which al-Qaeda has devolved into an idea that is self-generating extremist affiliates.<sup>40</sup> To counter this threat, the integration and synchronization of information operations, public affairs, and public diplomacy in increasingly complex and multifaceted environments requires a coherent approach, the absence of which is undermining the alliance's effec-



tiveness. The institutionalization of strategic communications within NATO requires a shared understanding that results in the creation of lucid policy and doctrine. NATO's next strategic concept must prioritize the development of organizational structures, processes, and human-centric solutions that effectively integrate strategic communications at the tactical and operational levels—where they are missing today.

The alliance has proven a resilient and relevant organization, weathering past crises by adapting itself to changing environments. When its relevance was imperiled by paralysis in dealing with the growing Balkans crisis, NATO fell back on US leadership and UN mandates for the legitimacy and moral turpitude necessary to deal with threats in Europe's backyard. In the process, it undertook its first out-of-area combat deployment to Bosnia and Herzegovina. Although the mid-1990s Balkans intervention was only a qualified success, the confidence gained by these groundbreaking operations set the stage for NATO's first combat operation outside of Europe. Less than 10 years later, troops deployed to Afghanistan under the NATO flag, where they continue to conduct stability and security operations in support of the Afghan government.<sup>41</sup> Today the alliance faces an unfinished war in Afghanistan, tensions with former Cold War foe Russia, doubts over the pace of future NATO expansion, and a dwindling appetite for military-centric solutions.

Properly shaped, the alliance permits the United States to distribute security responsibilities among a broad base of nations that share its commitment to liberal democratic values and global prosperity. Properly managed, the alliance is an important tool for guiding the rise of a multipolar world. NATO's next strategic concept must balance the asymmetric threats of the twenty-first century—terrorist networks, criminal enterprises, and climate change—with eighteenth-century conventional challenges posed by hegemonic nation-states. A successful strategic concept, therefore, will foster readiness, sustainability, and interoperability while offering a range of flexible options that leverage national strengths and direct their contribution to global security. Just as the NRF reaches full operational capability, the alliance must now adopt a more innovative and integrated approach to preparing its future response if it is to remain relevant. It must do this in an increasingly resource-constrained environment and in the face of the growing hybridization of threats. To accomplish this requires overcoming bureaucratic inertia, organizational culture, and national

caveats. While we may not be able to anticipate tomorrow's threats, it is clear is that NATO cannot meet them without a coherent strategy. **SSQ**

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# Chinese Military Involvement in a Future Korean War

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IN LATE October 1950, with UN forces pushing north toward the Yalu River, Mao Zedong—influenced by the US Navy presence in the Taiwan Straits, Soviet heavy-handedness, and a somewhat altruistic desire to help his fellow Communist comrades—issued the order for China to enter the Korean War.<sup>1</sup> His poorly equipped, parka-clad millions eventually stymied the advance, pushing UN forces below the 38th parallel and into the uneasy armistice that still exists. Until the very last moment, US war planners (and Gen Douglas MacArthur himself)<sup>2</sup> ignored signs of Chinese preparations for attack—a strategic mistake which led to the hard-fought retreat of UN forces out of North Korea. Influenced by history, Korean analysts today often refer to the US fatal error when discussing future Chinese military involvement in a Korean conflict. This implies an almost fatalistic assumption that China would intervene on behalf of North Korea. By analyzing Chinese intentions simply through a historical perspective, we limit our conclusions to a prism of variables that may no longer be applicable in a post–Cold War era.

To avoid repeating the mistakes of the past (or being overly influenced by them), Chinese intentions in a future Korean war must be analyzed, first by exploring how China's interests and capabilities have changed since 1950. Once a divergence from the past has been established, it is then necessary to define concrete actions the United States could take to not only assuage Chinese concerns but to also deter China's entrance into the conflict. Simply put, a modern analysis of any future Korean war must attempt to define China's perceived costs and benefits from involvement and then create solutions through which the United States can influence the values assigned by the Chinese to their political decisions. The final

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goal is to convince the Chinese that the cost of intervening militarily for North Korea would be greater than the benefit China could receive by abstaining from the conflict.

Before delving into this analysis, it is important to broach the assumptions upon which this discussion is based. First, this analysis assumes an unprovoked North Korean attack into South Korea. Secondly, the argument assumes that North Korea initiated this unprovoked attack without prior Chinese approval. It is important to understand that this analysis does not discuss regime anarchy, political upheavals, or any other circumstance which would involve humanitarian crises in North Korea.

### **Why Did China Enter the Korean War?**

China today is not the burgeoning bastion of Maoism that entered the Korean War in 1950, nor is the political paradigm the same bipolar schism of interests that so divisively partitioned Korea after World War II. In 1950, on the eve of the Korean War, the People's Republic of China (PRC) was a mere one year old, insecure in both its geopolitical viability and its domestic sustainability—plunging forward on the fumes of Mao's charismatic leadership and the spirit of the communist revolution. It was an infant state which, like all nation-states, was primarily concerned with survival—survival in the face of the US Navy's 7th Fleet, which was protecting remnants of the Chinese Republic exiled to Taiwan; survival in the face of the capitalist forces quickly advancing to the Yalu River; survival in the face of a region alarmingly antagonistic to the Communist Party and cornered by forces creeping in from Japan and the Korean peninsula (and with a Soviet neighbor that was not exactly trustworthy). A wide array of opinions exists on what ultimately pushed China into the Korean War. Here we'll explore some of the preeminent arguments, to include Mao's personal proclivities toward military romanticism,<sup>3</sup> China's role as a non-nuclear state in an emerging game of nuclear deterrence, the role of Stalin, and US policy in the Taiwan Straits.

Scholars may disagree on what finally pushed Mao into the Korean War, but they can agree that he was the primary arbiter of the final decision.<sup>4</sup> For that reason, Mao himself must be examined as a key variable in China's entry into the war. Perhaps most importantly, Mao believed the Chinese stood a fighting chance against the United States. Influenced by Marxist and Confucian theories, he stressed that the strength of character

and moral rectitude of the Chinese Communists mitigated any technological inferiority a PRC soldier might initially face in comparison to the well-equipped forces of the United States.<sup>5</sup> In this way, Mao's decision to combat the United States was derived by an analysis of possible outcomes—not through quantitative variables (number of tanks, efficacy of weaponry, presence of aircraft), but through qualitative concepts (strength of will, resourcefulness, and courage). In weighing these qualitative elements, Mao's reasoning became highly skewed by Marxist concepts of the proletariat's historical inevitability. Therefore, if one PRC soldier exhibits the valor of 10 capitalist mercenaries, then Mao's forces would (as the reasoning goes) be able, in the long term, to combat the better-equipped US forces. Mao speaks to this explicitly in an October 1950 telegram to Stalin in which he explains, "[T]he enemy would control the air . . . but we should be able to concentrate our forces four times larger than the enemy . . . and to use a firing power one and a half to two times stronger than that of the enemy . . . so that we can guarantee a complete and thorough destruction of one enemy army."<sup>6</sup> After determining that victory through strength of will (or sheer numbers) was achievable, Mao had next to decide if it was in the interest of the new People's Republic of China to become involved in the Korean War. Here his personal desires—respect in the eyes of international players, destruction of Chiang Kai-shek's nationalist forces and reunification of the Chinese territory, and cementation of his personal leadership in the quasi-independent Chinese Socialist Party—intertwined confusingly with national objectives. For the purpose of this analysis, we will discuss these variables as national interests.

Also integral to Mao's reasoning was the relatively new appearance of nuclear bombs on the international scene. Though Stalin and Mao both had an emerging understanding of the power of nuclear weapons to deter states from invading one another, the concept of deterrence was yet to become a codified foreign-policy concept. In 1950, the Soviet Union was a newcomer nuclear state,<sup>7</sup> and China was a nonplayer in the nuclear game. So, while China in 1950 assessed the very strong possibility of US aggression into its homeland,<sup>8</sup> it was not deterred from intervening in the Korean conflict because it (correctly) assumed that the United States would either not use a nuclear weapon against a nonnuclear state supported by a nuclear Soviet Union,<sup>9</sup> or the United States would use a nuclear weapon and the PRC's strength of will and population magnitude would still defeat US aggression.<sup>10</sup> Either way, whether the United States used a nuclear

bomb or relied on its conventional strength, China was equally vulnerable to an opportunistic US invasion of Manchuria. As Mao reasoned in his 1946 interview with US journalist Anna Strong, “The atom bomb is a paper tiger with which the American reactionaries try to terrify the people. It looks terrible but, in fact, is not. Of course, the atom bomb is a weapon of mass annihilation: the outcome of a war is decided by the people, not by one or two new weapons.”<sup>11</sup> More cavalierly, Mao believed that one A-bomb—with the demonstrated capability to kill approximately 150,000—would prove inconsequential in an all-out conflict against the heavily populated PRC. He reasoned that Stalin’s Soviet Union, with its commensurate conventional and burgeoning nuclear capabilities, was a more likely recipient of the United States’ nuclear ire. It was a risky assessment in 1950, but surprisingly accurate.

Stalin made the same assessment as Mao, which helps explain why the Soviet Union took such pains to both extricate itself from blame for the Korean War and to avoid explicitly aiding the North Koreans. The Korean War, which embroiled the United States in costly conflict, diverted US attention from the Soviet Union and provided an opportunity for Stalin to irrevocably divide the United States and China. It also allowed Stalin to divert Mao’s attention from Taiwan and avoid Chinese requests for Soviet support to attack Chiang Kai-shek’s forces. Stalin knew Mao’s forces had no possibility of success if the United States placed its unequivocal support behind Chiang’s forces. These motivators explain a significant school of thought, which attempts to explain Mao’s final decision to enter the Korean War as a response to extreme pressure from a wily Stalin.<sup>12</sup> Stalin’s manipulation of Chinese insecurities is evident in his October 1950 cable to Mao, in which Stalin argues, “For you it is possible to help the Korean people, but for us it is impossible because as you know the Second World War ended not long ago, and we are not ready for the Third World War.” He went on to further elucidate the consequences to China if it were to ignore the conflict brewing along its borders, “The economic recovery of the Northeast [China] probably will be out of the question . . . [the Americans] at will could harass from air, land, and sea.”<sup>13</sup> Bottom line, the milk has already been spilt. The Chinese could cry about the unfairness of the conflict which began without their consent<sup>14</sup> and at great disadvantage to their Taiwan reunification plans, but in the end their hand had already been forced and they had nothing left to do but to limit the repercussions of the war at their front door.

What may have been the greatest determinant into China's entry into the Korean War was a situation a few thousand miles south in Taiwan. Chiang Kai-shek's forces were seriously impeding the PRC's recognized entrance as an international player. In truth, Mao's primary goal in 1950 was not to support his communist brethren in North Korea but to finally quell his domestic enemies and cement his control of the entire Chinese territories.<sup>15</sup> In fact, as Kim Il Sung crafted invasion plans with Stalin in May of 1950, Mao was otherwise engaged with Taiwan invasion plans. By June (and just a few weeks before the first shots of the Korean War), General MacArthur warned Congress that "the troops opposite Formosa [Taiwan] had been increased from less than 40,000 to about 156,000."<sup>16</sup> Discussions between the Chinese and Soviet foreign ministries during this time period focus not on crafting a plan for North Korean invasion of the South, but on Soviet support of a PRC invasion of Taiwan<sup>17</sup> (impossible to attempt without Stalin's support because the PRC had no amphibious or airborne capability to mount an attack). Unfortunately for Mao, Stalin beat Mao to the punch and condoned (if not influenced) Kim Il Sung's attack on South Korea.<sup>18</sup> Stalin knew this would force the United States' hand—not only in regard to Korea, but also Taiwan. True to form, the United States (which had been toying with the notion of abandoning Chiang Kai-shek and offering recognition to Mao's PRC)<sup>19</sup> interpreted the Korean attack as a potential domino in their Asian strategy and quickly moved the 7th Fleet into the Taiwan Straits to protect against any opportunistic move by Mao. In fact, in July 1950, the United States went as far as to send General MacArthur to a highly public meeting with Chiang Kai-shek, coupling the stunt with the forward deployment of strategic bombers to Guam.<sup>20</sup> America's aggressive move into the Straits was noted by the Chinese government and clearly discussed in a late-September statement by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs:

We Chinese people are against the American imperialists because they are against us. They have openly become the arch enemy of the People's Republic of China by supporting the people's enemy, the Chiang Kai-shek clique, by sending a huge fleet to prevent the liberation of the Chinese territory of Taiwan, by repeated air intrusions and strafing and bombing of the Chinese people, by refusing new China a seat in the UN, through intrigues with their satellite nations, by rearing up a fascist power in Japan, and by rearming Japan for the purpose of expanding aggressive war. Is it not just for us to support our friend and neighbor against our enemy?<sup>21</sup>

Later the seemingly unstoppable US drive to the Yalu River would lead Mao to equate a US victory in Korea with an eventual (if not immediate)



opportunistic American attack into northeast China.<sup>22</sup> This would effectively open a two-front war (with Taiwan being a second front) from which Mao would not be able to garner enough resources to effectively retain control of the Chinese continent. Taiwan and Korea were impossible to decouple.

## **What Could Pull China Into a Korean Conflict?**

Is China willing to risk nuclear war with the United States over North Korea? More than likely . . . no. However, a more difficult question may be whether China is willing to risk limited war with the United States over North Korea.

First and foremost, for China to be willing to risk a limited war with the United States, China must be sure the United States would not use its nuclear arsenal. Keir Lieber and Daryl Press argue in their article, “The Nukes We Need,” that for the concept of mutually assured destruction (MAD) to work, both parties must be able to credibly support their threat of nuclear force.<sup>23</sup> Can (and does) the United States credibly claim that it would be willing to exercise its nuclear deterrent against China if People’s Liberation Army Air Force Flankers were to fly defensive patrols over Pyongyang? If Chinese vessels took up defensive positions at major North Korean ports such as Wonsan and Nampo? If Chinese Air Defense radars or surface-to-air missiles began to operate out of Sinuiju? The answer continues to be obfuscated in the recently published *Nuclear Policy Review* penned by Secretary of Defense Robert Gates which asserts,

In the case of countries . . . that possess nuclear weapons and states not in compliance with their nuclear non-proliferation obligations—there remains a narrow range of contingencies in which U.S. nuclear weapons may still play a role in deterring a conventional or CBW attack against the United States or its allies and partners. The United States is therefore not prepared at the present time to adopt a universal policy that deterring nuclear attack is the sole purpose of nuclear weapons, but will work to establish conditions under which such a policy could be safely adopted.<sup>24</sup>

With such a vague delineation of nuclear usage, it would be logical for China to assess that, no, the United States would not risk nuclear war by initiating a nuclear conflict against a state which controls a potentially threatening amount of US currency. No, the United States would not risk nuclear war against a state that has the capability to target not only

US-controlled Pacific interests but even the mainland United States (albeit in a limited manner).

We have established the possibility that the Chinese could assess the United States to be nuclearly unwilling. With this foundation, it is important to evaluate the possible circumstances which could lead China to determine that even the repercussions of a limited, conventional war would outweigh the international, domestic, and economic repercussions of abetting the North Koreans in an attack against the South. In homage to East meets West, it is time to introduce Clausewitz to the analysis. It is Clausewitz's argument that "the great uncertainty of all data in war is a peculiar difficulty, because all action must, to a certain extent, be planned in a mere twilight, which in addition not infrequently—like the effect of a fog or moonshine—gives to things exaggerated dimensions and unnatural appearance."<sup>25</sup> It is situations that Clausewitz described that lead to unfortunate incidents, and it is ultimately the most dangerous cinder block in the Korean scenario. How disciplined are Chinese air defense operators sitting watch as US aircraft skirt the border to prosecute North Korean targets? How advanced is the Chinese early warning system to be able to properly identify a US pilot from a North Korean pilot? How sure can a US vessel be that its nighttime engagement is with a North Korean frigate and not a Chinese frigate defending its perceived economic exclusion zone? I mention air and sea assets in particular because air and sea boundaries are inherently fluid (see the extensive arguments between China and the international community about the extent of their economic exclusion zone).<sup>26</sup> It is a matter of a simple GPS malfunction (or jamming) or operator error, which could lead forces on either side to improperly distinguish friend from foe or neutral from hostile.

Another volatile element in the Northeast Asian security dynamic is the relationship between China and Japan. North Korea's presence as the "bad guy" in Northeast Asia is relatively short in the history of the region. The historical enemy of all countries—from China to South Korea—has in fact been Japan. This enduring legacy of Japan as the colonizer is still salient in Chinese memories. Only five years ago, Chinese citizens took to the street in a mass protest against Japanese history books. Visits to the Yasakuni Shrine by Japanese officials still provide sizeable concern to Chinese and Korean diplomats. And to this day, China and Japan refuse to accept the sovereignty of oil-rich islands located between the two nations. Susan Shirk captures this antipathy in her book *Fragile Superpower*

when she quotes a Chinese Internet user as saying, “I would like to donate one month’s salary if our army fought against Taiwan. I would like to donate one year’s salary if our army fought against America. I would like to donate my life if our army fought against Japan.”<sup>27</sup> This animosity is recognized and exploited by the North Koreans, who have spent the last two years of Six Party Talks working to drive a wedge between the Japanese and the region, reminding the region of Japan’s imperial past while steadily pushing Japan out of relevance in regional negotiations. A 23 October 2008 article in KCNA (North Korea’s official news agency) masterfully articulated North Korea’s strategy vis-à-vis Japan, declaring,

What Japan is now claiming under the pretext of “nuclear verification” glaringly reveals its present regime’s stance toward the DPRK . . . Japan’s negative attitude is a deliberate move to hamstring the implementation of the denuclearization of the peninsula . . . Japan can hardly be considered as a party to the six-party talks both in the light of what it has done at the talks so far and the insincere stance taken by it toward the fulfillment of its commitments under the agreement reached at the talks. The countries concerned still remember the hurdles laid by Japan to create complexities in the way of the talks. They are, therefore, cautious about the present Japanese government bringing to light its sinister intention, displeased with the current development. Japan now deserves cool treatment for opposing the new “verification proposal” of the DPRK under the pretext of the “alliance.”<sup>28</sup>

The Japanese are partly responsible for the North Koreans’ effective manipulation of Japanese influence in the region. Japan is quick to react to North Korean aggression and often takes actions that countries, like China, view as counterproductive for achieving stability in the region. Taking into account these two foreign-policy objectives and strategies, it would not be out of the realm of possibility for North Korea to launch ballistic missiles at Japan in an attempt to draw Japan into the conflict, thus turning a simple equation of North Korea versus the United States and South Korea (a situation which could be tenable to China) into a more complicated scenario of North Korea versus the United States, South Korea, and Japan. Could China stand by as Japan executed what would seem dangerously similar to their colonial expansion of the early twentieth century?

A full discussion about China’s range of options in a Korean conflict cannot be concluded without discussing Taiwan. However loathe the United States is to link actions on the Korean peninsula with Taiwan, it is historically impossible to completely separate the two issues. As mentioned previously, China’s attempts to initially reunify Taiwan with the

PRC were stymied by the Korean War. Would it be possible for China to capitalize on the US focus on Korea to launch a simultaneous amphibious operation to conquer Taiwan? The answer to that question lies in the answer to two additional questions: (1) Does China believe that it could conquer Taiwan with the United States tied up in Korea? and (2) Does China believe that it is worth an offensive attack to reunify Taiwan?

As to the first question, China hosts an impressive array of short-range ballistic missiles and increasingly accurate medium-range ballistic missiles that reside uncomfortably close, across the Taiwan Straits.<sup>29</sup> According to a recent RAND study, the Chinese currently have the initial capability to destroy Taiwanese air defenses as well as its ability to launch offensive air operations. Assuming that US Pacific Forces would be tied up in a Korean conflict, China would be able to achieve air superiority within 24 to 48 hours of launching an attack on Taiwan. That would leave US long-range missile capability and Taiwanese ground troops to fend off a Chinese amphibious attack. The good news for the Taiwanese is that China still does not boast a sizeable amphibious capability.<sup>30</sup> It would take an operation of immense magnitude, planning, and resources to physically control the Taiwanese island. It is unknown whether the Chinese would be willing to enter into a conflict so antithetical to their Maoist principles of asymmetry. The conflict could devolve into a guerrilla conflict far too reminiscent to China's problems in Tibet. Ultimately China could most likely win the initial phase of a conflict but would find it difficult to completely secure and control the physical island.

This brings us to the second question. Does China believe it is worth launching an offensive attack against Taiwan? I find this question to be very difficult for Western (read American) analysts to comprehend. We simply do not have the equivalent to Taiwan in our cultural vernacular. It is hard for us to understand what domestic issue would be so salient it would be worth being declared an international pariah. In many ways, much of the same cost-benefit analysis computed for a Korean scenario would go into analysis of a Taiwan attack. How much would this hurt the Chinese economy? How much would it hinder China's ability to operate in the international community? How much domestic pressure would be put on China to use the Korean conflict to reunify Taiwan?<sup>31</sup> The answers to these questions lie with the Chinese policymakers and are almost impossible to discern as an outsider. For this analysis, what is important is not the answer to these questions but that the Chinese could *possibly* be

motivated to pursue an opportunistic invasion of Taiwan during a Korean conflict. This would consequently proliferate the Korean conflict to the Taiwan Straits and, by proxy, complicate US allocation of diplomatic and military resources during a Korean conflict.

## **Why China Won't Enter the Next Korean Conflict**

Today China is more secure in its geopolitical position and domestic survivability than the China of 1950. Though still driven by state survival, China is less concerned with the preservation of communism and more focused on stability to its burgeoning economy and global presence. Despite reluctance to codify its pragmatic focus into clear-cut foreign policy statements, China is no longer preoccupied with the proliferation of “isms”<sup>32</sup> and is more concerned with the aftermath of a nuclear-empowered, unstable North Korea.

Perhaps most noticeably, China of 2010 has no Mao. Instead, it has developed a bureaucratic system of governance with individuals who hold key positions but no one leader so charismatic as to control all national objectives. As a result, the possibility of personality-driven decision making is significantly decreased. The need to generate factions of consensus mitigates much of the romanticism endemic in Mao's military choices. Therefore, by removing Mao from the equation, the decision to intervene in a Korean conflict becomes a much more transparent equation of utilities, with a rational balance of domestic and international objectives.

Domestically, China is preoccupied with the impact that a Korean conflict might have to its economic and demographic stability. Northeastern China boasts several major industries—including steel, automobile production, and petroleum refining. Its three provinces—Liaoning, Jilin, and Heilongjiang—generate over \$413 billion in gross domestic product<sup>33</sup> and are the home base of the Shenyang Aviation Company, the centerpiece of modern aviation development in China. It is also the research and development hub for Chinese fifth-generation aircraft.<sup>34</sup> Were China to assist the North Koreans in a conflict, they could assume that these industries as well as major air force installations in the Shenyang region would be targeted by the United States, even in a relatively limited conflict scenario.

Add to the Chinese calculus the variable of over 1.5 million ethnic Koreans residing in the northeast region of China, and it leads to a very

serious Chinese concern. Not only would a large influx of North Korean refugees potentially provide a destabilizing demographic, but there is also the obvious cost of wartime refugee flows of hundreds of thousands to millions of starving North Koreans. The Chinese, who have been loath to provide for North Korean refugees in the past, will be assailed with a massive requirement to provide food, water, medical supplies, and basic housing. Chinese military forces in the region will have to police the porous border, establish rule of law in refugee camps, and mitigate the amount of international involvement in the humanitarian crisis. The Chinese have been preparing for this scenario since the 2006 North Korean nuclear test. Then, reports flooded newspapers worldwide of Chinese fence construction along the Sino-Korean border, implying containment, not involvement.<sup>35</sup> It seems counterintuitive that China would aid the proliferation of a conflict, which would have such dramatic repercussions to their own territories.

The effects to the Chinese border area would not be limited to refugee crises or errant bombs. On an environmental level, China could also suffer the repercussion of nuclear, chemical, or biological fallout from North Korea. While these events could occur regardless of Chinese military involvement, the probability they would occur is more likely in a drawn-out guerilla warfare scenario than a Persian Gulf-style US advance through North Korea, partly because a quickly dominated North Korea would have less access to weapons of mass destruction. According to the International Crisis Group and International Institute for Strategic Studies, North Korea may have stockpiled 2,500–5,000 tons of chemical agents<sup>36</sup> and experimented with biological warfare capability—to include anthrax and smallpox. Both chemical and biological weapons are notoriously difficult to control after dissemination and could spread to the Chinese territories, especially if North Korea chose to use those weapons within their own territory as US forces pushed north. There is also the potential concern that US targeting of North Korean facilities could inadvertently release dangerous toxins into the environment. According to *Global Security*, North Korea hosts chemical facilities within the Sino-Korean border town of Sinuiju,<sup>37</sup> just a short distance from Chinese territory and too close to contain fallout from reaching into northeastern China. Compound China's cost-benefit calculations with the devastating regional effects of a North Korean nuclear attack on Seoul or a subsequent reprisal attack by

the United States on Pyongyang, and it is clear China would benefit far more from mitigating conflict than by encouraging or abetting it.

Internationally, China is a major nuclear player, interested in asserting regional dominance while also parlaying to international norms in many ways dictated by the United States. The concept of nuclear deterrence is a linchpin in China's strategic defense and would influence its actions in any Korean conflict. Today, China understands the very real possibility of inciting a nuclear war if it were to pit itself against the United States. It also understands its relative inability to compete with the United States in terms of quantity and survivability of intercontinental nuclear strike platforms. Instead, it retains a limited deterrent capability designed to provide regional coverage and prevent territorial aggression. As Lt Gen Li Jijun, vice president of the PLA's Academy of Military Science, said in a 1997 speech, "China's strategy is completely defensive, focused only on deterring."<sup>38</sup>

This has a very important repercussion for Chinese–North Korean relations; in particular, the current interpretation of the extent of the Sino–North Korean Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance. While the Chinese promise that “in the event of one of the Contracting Parties being subject to the armed attack by any state or several states jointly and thus being involved in a state of war, the other Contracting Party shall immediately render military and other assistance by all means at its disposal,”<sup>39</sup> they do not extend a nuclear umbrella over North Korea as the US does explicitly over South Korea and Japan. The Chinese also make their support contingent on an offensive attack into North Korea. This is a foreign-policy decision North Korea clearly understands. A July 2009 report from North Korea's news agency stated,

As for the treaty of friendship, cooperation and mutual assistance between the DPRK and China is concerned, it was concluded when China was a non-nuclear state. It is, therefore, quite irrelevant to the provision of “nuclear umbrella.” It is our view that China has pursued the policy of keeping “minimum nuclear deterrent” for protecting itself only. In fact, China's existing nuclear armed forces are not big enough to protect other countries and they do not stand comparison with the nuclear armed forces of the U.S. threatening the DPRK, in particular. This is a well known fact.<sup>40</sup>

Perhaps the greatest argument against Chinese military involvement in a second Korean War is its position and reliance on the global economy. As one of the world's leading exporters, China's fortunes are irrevocably intertwined with states poised against North Korea. According to PRC Ministry

of Commerce data from February 2010, China in 2009 completed almost \$32 billion in trade with the United States, \$16.6 billion with South Korea, and \$25.5 billion with Japan. In total, China's trade with the United States, Japan, and South Korea totaled roughly \$74 billion and comprised a full 30 percent of China's total trade.<sup>41</sup> In comparison, China claimed the paltry sum of \$380 million in legitimate trade with North Korea, most of which is comprised of highly subsidized loans and aid. To add to the economic repercussions, China is the largest single holder of US currency.<sup>42</sup> The devaluation of the dollar due to a drawn-out war on the peninsula would deplete the value of China's stockpiles and perversely damage the Chinese perhaps more acutely than the United States.

These impressive economic statistics belie the overall repercussions of Chinese involvement in a second Korean War. China's ability to operate in and with multinational institutions like the World Trade Organization is contingent on international support. US displeasure over Chinese action vis-à-vis a Korean conflict would likely translate to blackballing of Chinese goods from major transnational trade agreements and could lead to allied nation sanctions. Furthermore, the impressive US blue water Navy could pose a significant threat to China's tanker-delivered supply of oil—an Achilles' heel to any oil-dependent nation.

## **Persuading China to Refrain**

Despite the reasons why China will not likely enter a Korean conflict, there are some very concrete actions the United States can take to mitigate reasons why it may. First and foremost, the United States must establish a clear nuclear policy vis-à-vis Chinese involvement. For instance, the United States could, given certain Chinese provocations, respond with a tactical nuclear strike against key infrastructure. Secondly, the United States must demonstrate its capability to pursue conventional deterrents. The 2010 *Nuclear Posture Review* partially addresses this issue with its explicit promise to strengthen conventional capabilities, to include ballistic-missile defense.<sup>43</sup> However, the review does not go far enough in articulating nuclear strategy to the Chinese government. By setting clear trigger points as well as expectations, we are able to establish a decision matrix that elucidates players' perceived values to particular actions. This, in turn, will limit the range of assessed choices available to China.



Perhaps the most pragmatic and achievable action that could reduce the chance of Chinese intervention into a Korean conflict would be to establish clear rules of engagement with the Chinese government. This concept, while tactically feasible, is revolutionary in regards to US–Chinese interactions. The US government would have to make the theoretical leap that the Chinese are not default enemies and would find it mutually beneficial to avoid war with the United States. After making this theoretical leap and with the eruption of conflict on the peninsula, the United States would begin coordinating with the Chinese to establish rules of engagement and guidelines to the conflict. Below are some initial recommendations:

1. Establish air, sea, and land buffer zones (or alternately conflict limit lines), beyond which US and Chinese forces will not operate. South Korean forces will be allowed to operate within the unified Korean territory, to include national air and sea boundaries.
2. Assign governance responsibility for refugees along Sino-Korean borders, to include nongovernment organization (NGO) and nation-state roles, responsibilities, and reporting authorities.
3. Delineate procedures through which countries may report violations of rules of engagement.
4. Assign repercussions for violations of the agreed upon rules of engagement.

It is highly unlikely China will want to be perceived either as colluding against the North Koreans or likewise as an ally in efforts against US and South Korean forces. Despite these Chinese concerns, the rules of engagement could still be effective as a secret agreement. Accordingly, the rules of engagement would be followed by all US and allied forces unless the Chinese were found to be supporting the North Koreans.

Because the idea of coordinating rules of warfare with China is a new concept, it would be irresponsible to discuss these rules of engagement without touching on China's possible reaction to proposed rules of engagement. First and foremost, China will likely note the advantage of their position and use that advantage to request information about US and allied countries' tactical operations, to include locations and times of major operations and units tasked in the conflict. As counterintuitive as it might at first seem, divulging a level of information to the Chinese could help establish a rapport without giving the Chinese much more than what

they would be able to ascertain with their own intelligence resources. Furthermore, information also must be divulged with preconditions. If evidence were to be found of China leaking important tactical information to the North Koreans, the Chinese would lose their privilege to further information (this would be included in the rules of engagement).

As mentioned earlier there is a danger of schisms of regional interests should Japan be pulled into the war. To avoid this regional bifurcation, the United States must first assure Japan of its willingness and ability to defend Japan against North Korean actions. This will be a difficult argument if North Korea has already successfully attacked Japan with ballistic missiles. It will be the job of the United States to clearly explain to Japan its lack of resources or constitutional viability to prosecute targets outside of their international boundaries. Japan must be convinced the use of its air and naval forces is more beneficial in defense of the homeland, in particular, filling the gaps of combat air patrols and naval defenses previously manned by US forces and possibly forward deployed to the Korean peninsula. Japan must also be convinced to limit or refrain from any military actions near islands disputed with the Chinese or around the southern islands, which abut Chinese-claimed economic exclusion zones. If possible, the United States will need to demarcate Japanese and Chinese defense zones. It is important Japan not be included as a component of US allied forces nor be seen as part of the forces engaged in conflict with North Korea. It is highly unlikely China would be willing to sign any statement that included Japan as a member of the US alliance against North Korea.

Rhetorically, the United States must convince the Japanese that hawkish statements, while appealing domestically, could serve as a springboard for Chinese involvement. The Japanese must avoid any references to their history and instead focus their statements on the importance of regional stability and perseverance of the economic dependence of Northeast Asia. In this particular situation, Japan would profit from demurring to the United States, which is historically seen as less of a threat in the region than Japan.<sup>44</sup> The rhetorical aspect is particularly applicable to dissipating historical antipathies because, as in the first Korean War, the United States would likely use basing in Japan to launch and support many of the logistical operations during a conflict against North Korea. The North Koreans could argue their actions were combating Japan's imperial forces in a conflict much like the anti-Japanese struggle before and during World War II.

## **The Way Ahead: Solving the Problem of Regional Imbalance**

For years, scholars have asserted that China's need for a North Korean buffer state would lead the PRC to intervene militarily on North Korea's behalf in any future Korean conflict. Though this argument may have lost much of its strength after the demise of the Cold War and the souring of relations between North Korea and China since 2006, it is essential that we address China's fundamental balance of power concerns. Reassuring the Chinese of their continued importance in the region will be pivotal in convincing China's government not to support the North Korean war efforts. Fundamentally, the United States and China have the same interests in Korea—stability on the Korean peninsula. Stability can be achieved by creating a process of reunification, which espouses incremental government change, links North Korean unification with US withdrawal from Korea, and focuses on the creation of a Korean state independent from the United States. China could be convinced that the dissolution of North Korea would not weaken China's influence within Northeast Asia and could at the same time ensure a stable Korean state on Chinese borders.

The change could prove advantageous for decoupling the Taiwan situation from the Korean peninsula. By demonstrating the will to use force, openness in military planning, and gracious collaboration in victory, the United States would demonstrate its inherent trust in China to participate in the region as a stabilizer. It would also highlight the continued US commitment to nuclear and conventional deterrence for its allies. In a game of multiple iterations, a Korean conflict could help the United States and China more advantageously perceive utility and value of each nation's interests and actions in Asia. By building trust between the two players in the Asian region, the probability of provoking conflict becomes less likely. Perversely, if executed properly, a conflict on the Korean peninsula could serve as a stabilizing event in the Pacific region. **SSQ**

### **Notes**

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# A Diplomatic Surge in Afghanistan, 2011–14

*Daryl Morini*

THE NORTH Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) member states and their coalition partners—encompassing some 40 democracies—are not the only players with high stakes in the current war for Afghanistan. Influential players such as Russia, Pakistan, Iran, India, and China all have legitimate interests.<sup>1</sup> Without a commensurate multilateral diplomatic surge, efforts toward lasting peace and stability in Afghanistan will most likely fail. But the potential of international cooperation in facilitating a long-term political settlement in that country remains woefully under-exploited. Diplomatic cooperation among the main external players, along with coalition forces, will be essential to success in the Afghan campaign. Only by tapping into the global convergence of interests in Afghanistan can the United States and its NATO–ISAF (International Security Assistance Force) partners hope for a political victory or, at the very least, an international environment conducive to the conflict's peaceful resolution.

The strife in Afghanistan is variously conceived as an Afghan civil war, an inter-Pashtun ethnic conflict, or an Islamist upheaval. No consensus presently exists on the nature of the conflict in Afghanistan, neither in academic literature nor within NATO–ISAF headquarters.<sup>2</sup> The focus here is not on the military operations and campaigns which make up the international intervention in Afghanistan per se, nor does it pretend to contribute to these debates in any meaningful way. Instead, this analysis frames the war from an international relations perspective. This approach has thus far been conspicuously absent in many existing accounts of the conflict. An assessment of the various international interests in Afghanistan, even one as geographically limited as that offered here, can aid academics and policymakers in reconceptualizing Afghanistan as a country

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whose security needs must be met by more complex instruments than the application of military power alone—including reconstruction and development assistance, governance reform, and diplomatic engagement. The Obama administration's call for "a wide-ranging diplomatic strategy to build support for our efforts," which conceives of the Afghan-Pakistani (AFPAK) region not only as a battlefield, but also as a "theater for diplomacy," is a step in the right direction.<sup>3</sup> This analysis, in four parts, focuses on the latter aspect of international efforts to rebuild a viable Afghan state, namely that of diplomatic engagement.

This article first explores the pivotal role of interventionism by great powers in perpetuating political violence in Afghanistan during the Soviet-Afghan war (1979–89) and the Afghan civil war of the 1990s. Next, it seeks to convey a detailed picture of the complex web of international relationships and great-power interests currently affecting the coalition's war effort in Afghanistan. Third, it supports the case that Afghanistan's international context is as important as military facts on the ground in providing long-term security for the Afghan state and people. I argue that a more energetic "diplomatic surge" should be a fundamental part of an eventual American and NATO-ISAF military drawdown. If Western troop-providing states are unable or unwilling to assist the Afghan state in the diplomatic realm—once international soldiers and journalists begin returning home—the Afghans could face the troubling prospect of repeating the tragic historical precedent set by the Soviet Union. Finally, I offer practical policy recommendations on what Western powers and regional partners can do to help Afghanistan reach a lasting political settlement.

## **Great-Power Conflict in Afghanistan: From Colonial to Civil Wars**

At this early stage, we must confront a predictable hurdle. There is an unfortunately widespread historical observation-turned-cliché—dubbed "the mother of all clichés" by Christian Caryl—that all foreign interventions in Afghanistan have been doomed from the start.<sup>4</sup> If Afghanistan indeed is the "graveyard of empires," many analysts ask why then should this time be any different?<sup>5</sup> According to this tautological and unidimensional narrative, all external powers which intervened in Afghan affairs—from Alexander the Great to the Red Army—were *inevitably* defeated and expelled. The international systemic context of each intervention was thus irrelevant, the

historical setting unimportant. Such minutia as the differences between an imperial Briton, internationalist Russian, and American grunt are viewed as practically immaterial to those sharing this viewpoint. However, the strategic interests of foreign involvement in Afghanistan should not be generalized. The systemic context of each intervention, including that by NATO–ISAF, is arguably as important as military facts on the ground in explaining changes in the Afghan political scene. The US–Soviet proxy confrontation of the 1980s in Afghanistan is a poignant example thereof.

Since its imperial heyday, Russia has had profound security interests in Central Asia. It was from fear of Russian expansionary designs on its treasured imperial crown jewel—British India—that the United Kingdom ventured into Afghanistan in the first place.<sup>6</sup> Some theories hold that Moscow was interested in acquiring a warm-water port for its fleet to circumvent the inconveniences of its other naval facilities.<sup>7</sup> Russian interests in Afghanistan lasted well into the Soviet period, reaching its apex when a Marxist regime took control of Kabul in 1978. Reacting to this news, the US Embassy in Afghanistan cabled a message home which read: “The Russians have finally won the ‘Great Game’.”<sup>8</sup> Almost immediately, however, the atheistic People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan was faced with a popular resistance from the predominantly Islamic Afghan population surrounding its communist island of Kabul. Keeping true to its Brezhnev Doctrine, the USSR asserted its “right and duty” to go to war in foreign countries “if and when an existing socialist regime was threatened.”<sup>9</sup> This intervention began the Soviet–Afghan War of 1979–89.

Washington spearheaded the international movement to fund, equip, and train the Afghan Mujahedeen. This was an opportunity “of giving the USSR its Vietnam War,” in the words of Zbigniew Brzezinski, to demoralize and bleed the Red Army dry.<sup>10</sup> That is essentially what had occurred by 1989, when most Soviet troops had withdrawn from Afghanistan.<sup>11</sup> But Afghanistan had been just another proxy conflict of the Cold War, and once the Soviets left, the United States shifted its focus to more-pressing foreign policy issues such as German reunification. The war, as far as wars go, had been horribly traumatic and destructive for the country. It had decimated essential infrastructure and agricultural goods and killed upwards of one million Afghans.<sup>12</sup> After all of this, the champion of anti-Soviet resistance—the United States—simply left the scene. Some American policymakers argued that if Afghanistan were to escape the vicious cycle of poverty and insecurity, it could only do so with strong economic



support from Washington.<sup>13</sup> The alternative, they warned, would be continued chaos. They only represented a minority view, however, and the US government contented itself with buying back high-technology weapons which had been supplied to Afghan warlords to avoid them being used against American targets in the future.<sup>14</sup> In 1992, a dangerous power vacuum and ongoing civil war finally engulfed the fragile Kabul government.

The addition of pronounced security interests from Europe and the United States since the start of the current intervention in October 2001 only complicated what was already an internationalized civil war in Afghanistan. There is significant evidence to suggest that the US government was planning to dislodge the Taliban from Kabul, by force if necessary, even prior to 9/11. Indeed, Pres. George W. Bush's National Security Council (NSC) had already agreed, one day *before* the 11 September 2001 attacks, to a program of covertly overthrowing the Taliban if necessary.<sup>15</sup> But this foreign intervention in Afghanistan was not an exclusively Anglo-American enterprise. Foreign powers such as India, Russia, Iran, and probably Turkey had already joined the United States in providing financial and, most likely, military support to the war effort of the Northern Alliance—a majority ethnic Tajik group of soldiers fighting against the Taliban. These joint operations were based in neighboring Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, suggesting the open cooperation of these two states.<sup>16</sup> The fact that covert anti-Taliban efforts by a loose coalition of states existed prior to 9/11 does not necessarily legitimize them with regards to international law and the norm of nonintervention in other states' affairs,<sup>17</sup> but it does suggest that more than narrowly American strategic interests were at stake in Afghanistan. The international support lent to the Northern Alliance, as well as its predecessors, crossed many conventional diplomatic lines. Paradoxically, this phenomenon is central to understanding how great-power interests could be channeled to bring about a lasting political solution to the seemingly endless conflict in Afghanistan.

## **Why Russia is Part of the Solution**

Today, a major regional player which the US-led coalition has little choice but to rely on is the Russian Federation. The direct threat to Russian security posed by an unstable Afghanistan did not end in 1989 but remained to plague the Russian Federation in its fledgling days. A simple formula terrified Pres. Boris Yeltsin and his entourage. Islamic extremism

plus Chechnya, they feared, would result in Muslim separatism and the ultimate breakup of the federation. Although exaggerated by xenophobic nationalists, these fears did have foundations in reality, with both Islamic foreign fighters and finance drifting to Russia's unstable southern borders during the 1990s. This two-pronged attack originated in Afghanistan and Saudi Arabia.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, in 1993 Russia became embroiled in the brutal Tajik civil war when its peacekeepers were ambushed by Afghan Mujahedeen operating in the area. Moscow's response was to send in 25,000 troops by 1995 and close the Tajik-Afghan border.<sup>19</sup> That is proof of how seriously Moscow took the threat of an Islamic jihad against Russia.

By 1999, the official *Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation* pinpointed interference in Russia's domestic affairs, most notably in Chechnya, by Taliban and other Islamic supporters as "one of the main external threats to Russian security."<sup>20</sup> This should be puzzling at a time when Russia's relations with the United States and the NATO alliance in particular were at their post-Cold War low. This suggests that Afghanistan has been well and truly on the minds of Russian policymakers since the breakup of the Soviet Union. The highest echelon of the Russian military brass, in particular, obsessed about the potential threats emanating from the Muslim South—as well as the Asian East—more so than from the Euro-American West.<sup>21</sup> This could also explain why Moscow continued to wage a covert war against the Taliban alongside the United States until the 2001 intervention. One author even spoke of a division of labor between America and Russia in the war against the Taliban. The United States would bomb the Taliban infrastructure, and the Russians would equip, train, and aid the NA (Northern Alliance). The last time this level of military cooperation between Washington and Moscow occurred was 1945.<sup>22</sup>

Officially, no Russian soldiers or advisers were involved in Afghanistan's civil war or thereafter. In reality, Russian support always was and always will be a necessary precondition if coalition forces hope for a favorable outcome to the current war in Afghanistan. At the military level, Russia's GRU intelligence directorate is unsurpassed in its collection network throughout Afghanistan and Iran.<sup>23</sup> Quite simply, US troops may not have been able to topple the Taliban as quickly as they did without Russian intelligence in the autumn of 2001. Furthermore, NATO-ISAF commanders currently rely on Moscow's goodwill to let supplies pass unhindered through its airspace and across Central Asian states to the front line. This was probably due to a deal struck between Vladimir Putin and George

W. Bush in the wake of 9/11. As the first head of state to contact the American president, Putin aligned himself with Bush in the so-called war on terror. In exchange, US criticism toward Russia's treatment of its Chechen separatists became deafeningly silent.<sup>24</sup>

What are Russia's intentions and interests in the current Afghan war, and how reliable a partner for the coalition is it? Firstly, Russia has a profound interest in once and for all seeing a stable Afghanistan on its southern flank. Aside from Moscow's fears of Islamic terrorists attacking Russia—some justified, others not—Russians are one of the hardest hit populations by the Afghan opium trade. At least 30,000 Russian citizens die each year from the drug, seriously compounding the already drastic state of public health in Russia.<sup>25</sup> But Russian policymakers have sent contradictory signals, some expressing their desire to cooperate and others demonstrating the strategic muscle-flexing characteristic of Putin's later foreign policy. This trend was exemplified when the Kyrgyz parliament voted to close a US air base at Manas in early 2009. Around the same time, a generous \$2.15 billion Russian aid deal was offered to Kyrgyzstan.<sup>26</sup> "The Russians are trying to have it both ways with respect to Afghanistan," believes Secretary of Defense Robert Gates. "On the one hand you're making positive noises about working with us in Afghanistan, and on the other hand you're working against us in terms of the airfield which is clearly important to us."<sup>27</sup> This apparent contradiction is due to the complexity of Russian motives in Afghanistan. Explained Tony Karon,

While Russia can't afford for NATO to fail in Afghanistan, it would not be comfortable seeing the U.S. prevail, boosting its position in Moscow's traditional central Asian backyard—where the increasingly competitive geopolitics of energy supplies has ignited a new "great game" battle for influence between the rival powers. While it needs the Taliban to lose, Moscow doesn't necessarily want NATO to win, as such.<sup>28</sup>

This Russian duality is a serious impediment to its full cooperation with the NATO-ISAF mission. Geopolitics aside, Russian leaders are also constrained on the home front from aiding the Americans and company more actively. First, the Kremlin has too often portrayed NATO as Russia's military-political nemesis to now justify such overt help.<sup>29</sup> This means that a change of heart would certainly be attacked by hard-line nationalists or—more dangerously, an internal Kremlin faction—as proof of a weak government caving in to US power. A more visible presence in Afghanistan would also not go down well with the Russian public who, just

over 20 years ago, experienced the traumatic deaths of 15,000 Soviet soldiers.<sup>30</sup> This explains why, on the December 2009 visit to Moscow by NATO secretary-general Anders Fogh Rasmussen, the Russian leadership politely declined a request to increase its logistical support for the coalition intervention in Afghanistan.<sup>31</sup> If NATO cannot even recruit more Russian helicopters, then what does that portend for Moscow's future cooperation in Afghanistan?

For the foreseeable future, Russian cooperation will hinge upon its own strategic considerations—balancing the rhetoric of Russia's *derzhavnost'* (great-power status) with its Realpolitik interests in Afghanistan. However, judging by the current level of cooperation, we can expect Russia to uphold its quiet but extensive commitment to the coalition's efforts in Afghanistan. Short of a profoundly destabilizing event in NATO-Russian relations, Moscow's interests will prevail over its rhetoric. Admittedly, such an event did occur in August 2008, when the Russo-Georgian war led to NATO freezing its military and diplomatic relations with Russia. The thaw occurred a year later, in June 2009, when both realized the imperiousness of working together in Afghanistan. The message, as NATO secretary-general Jaap de Hoop Scheffer put it, was that "Russia is necessary in the solution for many, many conflicts we see around us unfortunately in this world."<sup>32</sup> Finally, if tentatively, the NATO-Russia Council (NRC) was put back to work. As a sign of the shared interests between NATO and Russia, issues relating to Afghanistan—such as combating the narcotics trade—seem to be the only ones upon which the NRC can agree.<sup>33</sup>

There is some irony in Russia helping a US-led coalition in Afghanistan today. Moscow is well aware that its American counterparts, most notably the CIA, funded a covert war against Russia's own Afghan war effort during the 1980s. Today, Russia is well placed to return the favor if a major turn of events so compelled it. Realistically, however, Moscow has a lot to lose from having another Afghan failed state to its south impeding the Kremlin's hopes of reestablishing Russia's credentials as a formidable power in Central Asia. Russian diplomats in Kabul may continue to express "polite *Schadenfreude*," smirking at American misfortunes in Afghanistan,<sup>34</sup> but any rhetorical gloating or rattling of sabers by Moscow will most likely not get in the way of its serious cooperation in Afghanistan. A much more challenging partner for NATO-ISAF governments to deal with is the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

## **Pakistan: The Durand Line, India, and “Strategic Depth”**

During the covert US war on the Soviets, military and financial support to the Afghan Mujahedeen was also supplied by an alliance of such strange bedfellows as China, France, Great Britain, Iran, Pakistan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and perhaps most surprisingly, even the state of Israel.<sup>35</sup> This aid was channeled through Pakistan, whose foreign policy steered a decidedly anti-Soviet course. Hence, direct Pakistani involvement in Afghanistan was pivotal in defeating the Cold War superpower.<sup>36</sup> Afghan fighters could take safe refuge in Pakistan’s predominantly Pashtun ethnic group just across the border. As a tactic to block Russian encroachment upon its colonial holdings, Britain had negotiated the Durand Line over a century ago, severing the Pashtuns on either side of the haphazard Afghan-Pakistani border.<sup>37</sup> Contemporary observers see in this historical dilemma the seeds of today’s AFPAK strategy. Both Afghanistan and Pakistan are geographically artificial states. It is therefore unsurprising that the fault line of these states happens to intersect in the areas of the contemporary Taliban insurgency, the latter being a majority Pashtun movement. Hence, Pakistan’s role is inextricable from the Afghan problem.

Here a perplexing question arises. What impeded Pakistan from tackling its own Taliban stronghold of South Waziristan and the other Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) for so long?<sup>38</sup> In one word: India. Islamabad views the region through the prism of its ongoing proxy conflicts against India, the archrival, equally armed with nuclear weapons. India is perceived to be threatening a partition of Pakistani territory—in Kashmir for example—if not its wholesale destruction. During the Afghan civil war and thereafter, Pakistan thus supported the factions which India did not.<sup>39</sup> The Pakistani leadership reasoned that by maintaining an “internal balance of weakness” within Afghanistan through its proxies, Islamabad could manipulate this client and keep out the unwelcome influence of New Delhi.<sup>40</sup> That is essentially how the Taliban gained such prominence, through strong backing from Pakistan and, specifically, its notorious Interservices Intelligence (ISI) directorate.

Problematically for coalition forces, the threat of the Indian enemy has become an institutionalized reality, so much so that Pakistani officials have for decades viewed Afghanistan as “something like the vacant lot behind their house.”<sup>41</sup> This is the essence of Pakistan’s notion of “strategic depth.” As Sarah Chayes explained, “Successive governments in Islamabad postu-

lated Afghanistan as an extension of their territory, land to fade back or retreat to, or base their missiles on, if it ever came to war” with India.<sup>42</sup> Operating within such a classic security dilemma as Pakistan perceives, it is not certain how long its support for NATO’s mission can last. Is it really in Islamabad’s interest to see a strong, independent, or even worse, India-aligned Afghanistan emerge in the region? At first sight, probably not. And the United States is increasingly disillusioned with its ostensibly staunch regional ally, alleging that Islamabad could be hedging its bets on the outcome of the Afghan war. In the event NATO–ISAF successfully stabilizes Afghanistan, Pakistan could benefit by safeguarding its own territorial integrity vis-à-vis a homegrown Islamist movement. If the Taliban came back to power in Kabul, on the other hand, their influential neighbor could still retain a degree of influence over the course of Afghan foreign policy, at the expense of India.

The Pakistani ISI’s “tentacles” are suspected to stretch deep into neighboring Afghanistan to this day, but the ISI is infuriated by such suggestions. Pakistan would “have the most to lose from a Taliban victory in Kabul,” they counterargue, “because it would inevitably strengthen the Taliban in Pakistan.”<sup>43</sup> There is some truth to this. Pakistan’s new approach was demonstrated in October 2009 with a more determined Pakistani attack on its own Taliban in the quasi-autonomous regions bordering Afghanistan. Nevertheless, recently leaked official US Army documents only add to an ever-increasing pile of evidence pointing to direct ISI involvement in supporting the Taliban in killing NATO–ISAF soldiers and Indian workers in Afghanistan. Once again, the ISI has rejected these allegations as “malicious and unsubstantiated,” if not outright “fiction.”<sup>44</sup> This has only revived the vexing question: On whose side is Pakistan?<sup>45</sup> It arguably is in Islamabad’s interests to help strengthen the Afghan state and withdraw its support from the Taliban it helped to power. Whether all elements of the Pakistani government agree on this question is another matter altogether. But a concerted regional effort, with pressure from Pakistan’s closest allies—and enemies—might be helping to tip the balance in Islamabad.

### **India, Iran, and China: Triangulating the Taliban**

In the zero-sum game of South Asian geostrategy, what is good for Islamabad must be bad for New Delhi. Thus, India has historically

attempted to deny Pakistan the strategic depth it sought in Afghanistan. According to Kenneth Katzman, “Pakistan is wary that any Afghan government might fall under the influence of India, which Pakistan says is using its diplomatic facilities in Afghanistan to train and recruit anti-Pakistan agents.”<sup>46</sup> The number of Indian consulates in Afghanistan (9) is deemed to be a direct threat to Pakistani security aimed at that country’s encirclement. But India also has legitimate interests in Afghanistan. Above all, New Delhi fears that a NATO–ISAF withdrawal would free up the Taliban to cross Pakistan’s porous borders and pursue an anti-Indian struggle in Kashmir, or even in Indian cities.<sup>47</sup> The memory of the 2008 Mumbai attacks serves as a powerful reminder to Indians, as did the 2009 terrorist attack on the Indian embassy in Kabul. Nevertheless, Pakistan would retort that India’s booming defense spending on conventional weapons, as well as higher-yield nuclear warheads, are aggressive to Pakistani security interests.<sup>48</sup> And so on, and so forth, *ad nauseam*.

The vicious cycle driving India-Pakistan tensions and mistrust has also resulted in Afghanistan becoming caught in the crossfire. It is no exaggeration to claim that Afghanistan’s chronic internal crises since 1989 have been fanned by this regional power competition. “Afghanistan,” in the words of Robert Kaplan, “has been a prize that Pakistan and India have fought over directly and indirectly for decades.”<sup>49</sup> Because Pakistan fears strategic encirclement by India, it continues to hedge by half-heartedly fighting its own Taliban while supporting those in Afghanistan. Responding to mounting Pakistani pressure on the ground, New Delhi has increased its political-military role in Afghanistan by assigning 500 border guards to protect Indian reconstruction workers, inaugurating an air base in neighboring Tajikistan, and supporting Iran’s Chabahar port as an alternative to Pakistan’s Chinese-backed-and-built Gwadar port.<sup>50</sup> In turn, Pakistan sees its own dreaded encirclement being realized by these moves and increases its destructive activities in Afghanistan. Logically enough, then, “India-Pakistan relations are in many ways key to the peace in the region,” as Julian Lindley-French suggested.<sup>51</sup> To say so is to say it all, and thus, nothing specific. No easy fix exists, but in the case of Afghanistan, the wider regional framework is the key. In the end, India and Pakistan will have to at least grudgingly be forced to admit that they share a common threat in a fundamentalist Taliban regime returning to power in Kabul—one over which not even the ISI would be able to regain mastery.

Iran is an equally important player in an eventual region-wide Afghan peace agreement. Traditionally, prerevolutionary Iran had enjoyed cordial relations with both Afghanistan and Pakistan. In fact, during the 1970s the Shah's Iran was something of a regional anti-Soviet bulwark and a pro-United States "regional gendarme."<sup>52</sup> But the twin revolutions in Kabul (1978) and Tehran (1979) turned things around drastically. The fundamentalist Islamic cleric at the head of the country saw geopolitics in pseudo-religious terms. The United States was the "Great Satan," Israel the "Little Satan," and the atheistic Soviet Union—which occupied Muslim lands in Central Asia—the "Red Satan."<sup>53</sup> After the Soviet invasion of neighboring Afghanistan, the Islamic Republic of Iran entered an alliance of convenience with both the Great and the Little Satans to fund the Afghan Mujahedeen. Once their common (Red Satan) enemy was vanquished, however, Iran was left searching for an Afghan policy in the early 1990s. That is precisely when relations with Pakistan began deteriorating.

There was a prominent ethno-sectarian element to the dispute. Pakistan's Pashtun population, "well-represented in the army and the bureaucracy," felt empathy for the plight of their ethnic neighbors across the Durand Line.<sup>54</sup> Meanwhile, Iran supported the non-Pashtun peoples in western Afghanistan. In turn, Iranian contacts with the Shiite minority of Afghanistan greatly irritated the orthodox Sunni Muslims of Pakistan.<sup>55</sup> However, the nascent Iran-Pakistan rivalry for influence in Afghanistan was principally about their conflicting geopolitical interests. Both states competed for access to resource-rich Central Asian markets, with Afghanistan—an ideal transit state of the said resources—once more falling victim to a regional power struggle. This geopolitical competition between Iran and Pakistan, according to Andreas Wilde, "contributed greatly to the escalation of the Afghan civil war."<sup>56</sup> Only when the Taliban came to prominence in Afghanistan, though, did their not-so-diplomatic relations deteriorate irrevocably. Iran, seeing a threat in this Sunni Islamist movement, sponsored its Northern Alliance foes. But Pakistan continued to bank on its Taliban proxies, further inflaming Iranian fears of Pakistan dominating Kabul. The result, as Afghan journalist Musa Khan Jalalzai noted, is that prior to the 2001 intervention in Afghanistan by the US-led Operation Enduring Freedom, erstwhile allies Pakistan and Iran were "fighting a proxy war there, a painful and devastating irony."<sup>57</sup> Iran was even on the cusp of an interstate war with Afghanistan in 1998, after the



Taliban—with suspected Pakistani backing—murdered Iranian diplomats and journalists in Mazar-i-Sharif.<sup>58</sup>

Complicating matters further are historic US–Iran tensions. The Islamic Republic of Iran, for all its rhetorical follies,<sup>59</sup> does have legitimate security concerns. For one, since the 2003 invasion of Iraq, Iran has been faced with “tens of thousands of U.S. troops on either side of its border,” as Fareed Zakaria writes.<sup>60</sup> Iran thus feels encircled by Washington’s allegedly aggressive grand strategy. Under the Obama administration, the open hand was extended to Tehran in an attempt to gain Iran’s help on a host of issues. The alleged covert Iranian nuclear weapons program remains the most salient stumbling block for Washington and its allies. But it might not always be so.<sup>61</sup> The United States is painfully aware that Iran is an important regional power which, if it desired, could easily activate friendly militias in Afghanistan and Iraq, thus reversing coalition gains in both countries.<sup>62</sup> Iran would be committing an act of political self-immolation due to its strong anti-Taliban feelings, but that does not preclude it from doing so to harm American interests. Inevitably, as Dr. Amin Saikal argued, a US–Iranian rapprochement is the basis for a regional diplomatic front to open up against the Taliban.<sup>63</sup> But the chances of this happening, in the short term, are slim to nil. More and more evidence is accumulating to suggest that Iran has actively trained Afghan insurgents for the sole purpose of killing coalition troops.<sup>64</sup> This does not bode well for a regional diplomatic strategy involving Iran.

Finally, the People’s Republic of China (PRC) is the last major actor whose increased political involvement would benefit Afghanistan’s security. China has historically enjoyed close relations with Pakistan, and hence, antagonistic ones with India.<sup>65</sup> Today, the lines have been blurred by the situation in Afghanistan. Beijing does not sympathize with the Taliban,<sup>66</sup> a movement likely to stir unrest among the Muslim Uighur populations of Xinjiang Province. After all, Afghanistan shares a very narrow border with the PRC. The geographical anomaly of the thin Wakhan Corridor has intertwined Afghan–Chinese relations. Although largely peaceful, this area could serve as an illegal passage for Afghan Islamists into China or, alternatively, as a supply route in the war against the Taliban.<sup>67</sup> Whether the PRC chooses to input more into the regional effort to stabilize Afghanistan remains unclear, especially in light of Beijing’s long-espoused value of noninterference in the affairs of other states. Some posit that China’s contingency plan involves striking a deal with the Taliban. Hence,

Beijing's hedging strategy has resulted in the PRC being, and planning on remaining, "well-positioned to resume its traditional policy of dealing with whichever government is in Kabul."<sup>68</sup> This is the principle reason why Beijing seeks to avoid alienating any future government in Afghanistan by overtly aiding the NATO-ISAF coalition, should this intervention fail.

Beijing does possess vital strategic interests in the region, the most important being Central Asian political stability for its resource security. The PRC follows a strategy of diversifying its energy imports away from the unstable Persian Gulf states, whose resources must travel over the sea lanes of the Indian and Pacific Oceans at high risk of naval interdiction by unfriendly powers.<sup>69</sup> Overland transit of natural resources from the Central Asian supplier states, including Kazakhstan, is therefore a priority, as is the stability of the region's political regimes. Secondly, as China dramatically increases its economic investments in Afghanistan, so do its political and security interests in that country deepen. The PRC has already invested some \$3.5 billion in copper mining in the Afghan Lugal province,<sup>70</sup> as well as \$5 billion in copper mines near Kabul.<sup>71</sup> Additionally, the recent discovery of lucrative cobalt deposits in Afghanistan might attract further Chinese investment. But apart from cold, geo-economic calculus, the PRC is asking itself what a US defeat in Afghanistan would cost its own interests and whether Chinese soldiers could be used to fill a post-American security vacuum in that country if the PRC's Central Asian energy strategy were at risk.<sup>72</sup> This suggests that coalition governments have room to maneuver in lobbying China for greater support in Afghanistan.

### **The Road Ahead in Afghanistan: Toward a Diplomatic Surge?**

So what do Tehran, New Delhi, and Beijing have in common? Quite simply, they have a common enemy in the Taliban. But all three states are also wary, to varying degrees, of seeing an indefinite US presence in Central Asia. Hence, what has emerged in recent years is an Iran-India-China axis of sorts, which effectively triangulates the Taliban and confines them to the AFGPAK region.<sup>73</sup> The development of this strange entente cordiale came as a shock to Pakistan, whose "closest allies, China and Iran, were in a meaningful partnership with India, its worst adversary."<sup>74</sup> For NATO-ISAF planners, however, this is not necessarily bad news. By engaging these three regional powers in pressuring Pakistan, the latter may find it

impossible to withhold its unconditional support to the anti-Taliban effort. Through continued intransigence, Islamabad would risk international isolation from even the PRC, while losing the soft-power battle for prestige with India. That is clearly not in Pakistan's interests, howsoever defined.

The Afghan problem, it seems, almost inevitably comes back to the all-important role of Pakistan. Because of its porous border with Afghanistan, Pakistan is frustrating coalition efforts to pursue the Taliban and al-Qaeda. Pakistan, in its mutual competition with India, is fueling regional insecurity. Finally, through its asymmetrical disputes with Iran,<sup>75</sup> Pakistan is alienating its own allies. This explains why NATO-ISAF commanders acknowledge that they are dealing with two sides of the same coin. Pakistan does have a lot to lose from a coalition failure in Afghanistan, not least of which could be its very territorial integrity, or the loss of the United States as a staunch ally.<sup>76</sup> Pakistani strategists have recently signaled to their American counterparts that a certain *quid pro quo* might be on the agenda involving financial aid in exchange for a more resolute attitude against the Taliban elements on their soil who exploit the porousness of the Durand Line.<sup>77</sup> It remains to be seen how these negotiations pan out.

Islamabad also faces more practical problems caused by the continuing conflict in Afghanistan, such as a renewed influx of Afghan refugees. Although close to 2 million have returned from Pakistani camps since 2002, some 300,000 or so remain across the border. Iran faces a similar problem, with up to 1.2 million Afghans living in squalid conditions within its jurisdiction.<sup>78</sup> Aside from humanitarian considerations, both Tehran and Islamabad incur considerable costs from attending to the basic needs of that many extra human beings. According to estimates by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, the economic burden of Afghan refugees to the Iranian state was of the order of \$352 million *prior to* the 2001 resumption of hostilities.<sup>79</sup> A peaceful solution to Afghanistan's wars, which have now destabilized the region for some 30 years, should be welcomed by most of that country's near and distant neighbors. And it is within reach. The foreign policies of the aforementioned states—Russia, Pakistan, India, China, and Iran—are pivotal to the establishment of a positive peace settlement to the decades-long Afghan quandary. A successful diplomatic strategy must involve all of these major players.

There is no linear road to success in Afghanistan, but there is nothing inherently "unwinnable" about the Afghan war at the strategic level either. History has not doomed the intervention, but policy choices since 2001—

such as focusing on Iraq at the expense of Afghanistan—have certainly not helped.<sup>80</sup> Nevertheless, the current intervention in Afghanistan does possess one major advantage over previous counterinsurgencies in that country and elsewhere. During the Soviet foray into Afghanistan, Moscow's attempt to reconstruct the Afghan state (in its own image) was "permanently dogged by a perceived lack of international legitimacy, and by a non-benign regional security environment," as Alex Marshall explained. In this environment, all of the main actors, including China, Iran, Pakistan, and the United States, "conspired to varying degrees to undermine the whole Soviet effort."<sup>81</sup> In today's intervention, however, international legitimacy and regional interests are not lacking, but political will is. According to Henry Kissinger,

the special aspect of Afghanistan is that it has powerful neighbors or near-neighbors—Pakistan, India, China, Russia, Iran. Each is threatened in one way or another and, in many respects, more than we [the United States] are by the emergence of a base for international terrorism: Pakistan by Al Qaeda; India by general jihadism . . . China by fundamentalist Shiite jihadists in Xinjiang; Russia by unrest in the Muslim south; even Iran by the fundamentalist Sunni Taliban.<sup>82</sup>

But Kissinger goes on to note that, so far, these regional powers have largely stayed "more or less aloof."<sup>83</sup> His argument is not so much about imposing a rehashed version of the infamous Domino Theory upon Afghanistan and Muslim countries more generally, as his critics have argued.<sup>84</sup> Rather, Kissinger's point is that coalition governments, if they hope for any measure of success, will need to actively engage neighboring states to reconstruct and firmly "anchor" Afghanistan to its regional environment. That is why a diplomatic surge must accompany and eventually supersede the US military surge. All of those aforementioned states should be engaged diplomatically, at the highest level, by the Obama administration as well as its European allies. We should remember that it took a large coalition of states during the Soviet-Afghan war to fund the Mujahedeen and ultimately eject the Soviets from Afghanistan. Paradoxically, only such a coalition today can effectively prevent a return of the Taliban in Kabul—namely by starving the insurgents of much-needed international funds, weapons, and legitimacy.

As of January 2010, the United States seemed to have come around to the idea of a diplomatic surge, lobbying Afghanistan's closest and regional neighbors for support.<sup>85</sup> Such positive developments, however, should not give rise to unwarranted idealism. Some serious questions remain unanswered.

Moscow would struggle trying to sell a second Russian-Afghan war to the public, even if it were portrayed as necessary to defend the security of the Russian Federation.<sup>86</sup> Furthermore, if the Iranian nuclear issue comes to a dramatic conclusion, as Israelis envisage,<sup>87</sup> then could Russia sustain its support for NATO–ISAF in Afghanistan at the expense of its partnership with Iran? Will Pakistan stray from its current course through different agencies in Islamabad, resuming to place bets on both sides? The war will be decided on the battlefield, but it could just as well be decided at home, where a premature pullout by any reluctant European ally could have untold consequences for the mission.<sup>88</sup> For the moment, there are more questions than answers. There are some practical policy steps which can be implemented, however, beginning in July 2011 to help embed Afghanistan into a sustainable and more or less benign framework of regional and international relations.

## **Recommendations**

Five principal policy recommendations emerge from this discussion. The most immediate US and NATO–ISAF diplomatic goal should be to show recognition where it is due but punish negative behavior where necessary. This would positively encourage international contributions to Afghanistan's security, while assuring these partner states that their interests are being taken into account. For Russia, as an example, this means acting on Moscow's concerns about the Afghan poppy trade. Russian officials have been suggesting for several years that NATO implement an "anti-drug security belt" around Afghanistan.<sup>89</sup> This initiative should be taken seriously. If predominantly Russian soldiers were to guard this "belt" with the help of Iran, Pakistan, and the Central Asian states—perhaps in the framework of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO)—then this might avail to be one of the most practical steps in advancing regional cooperation. Additionally, Russia wants the production and smuggling of Afghan opium to "be classified as a threat to international peace and security."<sup>90</sup> It already is in all but name, as a recent UN report highlighted, costing up to 100,000 lives around the world each year and ultimately financing the Taliban insurgency.<sup>91</sup> The United States and its NATO–ISAF partners should oblige. If this were the case, Russia would see its interests even more aligned with those of the United States in Afghanistan and might be inclined to reciprocate in terms of increased political and mili-

tary aid to the Kabul government. Such a move should evidently be undergirded by the explicit approval of neighboring states for the temporary stationing of international forces on their territories.

Concerning Pakistan, coalition governments must encourage Islamabad's potential mediation efforts between the Afghan government and certain reconcilable Taliban elements.<sup>92</sup> An upsurge in Afghan-Pakistani military cooperation, as has recently been the case, should also be welcomed by Washington and its allies. It would be a mistake to view Pakistan's role in Afghanistan in solely zero-sum terms. Pakistan always has and always will be Afghanistan's most important neighbor; Western troops are only there temporarily. NATO-ISAF governments should nevertheless proceed with caution, as Pakistan is for all intents and purposes a party to the Afghan conflict. The United States should therefore seek to balance the conflicting priorities of encouraging Islamabad's mediation efforts among Afghan factions while limiting Pakistan from playing the role of privileged mediator. Any delaying or blocking tactics by Islamabad could all too easily frustrate any hopes of a peaceful Afghan settlement. Moscow's failed attempt to negotiate with Pakistan on a peaceful settlement in Afghanistan should serve as a cautionary tale.<sup>93</sup> With this in mind, the US administration—by virtue of its close working relations with both governments—should seek to convince the Afghan and Pakistani leaderships that it is in everyone's interests that they draw closer. The trilateral Afghan-Pakistan-US meeting is a sound building block. But, Washington must signal clear red lines, which include firmly opposing Pakistan's use of proxies in Afghanistan, its efforts to seek strategic depth and compete with India there, its lax treatment of Pakistani terrorists, as well as insisting that both states effectively desectarianize their relations. This last step should dissuade Islamabad from pursuing an ethno-sectarian divide-and-conquer strategy in Afghanistan, and it would send a strong signal to Tehran. To avoid alienating New Delhi, however, India should be encouraged to participate with Pakistan and Afghanistan, expanding upon Afghan president Hamid Karzai's concept of a "tripolar structure of cooperation."<sup>94</sup> This might even act as a practical confidence-building measure between India and Pakistan, potentially undermining the logic of their zero-sum competition in Afghanistan.

The other side of the equation is punishing destructive meddling, by both Pakistan and Iran. The former, enticed by American aid, can be threatened with the drying up of economic and technology transfers from

the United States. Should that fail, there is a Plan B, to which we will return. Meanwhile Iran, which has once again been sanctioned by the UN Security Council, may or may not be reconsidering its Janus-faced strategy. On the one hand, Iran's Afghan policy is generally benign, consisting of investing in Afghanistan and drawing the predominantly Shiite Hazaras of western Afghanistan closer to the Iranian economic and political orbit.<sup>95</sup> The United States should recognize that its interests converge significantly with those of Iran in Afghanistan and show appreciation for Tehran's constructive role as a generous investor in Afghan infrastructure and the third-largest donor country—pledging some \$560 million at the 2002 Tokyo conference.<sup>96</sup> One way to show appreciation would be for the Obama administration to engage in unofficial, bilateral talks free of preconditions with Iran, at least on issues relating to Afghanistan, and to abandon all Bush-era insinuations or direct threats of regime change against Tehran.<sup>97</sup>

On the other hand, despite the agnosticism of some experts on the issue,<sup>98</sup> Iran is probably supplying some Taliban factions to kill and maim NATO–ISAF troops, if only as a message of what it is capable and willing to do. As is the case with Pakistan, the more evidence that accumulates suggesting some form of direct or indirect Iranian support for Taliban factions in Afghanistan, the shriller becomes official denial.<sup>99</sup> If Tehran continues down this path, one option which Machiavelli might have advocated would be to retaliate by arming separatist rebels in Sistan-Balochistan,<sup>100</sup> but this is by no means a desirable solution, potentially inflaming tensions into a proxy conflict with Iran over Afghanistan. Moreover, Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad is already accusing Washington of such covert subversion, using this as an excuse to lambast the NATO–ISAF intervention in Afghanistan and encourage Afghan president Karzai to imitate Iranian anti-Westernism, as demonstrated during their March 2010 bilateral meeting in Kabul.<sup>101</sup> Instead, the United States and coalition governments can make the best of an existing diplomatic crisis by courting Moscow, whose participation in this strategy would be more likely if its anti-narcotic concerns were heeded.

Russia could conceivably pressure Iran to recognize that cooperation, rather than strategic competition, is the best way forward in Afghanistan. President Ahmadinejad was incensed by the Russian participation in the most recent UN sanctions against Tehran's nuclear enrichment program, even threatening one of his few international allies that Moscow could

soon be joining the long list of Tehran's "historic enemies."<sup>102</sup> Although Moscow is known to tread lightly in offending its Iranian partners, it could feasibly let it be known that threatening Russian (and Chinese) interests in Afghanistan will have consequences—such as losing any chances of purchasing the Russian S-300 defensive missile system, as well as becoming estranged from its great-power sponsors in the Security Council. The current climate in NATO-Russia relations is looking promising, with Russia having strongly reaffirmed the alignment of shared interests in Afghanistan.<sup>103</sup> This means that the time for a diplomatic offensive should be sooner rather than later. Importantly, if Iran were to counter by threatening Russia's lucrative arms trade to that country, then NATO should swiftly move to guarantee that it would open its Euro-Atlantic markets to Russian weapons—fulfilling one of Moscow's foreign policy ambitions.<sup>104</sup>

Secondly, the United States and coalition governments should urgently seek to establish a broad regional framework to assist and negotiate an eventual Afghan political settlement. As we have seen, USSR-US, India-Pakistan, Iran-Pakistan, Iran-US, and to a lesser extent, India-China competition have all contributed to the perpetuation of war on Afghan soil. There is therefore a dire need to first bring all of the *external* parties to the Afghan war around a common table to reach a minimum understanding of their common interests to facilitate the *internal* Afghan peace process. Evidently, interests will not always coincide, sometimes not at all. On the basic question of recognizing the Taliban in a coalition Afghan government, there is no visible solution to cramming the categorical intransigence of Iran, Russia, and probably India with the more amenable flexibility of China, the positive zeal of Pakistan, and the continuing ambivalence of the United States into a coherent strategy.<sup>105</sup> In any case, the best way forward might be a common hands-off approach in which these international powers do not prescribe a solution to the conflict in Afghanistan, which would surely be vetoed by one or more of the interested parties.

Instead, Russia, Iran, Pakistan, India, China, and the United States should agree to create an ad hoc, consultative mechanism among themselves, plus the Afghan government and moderate antigovernment factions, which could help the Afghans bargain with international arbitration. An idea worth exploring would be the addition of one principal mediating state, preferably a Muslim country with presumed neutrality, such as Malaysia.<sup>106</sup> Importantly, all of the major players should be urged in no uncertain terms to discontinue the age-old and faultlessly destruc-



tive tradition of supporting competing Afghan proxies on the battlefield. If the interested powers chose to re-embark upon the 1990s policy of free-for-all alliances—exemplified by India reaching out to Iran and Pakistan being supported by China and Saudi Arabia—then this would signal dire news for coalition governments, not to mention for most Afghans. If India, Pakistan, and Iran only competed in a positive-sum game to rebuild Afghanistan's state and public infrastructure, then life would become more joyous, as Stalin enjoyed saying. But that is not the case. A revamped “scramble for Afghanistan” would only make “de facto partition and renewed civil war” an increasingly likely prospect.<sup>107</sup> This scenario must be avoided at all costs.

A third recommendation toward a regional diplomatic strategy, in the short-to-medium term, is to facilitate a rapprochement between NATO and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). Traditionally, NATO had refused to recognize and establish equal relations with the SCO and the CSTO out of fear of recognizing a de facto Russo-Chinese sphere of influence in Eurasia. As of 2010, however, there were some signals that NATO was considering formalizing links with these two security organizations in its New Strategic Concept.<sup>108</sup> This would aid Afghanistan's long-term stability in a number of ways, not least of which would be the previously mentioned contingency plan for dealing with Pakistan's potentially renewed intransigence vis-à-vis the Taliban. The SCO is the ideal organization, if not the only one, which can effectively bring diplomatic pressure to bear on Islamabad, most notably through China's important role therein. Indeed, the Russo-Chinese core of the SCO would be well placed to keep Pakistan in line with international interests in Afghanistan by threatening to withdraw the carrot of SCO membership to Islamabad. (This might also work for Iran, which is likewise a candidate member.)<sup>109</sup> Of course, this is beyond the scope of Euro-American diplomacy, but NATO could make such a situation more likely by seeking official ties with the SCO as well as the CSTO. This recognition need not define geopolitical spheres of influence, which are obsolete and illegal in the eyes of international law and would only benefit Afghanistan's security and the goals of the NATO-ISAF mission.

There exists a particularly specious argument that NATO and the United States should jealously guard their privileged roles in Afghanistan, for fear of Kabul drifting into the Russo-Chinese sphere of influence,<sup>110</sup> but this specter is a straw man. Indeed, as Dmitri Trenin and Alexei

Malashenko point out, China and Russia follow two different and often competing positions in Afghanistan, precluding a monolithic SCO bloc policy.<sup>111</sup> Those who “continue to view SCO–NATO relations primarily through the prism of a new cold war,” as argued by Kaveh Afrasiabi, “miss the point that there is a convergence of interests” in Afghanistan.<sup>112</sup> Quite simply, such a policy of isolating the SCO from playing a greater security and political role in Afghanistan—which even the Afghan government hopes for—would be counterproductive, if not outright disastrous. Afghanistan, already an observer state, may conceivably join the SCO one day. This would make sense, recognizing the country’s physical and geopolitical place in the world. NATO is unlikely to extend a competing invitation to Kabul in the near future. In the past, the SCO has served Moscow’s interests in pushing for an end to the US military presence in Central Asia. This strengthened the idea that the SCO was morphing into a competitor to NATO’s security role in Afghanistan and a means to expel an unwanted American influence from the traditional Russian and Chinese spheres of influence.<sup>113</sup>

Viewed objectively, however, seeking a rapprochement with the SCO should be a central pillar of any Western diplomatic strategy aimed at leaving Afghanistan on favorable terms. The SCO is admittedly no silver bullet, with its measly budget of \$4 million barring it from playing an active role in the Afghan reconciliation process.<sup>114</sup> But it can continue to play a key function as a convener of regional conferences on Afghanistan, as happened in Moscow in March 2009. Furthermore, deepening SCO–Afghanistan cooperation is reaching a level that makes Kabul a potential bridge between NATO and the SCO. An SCO–Afghanistan Contact Group was set up in 2005,<sup>115</sup> and the SCO publicly acknowledged at its June 2009 Yekaterinburg summit that drug trafficking, terrorism, and transnational crime originating in Afghanistan posed “a threat to the whole international community.”<sup>116</sup> NATO–SCO cooperation in Afghanistan might also set a precedent for win-win cooperation in other areas of common interest, such as Kyrgyzstan and even the Pacific.<sup>117</sup>

Fourthly, to allay Russian, Chinese, Iranian, Pakistani, and probably Afghan fears, the United States and NATO ought to publicly and privately reassure these governments that Washington and its allies do not seek long-term geopolitical advantages by leaving behind a permanent military footprint in Afghanistan. Although the semiofficial 2011–14 withdrawal timetable may have helped in this regard, there should be an

explicit commitment from Washington that it will only remain in Afghanistan as long as it is needed and accepted by Kabul. In return, this would make it more feasible for pragmatic Chinese policymakers to justify playing an increased political role in this country. The PRC, which is widely seen in Western capitals as free riding “on the back[s] of dead European, American and Afghan soldiers,” would be in a better position to contribute more political—even if not military—assistance to the intervention.<sup>118</sup> For example, Beijing is capable of contributing to the training of the Afghan National Police and increasing technical study subsidies for Afghan students in the People’s Republic. In the longer-term, as Richard Weitz argues, the paradox of the PRC’s asymmetric economic-political commitment to Afghanistan might mean that increasing Chinese participation becomes practically unavoidable.<sup>119</sup> NATO–ISAF should welcome such a role, not reject it on the grounds of a larger China threat.

One may object, however, that the likelihood of such positive-sum multilateral involvement in Afghanistan coming so seamlessly to fruition is remote at best. Will not the interests of one or more parties negatively impact upon those of other players? They most likely will. Iran may continue to arm the Taliban. India and Pakistan may prove irreconcilable in pursuing what, objectively, appears to be common interests. An increased Russian military presence in the states surrounding Afghanistan, even for an allegedly “anti-drug security belt,” may arouse American, Central Asian, and perhaps even Chinese suspicions of Moscow’s alternative motives. Additionally, and despite Western support for Islamabad during the July 2010 floods, increasing NATO–ISAF pressure on Pakistan may encourage that government to perceive itself as “constrained to consider response options.”<sup>120</sup> The objective of diplomatic engagement is neither to paper over differences nor to lapse into a naïve faith that all of Afghanistan’s neighbors necessarily share benign intentions for that country’s future. Instead, the point is that NATO–ISAF states will need to employ their joint political, economic, and soft-power capabilities—as well as traditional military power—to facilitate a negotiated conclusion to the Afghan war. This strategy of diplomatic persuasion or “co-optive power,” as defined by Joseph Nye, will hinge on the ability of the United States to influence external powers to “define their interests in ways consistent with its own.”<sup>121</sup> Thus, the United States and its coalition partners should aim to convince China, India, Iran, Pakistan, and Russia that: (1) their core interests in Afghanistan (see table 1) converge with those of NATO–ISAF,

(2) inaction or ill-intentioned meddling are harmful responses to this common threat, and (3) a mission failure in Afghanistan and the continued use of Afghan soil for opium fields, terrorist havens, and political violence and instability would be as detrimental to the interests of Afghanistan's neighbors as they are to those of the United States.

**Table 1. Analysis of key players' interests in Afghanistan**

This matrix presents the key interests and worst-case scenarios of each of the main foreign powers involved in Afghanistan. The fourth column suggests what appears to be—at least on paper—the lowest-common denominator points of consensus, from which a multilateral diplomatic surge could be fashioned.

<i>Player</i>	<i>Interests in Afghanistan</i>	<i>Worst-Case Scenario</i>	<i>Mutually Acceptable Outcome</i>
<b>China</b>	Maintain political stability and resource security in Central Asia; contain potential terrorist threat; stop the United States from establishing a permanent military presence in region	Regional instability; terrorist threat to China (Xinjiang); establishment of permanent US military bases in Afghanistan and/or Kyrgyzstan	Politically stable government of Afghanistan and gradual phasing out of American military presence in Central Asia
<b>India</b>	Deny Pakistan strategic depth; maintain political stability in region; remove potential terrorist threat	Pakistani-dominated Afghan government; regional instability; terrorist threat to India	Afghan government engaged in a trilateral security relationship with India and Pakistan
<b>Iran</b>	Stop Pakistan and/or the United States from establishing a permanent political and military presence in Afghanistan; contain potential terrorist threat; curtail Afghan opium trade	Pakistani/American-dominated Afghan government; terrorist threat to Iran; upsurge in Afghan poppy trade	Militarily nonaligned Kabul government and phased withdrawal of US forces
<b>Pakistan</b>	Counter India's strategic encirclement of Pakistan; contain potential Taliban threat to Pakistani state; end refugee crisis	India-friendly Afghan government; disintegration of Pakistani state under terrorist threat; upsurge of Afghan refugees	Multilaterally inclined Kabul government, stability of Pakistan, and containment of Taliban
<b>Russia</b>	Eliminate Afghan opium trade; remove potential terrorist threat; stop the United States from establishing a permanent military foothold in Central Asia	Upsurge in Afghan poppy trade; terrorist threat to Russia (northern Caucasus); establishment of permanent US military presence in region	Gradual elimination of Afghan opium trade and containment of terrorist threat to Russia
<b>US/ NATO/ ISAF</b>	End political violence in Afghanistan; hand over leading security role to strong, centralized and preferably democratic Afghan government; encourage constructive regional involvement in Afghanistan, but limit meddling if malign	Return of Taliban (and al-Qaeda) to Kabul; destructive foreign meddling; collapse of Afghan state and renewal of civil war	Transfer of security responsibilities to Afghan lead between 2011 and 2014 and internationally mediated political solution to Afghan conflict, with potential Taliban role in decentralized Afghan government

Finally, the fifth recommendation concerns the longer-term objective of assisting Kabul in integrating into its regional system of interstate relations. Afghanistan itself is slowly but surely rising as a regional player. The Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs articulates a vision of a strengthened Afghanistan acting as a bridge between Islam and the West and a model of “Cooperation among Civilizations.”<sup>122</sup> Such an outcome is obviously far removed for the time being, but regional peace can only be assured when Afghanistan does become such a metaphorical bridge between powerful neighbors rather than their mutual doormat. How to help Kabul achieve that aim? Most importantly, just as in the military sphere, a diplomatic surge must inevitably end with a handover to the Afghan government when it is ready and able to take the lead role in its own affairs. At the moment, 2014 seems like the most likely date for the endgame of NATO–ISAF’s direct military assistance to the government of Afghanistan.<sup>123</sup> In practice, however, a diplomatic surge would mean assisting Afghanistan for years to come in modernizing its army and intelligence gathering and analysis capabilities and professionalizing its diplomatic corps. Western powers could also help by encouraging the Afghan government to participate in regional exchanges, including military, parliamentary, and Track 2.0 diplomacy, as well as classical confidence-building measures and preventive diplomacy to avert potential interstate crises.

In the near future, however, the foreign intervention in Afghanistan will come to an end. When it does, Washington must let the Afghan state pursue its own foreign policy. The worst which any US president could do in the postconflict stage of the Afghanistan mission would be to attempt to maintain a client-patron relationship à la South Vietnam. If it has not already done so, Washington should discontinue the habit of telephoning Kabul to dictate to the Afghan president what to do or not to do.<sup>124</sup> Most importantly, the United States should certainly *not* attempt to force a permanent American military or “advisory” presence upon Afghanistan. The adverse consequences of such a magisterial policy include but are not limited to: confirming the central tenets of Taliban propaganda in the eyes of the Afghan people, stifling any lingering soft-power appeal which the United States may enjoy in postconflict Afghanistan, repulsing a strengthened Afghan government away from its erstwhile security guarantor, and forcing Kabul into the fold of such potentially ill-intentioned states as Iran. Indeed, Afghanistan has a long history of neutrality and nonalignment in world affairs. It may or may not resume such a position; but that choice

must be made in Kabul. A consolidated, sovereign, and hopefully democratic Afghan state—if only in a non-Western, tribal sense—should be the sole arbiter of its future place in the world and an international actor in its own right.

## **Conclusion**

The last point brings us full circle. Only with internal stability and security will Afghanistan emerge as a unified and respectable player in regional and world politics. International military assistance will be necessary to prevent a repetition of the Soviet withdrawal, paving the way to a full-fledged civil war. The dilemma facing NATO–ISAF is that a premature disengagement without a clear political-diplomatic solution to the Afghan conflict would risk repeating the Soviet mistake and spark a renewed great-power melee over Afghanistan.<sup>125</sup> Inevitably, this would once again cause great devastation to the Afghan people.<sup>126</sup> Hence, hard military power is a necessary short-term solution to some of Afghanistan's most pressing problems, but military power is never an end in itself. Equal consideration should also be given to potential strategies to shape the peace and find a lasting political solution to the deeply entrenched, 30-year Afghanistan conflict.

Diplomacy is stereotypically viewed as the domain of peaceniks and pacifists. In fact, diplomacy may be more accurately, if paradoxically, defined in Clausewitzian terms as the extension of war by other means.<sup>127</sup> The diplomatic weight and influence of a state—legitimized by its credible use of force—can and should be a central part of Western strategy in Afghanistan and elsewhere. One of NATO–ISAF's strengths—its rapid and flexible response—has proven problematic, as Jamie Shea noted, by virtue of committing military resources to Afghanistan ahead of a clear political and diplomatic strategy to guide the intervention.<sup>128</sup> Military strategies in the post-9/11 world are too often underpinned by the spoken or unspoken assumption that terrorism can be eradicated like the plague. War is thus seen as a panacea by some strategists, who simply advocate hunting down and killing such and such a group—be they the Taliban or the Islamic Movement Uzbekistan—without providing the least afterthought of how the political situation might pan out, stabilize, or destabilize in the aftermath of such decapitation strikes.<sup>129</sup>

The aim of this article is to stir public and professional debate on the often occulted topic of Afghanistan's international relations. Indeed, a recent report of the Afghanistan Study Group concurred with the findings and recommendations herein: that the Afghan war had "long been exacerbated by outside powers seeking to protect or advance their own interests," that "neighboring states such as India, Pakistan, China, and Iran share a common interest in preventing Afghanistan from either being dominated by any single power or remaining a failed state that exports instability," and that the United States therefore ought to "engage global and regional stakeholders" in the task of rebuilding a viable Afghan state.<sup>130</sup> This report equally suggested that "abandoning a predominantly military focus could actually facilitate a more energetic diplomatic effort."<sup>131</sup> Hence, one general conclusion we can draw from studying the international aspect of Afghan conflicts, past and present, is that it is a fallacy to assume that the role of diplomacy should be relegated to some ideal "if and when" phase of the intervention in which Afghanistan is a stabilized, safe, and postconflict country. Thinking beyond the urgent political problem of following a withdrawal timetable, it becomes clear that a diplomatic surge is an important instrument of state power that coalition states have so far underutilized to the detriment of their long-term strategic interests. Somewhat counterintuitively, a diplomatic solution may need to precede an internal reconciliation in Afghanistan. Otherwise, any security gains on the ground could systematically and very rapidly be reversed by the self-serving actions of regional powers. If NATO–ISAF governments delay implementing a strategy to maximize the benefits from Afghanistan's currently benign international environment, they run the risk of losing it to a regional upsurge of competitive dynamics.

The attempts under the Obama administration to increase the civilian presence in the international reconstruction and governance efforts in Afghanistan<sup>132</sup> should only be building blocks toward a stronger role for diplomacy in bringing about a favorable outcome to the war. Today's uncertainty and national debates in coalition countries about whether to stay the course in Afghanistan or "suddenly turn off the lights and let the door close behind us,"<sup>133</sup> are at least partly due to this lack of strategic vision.<sup>134</sup> To be sure, Afghanistan should not be abstracted to a game of geopolitical chess. Neither should it be held hostage to the expedient interests of party politics. Too many lives hang in the balance. Establishing a political-diplomatic strategy for Afghanistan will obviously not, in and of itself,

bring a decisive military victory to NATO–ISAF on the ground. A genuine and stable Afghan political reconciliation against the backdrop of a phased withdrawal of troops, from mid 2011 to approximately 2014, will be much more likely with diplomatic backing and participation of Afghanistan's powerful neighbors. **SSQ**

## Notes

1. Adam Roberts, "Doctrine and Reality in Afghanistan," in *Survival* 51, no. 1 (February/March 2009): 33.
2. See David Kilcullen, "Conference of Defence Associations Institute 26th Annual Seminar," CPAC, 3 March 2010, <http://www.cpac.ca/forms/index.asp?dsp=template&act=view3&pagetype=vod&lang=e&clipID=3730>.
3. The White House, *White Paper of the Interagency Policy Group's Report on U.S. Policy toward Afghanistan and Pakistan*, March 2009, 1, 6.
4. For a trenchant counterargument, see Christian Caryl, "Bury the Graveyard," *Foreign Policy*, 26 July 2010, [http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/07/26/bury\\_the\\_graveyard](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/07/26/bury_the_graveyard).
5. See Malou Innocent and Ted Galen Carpenter, *Escaping the "Graveyard of Empires": A Strategy to Exit Afghanistan* (Washington: Cato Institute, 2009).
6. M. Hassan Kakar, *A Political and Diplomatic History of Afghanistan, 1863–1901* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2006), 160.
7. The Russian ports in the Black Sea are dependent on Turkey's goodwill, and those in the Baltic and northern Pacific Oceans are not ice free all year round. J. Bruce Amstutz, *Afghanistan: The First Five Years of Russian Occupation* (Washington: National Defense University, 1986), 3–5.
8. Ibid.
9. Scott McMichael, "The Soviet-Afghan War," in *The Military History of the Soviet Union*, eds. Robin Higham and Frederick W. Kagan (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 261.
10. Vincent Jauvert, "Oui, la CIA est entrée en Afghanistan avant les Russes," *Le Nouvel Observateur* (Paris), 15–21 January 1998.
11. To his great surprise, in 1992 Yeltsin was informed that Soviet-era "advisers" had remained behind in Kabul. Christopher Andrew and Vasili Mitrokhin, *The World Was Going Our Way: The KGB and the Battle for the Third World* (New York: Basic Books, 2006), 419.
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13. George Crile, *My Enemy's Enemy: The Story of the Largest Covert Operation in History—The Arming of the Mujahideen by the CIA* (London: Atlantic Books, 2003), 522.
14. About 2,000 portable antiaircraft Stinger missiles were supplied to the Mujahedeen since 1985. Between 100 and 200 of these could still be around, in Afghanistan and elsewhere. Kenneth Katzman, "Afghanistan: Post-War Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy," in *Afghanistan Issues: Security, Narcotics, and Political Currents*, ed. Eric Gladstone (New York: Nova Science Publishers, Inc., 2007), 64.



15. The National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States, *The 9/11 Commission Report* (2004), 205–6, <http://www.9-11commission.gov/report/911Report.pdf>.
16. Tajikistan and Uzbekistan are still central pillars of the US strategy in Afghanistan. On a recent trip to Dushanbe, US envoy to the region, Richard Holbrooke, described Afghanistan's instability as a threat to the entire region, including Pakistan, China, and India. "Holbrooke Says Tajikistan Important for Outcome in Afghanistan," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, 20 February 2010, [http://www.rferl.org/content/Holbrooke\\_Says\\_Tajikistan\\_Important\\_For\\_Outcome\\_In\\_Afghanistan/1963609.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/Holbrooke_Says_Tajikistan_Important_For_Outcome_In_Afghanistan/1963609.html).
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19. Astrid S. Tuminez, *Russian Nationalism since 1856: Ideology and the Making of Foreign Policy* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000), 249.
20. Cited in Ted Hopf, *Social Construction of International Politics: Identities and Foreign Policies, Moscow, 1955 and 1999* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2003), 225–26.
21. Michael Stuermer, *Putin and the Rise of Russia* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2008), 11.
22. Martin McCauley, *Afghanistan and Central Asia: A Modern History* (Harlow and London: Longman, 2002), 154.
23. *Ibid.*, 150–51.
24. *Ibid.*
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26. Ultimately, the United States solved this impasse by increasing the rent paid for the Manas base and simply renaming it, avoiding a potential eviction. Baktybek Abdrisaev, "The Russification of Kyrgyzstan," *Foreign Policy*, 9 April 2009, [http://www.foreignpolicy.com/story/cms.php?story\\_id=4810](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/story/cms.php?story_id=4810).
27. Cited in Mark Thompson, "Obama loses a Key Base in Afghanistan," *Time*, 19 February 2009, <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1880686,00.html>.
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29. Hopf, *Social Construction of International Politics*, 216.
30. See, for example, Artyom Borovik, *The Hidden War: A Russian Journalist's Account of the Soviet War in Afghanistan* (New York: Grove Press, 1990).
31. "NATO fails to gain Russia aid in Afghanistan," *BBC*, 17 December 2009, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8418292.stm>.
32. Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, "NATO-Russia Council Resumes Work despite Occupation of Georgia," *YouTube*, 28 June 2009, [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fsX\\_CCG9TAo](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fsX_CCG9TAo).
33. See "NRC Pilot Project on Counter-Narcotics Training of Afghan and Central Asian Personnel," *NATO-Russia Council*, [http://www.nato-russia-council.info/htm/EN/structures\\_18.shtml](http://www.nato-russia-council.info/htm/EN/structures_18.shtml).
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35. Crile, *My Enemy's Enemy*, 142.

36. Ramachandra Guha, *India after Gandhi: The History of the World's Largest Democracy* (London: Macmillan, 2007).
37. McCauley, *Afghanistan and Central Asia*, 141.
38. M. Ilyas Khan, "What are the Waziristan War Aims?" *BBC*, 20 October 2009, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/nol/ukfs\\_news/hi/newsid\\_8310000/newsid\\_8316600/8316670.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/nol/ukfs_news/hi/newsid_8310000/newsid_8316600/8316670.stm).
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42. *Ibid.*
43. David Ignatius, "Afghan strategy tests CIA-ISI partnership," *Australian*, 30 September 2009, 10.
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52. Hussain, *Pakistan and the Emergence of Islamic Militancy in Afghanistan*, 81.
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54. Hussain, *Pakistan and the Emergence of Islamic Militancy in Afghanistan*, 176–77.
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57. Musa Khan Jalalzai, *The Foreign Policy of Pakistan: Sectarian Impacts on Diplomacy* (Lahore: Khan Book Co., 2002), 97.
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61. Catherine Philp, “Even entrenched ally Russia concedes sanctions are ‘inevitable’: Iran cornered over nuke program,” *Weekend Australian*, 26–27 September, 17.
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70. Aziz Huq, “Chinese Takeout,” *Foreign Policy*, 15 June 2010, [http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/06/15/chinese\\_takeout](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/06/15/chinese_takeout).
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## Air Force Culture and American Civil-Military Relations

*Jeff Donnithorne, Major, USAF*

IF WAR is an extension of politics by other means,<sup>1</sup> then civil-military dialogue is the birthplace of that extension. The *logical* continuity of politics and war requires a *functional* continuity of effective civil-military exchange. This effectiveness hinges both on normative democratic ideals as well as a deep appreciation of the other's material interests. To improve the clarity of civil-military dialogue, this article explores the cultural roots of military self-interest.

While civil-military relations in the United States are generally healthy, military and civilian policymakers do not always agree on the proper means to secure their common ends. Even the best of civil-military relationships must endure a messy hybrid of cooperation and resistance between principal stakeholders. A military that believes in and submits to civilian control is still a military that harbors its own interests.

But what are the origins of military self-interest? Is it useful to assume that these massive organizations simply crave more money, autonomy, and prestige?<sup>2</sup> The “empirically based abstraction” of organizational culture suggests otherwise, exposing deeper currents that shape military self-interest.<sup>3</sup> Culture predisposes the attractiveness of certain conclusions while creating cognitive barriers to aberrant ones; it impacts what its members see, ignore, amplify, and discard.<sup>4</sup> In civil-military relations, interests matter—and for a military service, culture uniquely informs the content of that interest.<sup>5</sup>

In light of these material interests, Peter Feaver invokes a principal-agent framework to assess how civil-military relations in the United States

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unfold on a daily basis.<sup>6</sup> As one of its independent variables, agency theory uses preference gaps between the military and civilians to help explain varying levels of civil-military friction. This article bores deeper into the causal implications of preference gaps by examining how service preferences are formed. Consequently, it is not a test *of* agency theory but rather a test *within* the theory. The hypothesis is that organizational culture informs service preferences and can create preference gaps with civilian principals. In turn, agency theory holds that these preference gaps contribute to the military's calculation of cooperation or resistance. Agency theory thus provides the framework to argue that service culture informs interests and preferences which concatenate into varying degrees of civil-military friction.

When a military service evaluates national security policy, weighing its options for cooperation or resistance, its organizational culture acts as a heuristic for informing judgment. Therefore, national security policies consonant with a service's long-standing organizational culture will likely generate cooperation, while a policy inconsistent with the culture's basic assumptions will set the conditions for resistance. Organizational culture constitutes an explanatory variable in shaping service preferences, which then inform the service's decision to cooperate or resist national policy.

To test these claims, this article disaggregates the unitary military actor and assesses cultural factors for an individual service—in this case, the US Air Force.<sup>7</sup> It begins with a short survey of the relevant civil-military literature and then highlights the nature of organizational culture. A brief survey of Air Force history follows, yielding five basic assumptions that form a qualitative baseline for assessing a particular policy's alignment with Air Force culture. Subsequently, the bulk of this article profiles three case studies from the past 20 years, testing the explanatory power of Air Force culture in shaping the service's varied responses to civilian policies. The cases unfold chronologically—from Operation Desert Storm in 1990, through the protracted no-fly-zone operations of the 1990s, to the force structure debates of 2007–08—providing spectral variation on the dependent variable of cooperation or resistance. This variation creates a useful array for assessing the extent to which cultural factors informed the larger civil-military exchange.



## **Theoretical Background**

The classic literature on civil-military relations focuses largely on the essential democratic question of how civilians should control their “armed servants.”<sup>8</sup> Samuel Huntington, in his seminal work *The Soldier and the State*, advises civilian leaders to practice “objective control” by granting wide autonomy to the military.<sup>9</sup> Such autonomy bolsters the ethic of professionalism within military organizations, which reinforces their willing subordination to civilian control. Similarly, sociologist Morris Janowitz idealizes a military that subordinates itself based on “self-imposed professional standards and meaningful integration with civilian values.”<sup>10</sup> On this central issue of civilian control, both theorists offer normative visions rooted in professionalism, largely ignoring the inevitable grappling of self-interested civil-military actors.

While Feaver’s work has a strong normative component, agency theory “brings material incentives back into the story.”<sup>11</sup> Agency theory posits the civil-military relationship as a principal-agent problem, with a civilian principal employing a military agent to provide security for the nation.<sup>12</sup> Like any principal-agent dynamic, information asymmetries allow the military agent to pursue its own interests over those of its civilian principal. Consistent with the larger principal-agent literature, Feaver places the terms “working” and “shirking” on opposite ends of a behavioral spectrum, reflecting the extent to which the military exploits its agency status: “Working is doing things the way civilians want, and shirking is doing things the way those in the military want.”<sup>13</sup>

The civil-military relationship therefore becomes a strategic interaction between civilian principals and military agents, with incentives, interests, and punishments informing each decision. Civilians decide first whether to monitor the military intrusively or not.<sup>14</sup> The military then decides whether to work or shirk the civilian policy, taking into account the magnitude of the preference gap, how strongly it feels about the issue, and how likely it is to be meaningfully punished for any misdeeds.<sup>15</sup> Finally, the civilian principal decides whether or not to punish any shirking that is detected.

This article gives causal privilege to one of these independent variables—the preference gap—and hypothesizes that a wide divergence of national policy from Air Force culture will set the conditions for shirking, while its convergence will engender working. Although other variables clearly contribute to the working/shirking calculation, they assume sufficiently moderate values in the following cases to sanction a limited focus

on the preference gap and its cultural antecedents. What then is organizational culture, and how could its influence be so pervasive?

The literature teems with competing definitions of organizational culture, each a nuanced variation to a common theme.<sup>16</sup> For simplicity, this article stands on the work of Edgar Schein, a social psychologist whose insights anchor the field. Schein defines organizational culture as “a pattern of shared basic assumptions that was learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems.”<sup>17</sup> Culture pervades an organization, Schein explains, by informing all levels of sociology within it. The first level of culture consists of *artifacts*—the visible, sensory phenomena such as architecture, jargon, iconography, and ceremonies.<sup>18</sup> Artifacts communicate the priorities and ethos of an organization, creating a first impression for an outside observer. The second level of culture includes the *espoused beliefs and values* of the organization.<sup>19</sup> These espoused beliefs constitute what an organization says it believes, “[its] sense of what ought to be, as distinct from what is.”<sup>20</sup> Espoused beliefs that consistently prove effective in solving problems for the organization ossify into the third level of culture: *basic assumptions*. These basic assumptions form the cultural cortex of the organization, establishing the “theories-in-use” that actually guide behavior.<sup>21</sup>

Once a culture has taken root within an organization, what difference does that culture make on its members’ worldviews? Schein suggests, “Culture as a set of basic assumptions defines for us what to pay attention to, what things mean, how to react emotionally to what is going on, and what actions to take in various kinds of situations.”<sup>22</sup> An organization’s culture both “guides and constrains” its members and biases the suitability of certain options while blockading the viability of others.<sup>23</sup> What might this look like in praxis? What are the basic assumptions of Air Force culture, and to what extent do they guide and constrain the thinking of thousands of Airmen?

## The Organizational Culture of the Air Force

To answer these questions, this section canvasses Air Force history in search of its artifacts, espoused beliefs, and basic assumptions forged in the fires of external adaptation and internal integration. It surveys historical

and cultural observations from outside works and categorizes the recurring themes into five general assumptions of Air Force culture. This array of assumptions is neither definitive nor universal—clearly, these assumptions do not saturate the thinking of every Airman. They do, however, serve as a useful starting point for a qualitative comparison between a particular policy and Air Force culture.

### **Technology-Centered**

The most salient dimension of Air Force culture is the service's core connection to technology. As defense analyst Carl Builder frankly suggests, "The Air Force could be said to worship at the altar of technology."<sup>24</sup> This love of technology, furthermore, finds its purest expression where man and machine meet in the piloted airplane. An observer's first visual impression of the Air Force reveals an organizational passion for aircraft. While the parade ground at West Point is flanked by statues of the Army's great generals, the Terrazzo at the Air Force Academy is cornered by the Air Force's sleekest airplanes: the F-15, F-16, F-4, and F-105. The halls of the Pentagon testify similarly, with paintings and pictures of aircraft dominating Air Force corporate territory. This fascination with flying machines stems from the earliest days of the Army Air Corps, as the nation's first Airmen felt viscerally connected with their wood-and-canvas steeds that carried them safely to and from the battle.<sup>25</sup>

While the Air Force's passion for technology is almost universally acknowledged, disagreements persist as to whether this technophilia is absolute or contingent on manned participation. Do the artifacts, beliefs, and assumptions of the culture value the potential effectiveness of any type of aircraft, or does the culture privilege the manned variety?<sup>26</sup> As exemplars of this tension, the development histories of both the intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) and the remotely piloted aircraft (RPA) present complex mosaics of enthusiasm and resistance.<sup>27</sup> Historian David MacIsaac posits the conventional wisdom, "However much the official spokesmen of the air services may deny it, [RPAs] are not considered an appropriate topic for discussion by most pilots, among whom it is an article of faith that a manned aircraft can perform any mission better than an unmanned aircraft."<sup>28</sup> In his in-depth analysis of RPA development, however, Thomas Ehrhard concludes differently and discounts the mythic influence of pilot bias.<sup>29</sup> Instead, Ehrhard argues that despite technological enthusiasm for RPA development, the Air Force's feudal structure and the absence of an

operational constituency stunted their adoption into the service.<sup>30</sup> Together, these findings suggest that the Air Force's passion for technology spurs enthusiasm for a wide array of potentially effective war machines, but the artifacts of its bureaucracy reveal a relative preference for the manned variety.

The following basic assumption therefore informs Air Force organizational culture: *The Air Force exists because of technology, and its ongoing superiority is sustained by the ascendancy of its technology. While all aircraft have their place in the Air Force mission, the manned airplane is the first among equals.*

### **Autonomously Decisive**

The technological DNA of the Air Force informs another dimension of its culture: an abiding desire for politically unconstrained, uniquely decisive operations. Forged in the crucible of World War II and amplified by a desire for service autonomy, an unflinching commitment to strategic bombing dominated the early decades of the Air Force.<sup>31</sup> Even before World War II concluded, the Army Air Corps commissioned a strategic bombing survey to generate empirical evidence for its decisive impact.<sup>32</sup>

The Airman's love of technology and aircraft, coupled with an organizational commitment to strategic bombing, forged a natural focus on means over ends. The quest to drop increasingly accurate and lethal bombs on war-winning targets became a technological passion for the service—a discrete physics puzzle within the impossible confusion of total war.<sup>33</sup> Muting the Clausewitzian ideal of subordinating the violence of war to its political purpose, Air Force leaders focused instead on the lethality of their means. Historian Michael Sherry suggests that among the Air Force leaders of World War II and the Cold War, "The task, not the purpose, of winning governed."<sup>34</sup> Mark Clodfelter extends this trajectory, noting that modern precision weapons create a "vision of air power that focuses on the lethality of its weaponry rather than on the weaponry's effectiveness as a political instrument."<sup>35</sup>

One manifestation of this focus on means over ends is the Airman's discomfort with political constraints. The nearly unconstrained political environment of total war in Germany and Japan molded an expectation for the right way to use airpower. In future conflicts, the precedent of a free political hand continued to inform Air Force expectations in the straitjacket of limited war.<sup>36</sup> During the Korean War, "Senior Air Force leaders 'chafed under

the prospect of political constraints' that reduced the decisiveness of air power and surrendered initiative to the enemy."<sup>37</sup> Similarly, after the frustrations of Vietnam, Air Force leaders insisted they could have been more effective if they had been "free from political restraints."<sup>38</sup>

In sum, the Air Force's mastery of technology motivates a desire to unleash the full potential of that technology. A basic assumption informing Air Force organizational culture is this: *The Air Force has the power to change the face of the Earth. It can do what no other service can. To realize its true potential, the Air Force should be employed kinetically, offensively, overwhelmingly, and with minimal political interference.*

### **Future-Oriented**

The Air Force's technological core predisposes a forward-looking orientation. As the youngest of the services, born from technological breakthrough, the Air Force "identifies the past with obsolescence, and for the air weapon, obsolescence equates to defeat."<sup>39</sup> Historian Tami Davis Biddle detects this tendency in Air Force thinking, noting, "too great a readiness to focus on the future without rigorously considering the past. This is an endemic problem in air forces, which develop their institutional identity around claims to see and understand the future more clearly than other services do."<sup>40</sup> An organizational commitment to looking ahead pervades the Air Force culture. Consequently, its third basic assumption is this: *Technology and potential adversaries change quickly, and the Air Force must orient forward to the unknown future instead of the forgotten past. The Air Force must pursue next-generation systems today to be ready for tomorrow.*

### **Occupationally Loyal**

The machine-centric nature of the service, coupled with its disparate mission portfolio, tends to create pockets of sub-loyalties within the Air Force. Builder asserts the history of the Air Force is steeped in an individual passion for flying more than an abiding loyalty to the institution. He contends, "The Air Force identifies itself with flying and things that fly; the institution is secondary, it is a means to those things."<sup>41</sup>

Within the service, this phenomenon gives rise to a "fractionated confederation of subcultures rather than a cohesive military service."<sup>42</sup> In his study of Air Force cultural cohesion, James Smith reports a high level of occupational over institutional loyalties, particularly among pilots.<sup>43</sup> As a service built around a visceral connection to unique machines, loyalties

can easily migrate to those machines rather than to the larger institution. Throughout the Air Force's history, "People found themselves in an institution because that was the place to do what they wanted to do—to fly airplanes, to work on rockets, to develop missiles, to learn an interesting or promising trade, etc."<sup>44</sup> A recent advertising campaign by the Air Force reinforced this idea by showing young people pursuing their passions—snowboarding, bicycle racing, flying remote-controlled airplanes—and then announcing, "We've been waiting for you."<sup>45</sup> In contrast to the recruiting messages of the other services, the Air Force markets itself as an honorable venue for doing what you already love.

The Air Force's diverse mission portfolio contributes to divided loyalties within the service. Former chief of staff of the Air Force Merrill McPeak lamented, "People built loyalties around their commands—intense loyalties in fact—rather than loyalties to air and space power as a whole, to a broader, more comprehensive mission."<sup>46</sup> Air Force officer and historian Edward Mann concurs: "We were a conglomerate of specialists with greater loyalty to machines and sleeve patches than to any single unifying theme or to the Air Force itself."<sup>47</sup> These dynamics suggest a hierarchy of overlapping motivations within the Air Force culture; desires to serve the country, lead Airmen, fly an airplane, and control satellites all collide in a mosaic of motivations. Consequently, a basic assumption persists: *The Air Force is an honorable and patriotic means to practice a desirable high-tech trade. Loyalties to the trade, machine, and subculture can easily overtake loyalty to the institution and its mission.*

## Self-Aware

As the youngest of the military services, and one that fought hard for its organizational autonomy, the Air Force is uniquely self-aware of its institutional legitimacy. During its infancy as an organization, the Air Force's adaptation to its external environment required fierce defense of its turf. Assigning roles and missions among the services spawned fractious debate and bureaucratic wrangling.<sup>48</sup> These dynamics imbued the Air Force with a sensitivity to its rightful place in the pantheon of established military services. Builder claims, "The Air Force . . . has always been most sensitive to defending or guarding its legitimacy as an independent institution."<sup>49</sup> In fact, as recently as December 2009, the office of the chief of staff of the Air Force was seeking fresh articulations of "why we need an independent Air Force."<sup>50</sup>

This self-aware posture subjects the service to chronic bouts of identity crisis. In 1989, an unpublished white paper entitled “A View of the Air Force Today” circulated throughout the Air Force. Its authors articulated an array of concerns about the state of their service and ultimately concluded, “The Air Force seems to have lost its sense of identity and unique contribution.”<sup>51</sup> Two years later, the stunning success of Operation Desert Storm (ODS) seemed to resolve the crisis for the Air Force as it proved its decisive worth in dramatic fashion.<sup>52</sup> The institutional self-confidence, however, was short-lived. In a study published by the Center for Strategic Budgetary Assessments in September 2009, Thomas Ehrhard concludes, “Today’s Air Force is experiencing an institutional identity crisis that places it at an historical nadir of confidence, reputation, and influence.”<sup>53</sup>

These phenomena underscore a final basic assumption of Air Force culture: *Major combat operations are the best setting to showcase the unique potential of the independent Air Force. Otherwise, the Air Force serves an enabling and supporting role in which it is easily taken for granted. In times of transparent contribution, the Air Force must actively articulate its relevance to the nation.*

A suitable framework for analyzing case studies is thus in place. Agency theory provides the rational framework for considering interests and incentives, and posits a useful spectrum of working and shirking. Organizational theory reveals the power of culture to shape a military service’s interests and preferences within that rational framework. Lastly, this section stipulates five basic assumptions of Air Force culture, suggested by its artifacts and espoused beliefs, and forged in its adaptation to the external environment. The following sections present three case studies of the Air Force between 1990 and 2008, testing the impact of its storied culture on its preferences for national security policy.

## **Desert Storm: A Case of Curious Working**

*The way the war was planned, fought, and brought to a close often had more to do with the culture of the military services, their entrenched concept of warfare, and Powell’s abiding philosophy of decisive force than it did with the Iraqis or the tangled politics of the Middle East.*

—Michael R. Gordon and Bernard E. Trainor  
*The Generals’ War* (1995)

Politically and militarily, Operation Desert Storm appears to be a triumphant declaration of the right way to fight a war. From Iraq's invasion of Kuwait on 2 August 1990 through the cease-fire on 28 February 1991, the US military marshaled overwhelming force, leveraged superior technology, and achieved the limited political objective of ejecting Iraqi forces from Kuwait. Furthermore, the cooperation between civilian principals and military leaders during the Gulf War has been hailed as an exemplar of sound civil-military relations. A deeper look, however, reveals a far more textured array of civil-military confrontation and policy grappling.<sup>54</sup>

A major source of civil-military tension in the Gulf War emerged at the outset—whether to pursue an offensive or defensive strategy against Iraqi forces in Kuwait. While most accounts portray the military resisting the offensive strategy preferred by the Bush team, such resistance was hardly uniform among the services. In fact, the Air Force was eager to cooperate. As the following analysis highlights, the Air Force formed a unique enclave of working amidst an otherwise-shirking military.

## **Context**

When President Bush convened his National Security Council (NSC) on 2 August 1990, the principals confronted an essential question: whether to draw a defensive line in the sand at the Saudi Arabian border or pursue an offensive strategy to evict Iraqi forces from Kuwait.<sup>55</sup> When the president polled his advisors, the perspectives emerged clearly: Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney was looking for options that could “hurt Iraq,”<sup>56</sup> while National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft and Deputy Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger counseled, “It is absolutely essential that the US . . . not only put a stop to this aggression but roll it back.”<sup>57</sup> The dissenting view came from the chairman of the Joint Chiefs (CJCS), GEN Colin Powell, who resisted such enthusiasm for military action and questioned whether “it was worth going to war to liberate Kuwait.”<sup>58</sup> As historians Michael Gordon and Bernard Trainor observe, “The lineup ran counter to what most of the public would have expected. The civilians were looking for a way to roll back the Iraqi gains while the military was urging caution.”<sup>59</sup>

After meeting with his NSC staff and top generals at Camp David on 4 August 1990, President Bush announced that the Iraqi aggression “would not stand.”<sup>60</sup> Several days later, Bush outlined four key objectives to guide US policy: secure the immediate, unconditional, and complete withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait; restore the legitimate government of Kuwait; assure



the security and stability of the Persian Gulf region; and protect American lives.<sup>61</sup> After securing permission to base troops in Saudi Arabia, the massive logistical train of men and equipment steamed east, and ODS began. President Bush was clearly on the offensive—but was the military with him?

Cutting short a family vacation, Col John Warden, USAF, hastily returned to the Pentagon on 5 August 1990 and began transforming his own theory of war into actual plans. Warden was convinced that the existing planning architecture would not generate a truly strategic and offensive air campaign; he knew the existing US Air Forces Central Command (CENTAF) plan was inherently defensive and its staff would be preoccupied deploying forces to theater.<sup>62</sup> Warden intended to fill the breach. At a staff meeting that day, he told his boss, “I do not have any idea how it is going to come out, but we are going to put something together anyway and see what happens.”<sup>63</sup>

“What happened” was a fortuitous phone call. CJCS Powell and the head of US Central Command (CENTCOM), GEN Norman Schwarzkopf, felt pressure to provide the president with retaliatory options in the event of Iraqi misdeeds in Kuwait. With his own planning staff consumed by the defense of Saudi Arabia, Schwarzkopf called the Air Staff on 8 August 1990 for planning assistance.<sup>64</sup> Vice chief of staff Gen Mike Loh fielded the call, quickly agreed to help, and passed the momentous task down to his planning staff led by Warden.

Warden and his staff furiously churned out a conceptual plan—dubbed “Instant Thunder”—that bypassed the Iraqi forces massed in Kuwait and targeted centers of gravity in downtown Baghdad instead. Warden believed that after six to nine days of the blistering air campaign, Iraqi leaders would capitulate, thereby obviating the need for an American ground invasion.<sup>65</sup> Despite objections from Tactical Air Command (TAC) planners who dismissed the nascent plan as “an academic bunch of crap,”<sup>66</sup> Warden enjoyed the enthusiastic support of top Air Force leaders.<sup>67</sup>

On 11 August 1990, Warden briefed Powell on his Instant Thunder plan. Although generally pleased with Warden’s effort, Powell refused to believe that the strategic air campaign could single-handedly accomplish the president’s objectives: “OK, it is day six and the strategic campaign is finished. Now what?” With characteristic confidence, Warden replied, “This plan may win the war. You may not need a ground attack . . . I think the Iraqis will withdraw from Kuwait as a result of the strategic air campaign.”<sup>68</sup> Exhorting them to make the plan more joint, Powell thanked the Air Staff team for its helpful contribution. Warden and his team briefed

Schwarzkopf on 17 August 1990 and then flew to Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, to hand off the plan to CENTAF in-theater.<sup>69</sup>

In Riyadh, CENTAF commander Gen Chuck Horner hired Brig Gen Buster Glosson to merge CENTAF plans and Instant Thunder into an executable scheme. With Glosson in charge and Lt Col Dave Deptula in the trenches, the newly formed Special Planning Group slaved to produce a viable offensive air campaign. With the civilian principals looking for an offensive strategy to hurt Iraq, the Air Force alone appeared eager to cooperate.

In early October 1990, a CENTCOM briefing team deployed to Washington to update the principals on their current plans for war. The team presented first to Cheney, Powell, and the JCS on 10 October 1990, and Glosson's robust air campaign clearly impressed the assembled leaders. In fact, Powell had grave concerns that the air plan looked *too* good—so good, in fact, that the president and his advisors might attempt to follow it.<sup>70</sup> Glosson recalls being counseled three separate times after his briefing. Powell pulled Glosson aside first and exhorted, "You've got to make sure when we go to the White House tomorrow that we don't oversell the air campaign because some of those idiots over there may convince the President to execute this before we're ready."<sup>71</sup> After Powell, Lt Gen Mike Carns took a turn: "Your air campaign is too good. The Chairman is afraid the President will tell us to execute. He wants you to go through the plan much faster and not be so convincing."<sup>72</sup>

Powell's resistance to the offensive air-only strategy persisted throughout the planning effort. On 11 October 1990, the briefing team went to the White House and briefed the president and the NSC. Glosson's brief was well received and prompted Bush to ask whether they could simply execute the first three phases of the air campaign and stop short of a ground invasion. Powell—prepared for that very reaction—responded quickly, "You've got to be ready to do Phase IV because your objective won't be accomplished."<sup>73</sup> Three weeks later, President Bush met with Powell and asked once again, "You and Norm are really sure that air power alone can't do it?"<sup>74</sup> Powell assured him that ground troops were essential to secure Iraqi withdrawal. While the president's policy of offensively ejecting Iraqi forces from Kuwait prevailed, Powell seized command of the ways and means—effectively blocking the Air Force's stand-alone offensive option.

### **Cultural Alignment**

What role did the Air Force's unique culture play in forging its isolated cooperation with Bush's preferred policy? This section evaluates the extent

to which the Air Force's cultural assumptions aligned with the civilian policy, thereby forming the basis for its unique position.<sup>75</sup>

**Technology-Centered.** The Desert Storm air campaign—as planned and later flown—showcased the superiority of American technology as no other war had done before. In the skies above Iraq, technology finally caught up with Air Force doctrine; at last, Airmen could deliver the precise effects that early airpower advocates had long espoused.<sup>76</sup> Warden, Deptula, and Glosson anchored their bold plan in two enabling technologies: radar-evading stealth and precision-guided weapons.<sup>77</sup> Their merger furnished the enduring visual images from the war: laser-guided bombs penetrating ventilator shafts in downtown Baghdad. Such missions were a glorious consummation of the Air Force's techno-warrior culture: brave pilots, sheltered in a technological cocoon of invisibility, penetrated hostile skies to drop strategic bombs with pinpoint precision.

**Autonomously Decisive.** The air campaign was largely a politics-free, kinetic operation that most Airmen viewed as the decisive lead instrument in a war-winning concerto. During the critical planning process, Airmen chose nearly all of the targets and enjoyed wide political latitude. During execution of the plan, the specter of Vietnam-style target selection loomed near, making President Bush and his security team careful to avoid excessive meddling. On the occasions when Air Force leaders did experience political constraints, they chafed under the fetters.<sup>78</sup>

**Future-Oriented.** ODS was at the leading edge of geopolitical currents and technological possibilities. As the Soviet Union crumbled, the United States emerged as the lone superpower and turned its attention to shoring up regional stability. The Gulf War inaugurated a new era, demonstrably proving the United States' capability and intention to police the globe for good. Furthermore, the campaign debuted cutting-edge technology and provided an opportunity to bury the hobgoblins of Vietnam. In nearly every meaningful dimension, the war and the air campaign accorded with the Air Force's cultural inclination toward the future.

**Occupationally Loyal.** The evolution of the air campaign followed the tribal affiliations of the Air Force's subcultures. The final product was a hybrid of strategic targeting in Baghdad and robust support to ground operations in the Kuwaiti Theater of Operations—a strategy that allowed Airmen from both the strategic and tactical domains to ply their chosen trade. While this aspect of Air Force organizational culture does not resound as clearly as the others, it nevertheless bears subtle reflection in the final Desert Storm policy.

**Self-Aware.** The robust air campaign provided the ideal venue to exorcise the demons of the Air Force identity crisis articulated the year prior. The offensive strategy of Air Force preeminence proved exceptionally attractive to Airmen wanting to assert their place in the military pantheon. By the time the cease-fire was signed, the visible carnage on the “highway of death” cured the plaguing notion that the Air Force had “lost its sense of identity and unique contribution.”<sup>79</sup>

## Implications

The preeminent features of Air Force organizational culture clearly saturate the offensive air campaign of the Gulf War. Through a fortuitous sequence of events, the Air Force as an institution had an opportunity to sculpt a campaign plan in its own image, soaked in its own cultural assumptions. The Air Force’s resulting policy preference accorded closely with the civilians’ desired offensive policy. This convergence of preferences minimized the preference gap and helped to explain the Air Force’s unique posture of working amidst an otherwise resistant military structure.

This case reveals the value of disaggregating the military actor in studying American civil-military relations. Whereas existing treatments of the Gulf War highlight the positions taken by “the military,” this analysis confirms that the military services are unique actors who may work at cross-purposes with each other in creating policy. Rooted in their unique histories, the military services have distinct and powerful organizational cultures that inform their appraisal of the national interest. By comparing a proposed national policy with the cultural assumptions of an individual service, policymakers can anticipate unique cooperation or resistance from the military services. In the case of the Gulf War, the civilians’ preferred policy correlated squarely with the cultural assumptions of the Air Force, creating an island of cooperation in a sea of resistance.

## Keeping Watch: A Decade of Quasi-War

*As 1998 winds to a close, few can claim to have predicted in 1991 that overwhelming victory would lead to such tattered laurels.*

—Rick Atkinson, *Washington Post*

For the Air Force, the satisfying triumph of Operation Desert Storm slowly deteriorated into an interminable decade of frustration. The heady days of stealthy precision bombing against leadership targets in Baghdad

devolved into a protracted cat-and-mouse skirmish with Saddam Hussein. Having proved its ability to purchase political results at low cost, the Air Force became the policy instrument of choice in the years that followed. The employment of airpower, however, often ran counter to the cultural assumptions of the service, creating more frustration than satisfaction among Airmen.

Over the life span of Operations Northern and Southern Watch (ONW and OSW, respectively), the United States flew over 265,000 sorties in the south and more than 122,500 sorties in the northern tier of Iraq.<sup>80</sup> This containment of Saddam cost the DoD nearly \$12 billion dollars and untold degradations in readiness and morale.<sup>81</sup> The Air Force was particularly hard hit, as its constant shuttling of Airmen and aircraft to the Gulf spurred widespread discontent and a hemorrhage of personnel leaving the service. Despite these trends, the appraisal of this national policy remained mixed throughout the Air Force. While many lamented the apparent uselessness of “boring holes in the sky,”<sup>82</sup> others touted the rare feat of securing national policy objectives through the air.<sup>83</sup> Some commanders bewailed their plummeting pilot proficiency,<sup>84</sup> while others appreciated the opportunity to drop bombs on enemy targets in a combat-like environment.<sup>85</sup> Overall, the Air Force exhibited as much confusion as frustration, unsure whether to savor its leading role or decry the dulling of its blade.

While the Desert Storm case study shows the value of analyzing an individual service, this case demonstrates that working and shirking are not binary absolutes but rather opposite ends of a behavioral spectrum. Unlike Desert Storm, in which clear cultural alignment spawned unique working, the decade of armed overwatch reveals mixed cultural alignment and a blend of both working *and* shirking. Furthermore, this case highlights a grassroots civil-military phenomenon made possible by the protracted season of the containment policy. While several administrations of Air Force leaders did their best to make containment work, symptoms of shirking bubbled up from lower echelons of the force. Over time, resistance at the individual level swelled into service-wide resistance to a culturally distasteful policy.

## **Containment and Culture**

The national policy of containing the Iraqi regime through airpower spanned more than 10 years and three presidential administrations.<sup>86</sup> The critics of Iraqi containment were legion, but on balance, most critics ceded

the ongoing value of the inescapable policy. “Our policy of containment,” noted former congressman Lee Hamilton, “with all its limitations and frustrations, has achieved the vital interests of the United States.”<sup>87</sup> Former secretaries of defense William Perry and Harold Brown exhausted their strategic imagination to divine a better option, but neither could do so; Brown lamented, “This is not a good strategy, but I haven’t thought of a better one.”<sup>88</sup>

While sporadic military flare-ups in the Gulf occasionally grabbed headlines, the Air Force endured the muted monotony of sustained enforcement operations for the whole decade. As a service, the Air Force paid a high price in morale, readiness, and retention to execute the national policy; but in exchange for that price, the Air Force provided security and stability for the nation, the Persian Gulf region, and the international community.<sup>89</sup> To what extent did this long twilight policy agree with the Air Force’s tacit cultural assumptions?

**Technology-Centered.** The long decade of flying constabulary missions over Iraq was not the technological showcase that ODS had been. Nevertheless, the perpetual operations afforded ample opportunities to introduce new technologies like remotely piloted Predator drones.<sup>90</sup> These Predator drones represented a leading edge of aerospace technology, but given the privileged status of manned platforms in Air Force culture, the Predator was slowly and tentatively accepted. Similarly, pinprick retaliations with advanced cruise missiles—so-called Tomahawk Diplomacy—proved equally unsatisfying for intrepid Air Force aviators. For Airmen whose culture prizes onsite aircrew taking measured risks to guide weapons precisely to target, outsourcing this honor to an unmanned cruise missile provided little gratification.

**Autonomously Decisive.** Airpower in ONW and OSW was clearly *not* used offensively, overwhelmingly, and with minimal political interference. Instead, by the very nature of protracted enforcement, the mission required inherently defensive operations with sporadic kinetic engagements designed not to overwhelm but to punish, hemmed in by extensive political sensitivities. The Air Force wants to be autonomously decisive, but the political environment hampered its autonomy, and enforcing the status quo meant there was nothing to decide. This defensive policy involved targets picked by Washington principals, punitive responses chaperoned by complex rules of engagement, and strike missions hamstrung by the political sensitivities of host nations like Turkey, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia.

In stark contrast to the autonomously decisive ethos of the Air Force, the policy grated at the service's core.

**Future-Oriented.** In his written testimony to the Senate Armed Services Committee in March 1999, Air Force chief of staff (CSAF) Gen Michael Ryan quoted Air Force legend Billy Mitchell: "In the development of air power, one has to look ahead and not backward and figure out what is going to happen, not too much what has happened."<sup>91</sup> The constabulary enforcement of Iraqi no-fly zones, however, mired the Air Force in a perpetual recycling of past grievances. The Air Force could hardly look ahead to what was going to happen, as it labored mightily to adapt to current demands. While the containment policy gave the Air Force the opportunity to provide security for the nation and the world, it kept the service from its preferred posture of looking ahead to the unknown future.

**Occupationally Loyal.** The frustrations of constant deployments to an unsatisfying mission spurred Airmen—namely pilots—to leave the service and ply their trade elsewhere. While many pilots chose to leave the service for perfectly honorable reasons, the overall exodus of skilled aviators suggests that loyalty to the Air Force institution and its mission was a contingent one.

In fact, leaving the service to fly for an airline was a culturally accepted choice. General Ryan reflected, "It's not their fault they are leaving. Maybe it's our fault"—suggesting the Air Force bore some responsibility for not providing a suitably satisfying means for national defense.<sup>92</sup> As one article reported in September 1998, "[Pilots] are leaving because they can't justify to their families the need for being away from home half the year when US interests really aren't at stake. And, just as importantly, they can't justify to themselves not being the best."<sup>93</sup> Is "being the best" a higher priority than fulfilling national policy? Furthermore, do line officers enjoy the privilege of determining when US interests are really at stake? Democratic theory gives *civilians* the authority to determine what is in the national interest, while the military has responsibility for executing that policy faithfully.<sup>94</sup> Dismissing a tasked policy as a peripheral US interest unworthy of one's professional skill belies a loyalty to a craft over the institution and its mission.

**Self-Aware.** The decade of containment over the Iraqi desert did little to sustain the buoyed self-image restored by ODS. In October 2000, Thomas Ricks reported as follows: "Northern Watch is characteristic of U.S. military missions in the post-Cold War era: it is small-scale, open-

ended and largely ignored by the American people. Even though U.S. warplanes are routinely dropping bombs on a foreign country, it has not been an issue in the presidential election and has hardly been mentioned by the candidates.”<sup>95</sup> The Air Force’s sacrifice of morale and readiness went largely unappreciated by civilian principals and the nation. The relentless demands of containment imperiled the future health of the service in support of a cause that no one could embrace *or* abandon.

Overall, this assessment suggests the national policy of containment was largely—but not purely—at odds with the Air Force’s cultural assumptions. While new technologies were introduced into the fight, they were not the shimmering high-tech prizes most central to the Air Force’s identity. The no-fly-zone missions gave the Air Force the leading role in providing security for the nation, the region, and the world; but the missions were largely defensive, politically constrained, and reliant on non-heroic cruise missiles. The Air Force had primacy in the current fight, but the exhaustive commitment kept it from posturing for the next fight. Pilots were given ample opportunity to fly, but dissatisfaction with the benign and peripheral mission compelled them to fly elsewhere. Finally, despite the operational rigor of constant deployments and engagements with Iraqi air defenses, Airmen received little credit from the press and the nation at large. Given such varied consistency between the national policy and the Air Force’s cultural assumptions, is the service more likely to work or shirk—or something in between?

## Implications

Throughout the long decade, pockets of cooperation and resistance dappled the Air Force. Senior leaders worked hard to accommodate the demands of a constabulary mission, but individual Airmen deploying for the fifth or sixth time could no longer tolerate the policy’s affront to their service culture. Individual resistance metastasized into a collective one, as the all-volunteer force volunteered to leave, altering the mission capability of the service. In this case, the protracted time period altered the conventional civil-military dynamic; instead of military leaders working or shirking a policy on behalf of their service, the reverse was true. The disparity between the policy and Air Force culture required an incubation period for individual symptoms of resistance to develop. When these symptoms reached critical mass across the force, the leaders had no choice but to follow and ask their civilian superiors for relief from the exhausting de-



mands.<sup>96</sup> The Air Force's aggregate response to containing Iraq fell somewhere between working and shirking, as the service hedged its cooperation in response to individual resistance.

### **381 or Bust: Buying Tomorrow's Fleet with Today's Budget**

*We are often asked: How many F-22s does the Air Force need? The answer, of course, depends on what we are being asked to do.*

—Michael Donley and Norton Schwartz  
*Washington Post*, 13 April 2009

What a service buys—or wants to buy—clearly reflects its perceived role in the nation's present and future defense. Cultural assumptions dominate the acquisition process, exerting a gravitational pull toward core programs and repelling peripheral ones. Morton Halperin, an experienced scholar of bureaucracy, observes: "An organization struggles hardest for the capabilities which it views as necessary to the essence of the organization."<sup>97</sup> The first decade of the twenty-first century places Halperin's insight into sharp relief.

After the procurement holiday of the 1990s, the Air Force sought to recapitalize its aging fleet, pursuing new tankers, helicopters, RPAs, and fighters. While every program endured scrutiny, no aircraft provoked more fractious debate than the F-22 Raptor, the Air Force's premier fighter. By 2008, these debates escalated to a fever pitch as the pursuit of more Raptors clashed violently with Secretary of Defense Robert Gates' stated priorities. Crusading to put the Pentagon on a wartime footing, Gates pushed the services to buy systems relevant to irregular war, which he viewed as the "most likely and lethal scenarios" for both the present and future US military.<sup>98</sup> Toward that end, Gates publicly prodded Airmen to provide more unmanned intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) coverage in-theater.<sup>99</sup> The F-22 and the Predator RPA thus became symbols of a deeper divide over how to prepare for the future: for Gates, the RPA embodied the Air Force's contribution to the new normal of irregular warfare, while the Air Force pitched its F-22 as an indispensable strategic hedge against a future near-peer competitor.

The F-22 and the Predator both provide an iconic comparison—and one that reveals the cultural roots of civil-military conflict.<sup>100</sup> Although

Air Force secretary Michael Wynne and chief of staff Gen T. Michael Moseley were ostensibly fired in June 2008 for their “lack of effective oversight” in the nuclear enterprise,<sup>101</sup> nearly all commentators agreed that the irreconcilable debate over the F-22 contributed in part to Gates’ decision.<sup>102</sup> Consequently, this case broaches the unexplored pole of the working-shirking continuum established in the earlier cases. While the Air Force curiously worked in planning Desert Storm and gradually balked at the no-fly zones, this case offers a striking example of organizational culture leading a service to shirk the policy of its civilian leaders.<sup>103</sup>

### **Cultural Alignment**

If organizational culture is the essential variable in forming a service’s preference, the five primary assumptions of Air Force culture should echo very differently between the F-22 and the Predator. This section explores the relative consonance between Air Force culture and the core ethos of these two major weapon systems.

**Technology-Centered.** Both the F-22 and the RPA manifest leading-edge technologies that are vital to the Air Force mission. Air Force culture, however, exhibits a preference for embodied platforms that permit warrior-flyers to ride technology into battle. Consequently, the F-22 is the apotheosis of Air Force technological achievement: a single fighter pilot employing radar-evading stealth to gather intelligence, shoot down enemy fighters, and drop precision-guided bombs. An RPA, conversely, boasts an advanced array of technology, but its remotely piloted nature consigns it to second-tier status within the bureaucracy and culture.

**Autonomously Decisive.** Throughout its history, the Air Force has prized its independent contribution to the joint fight. Although many RPAs are now equipped with a kinetic strike capability, their core mission is to support the joint fight by providing real-time ISR. The F-22, however, sets the gold standard for autonomy and decisiveness. Beyond the obvious capabilities of air superiority and precision bombing, even the Raptor’s capacity for ISR is autonomously decisive—as one Air Force colonel described: “There are environments [with] advanced defensive systems . . . where [only] the F-22 can go in and operate. And, by virtue of being there, it can collect information that’s of great value to a lot of other users.”<sup>104</sup>

**Future-Oriented.** In many respects, the debate between the F-22 and the RPA was a proxy war in the meta-clash over the future of

American defense. Were the irregular wars in Iraq and Afghanistan harbingers or aberrations? Secretary Gates clearly believed that irregular conflict merited the nation's focus and funding, while Air Force leaders surveyed a different horizon. In testimony to Congress, General Moseley warned, "As a service chief, I'm worried about tomorrow. Beyond Iraq and Afghanistan, there are storm clouds on the horizon, troubling global trends that will bring friction, competition and conflict, and will no doubt involve potential adversaries who have gone to school on American airpower these last 17 years."<sup>105</sup> Within the larger debate about America's future, the F-22 embodied the Air Force's commitment to future preparedness.

**Occupationally Loyal.** From 1982 until 2008, fighter pilots led the Air Force as its chief of staff—Moseley was the ninth in a string of fighter generals. Strikingly, the F-22 is the culmination of plans originally drafted in 1981.<sup>106</sup> The F-22 was therefore conceived, purchased, and defended by a 26-year administration of fighter pilots. In an Air Force that often engenders loyalties to a particular job or an individual aircraft, the F-22 air-superiority fighter always had a powerful patron at the highest level. RPAs lacked an equivalent voice. As stated earlier, Ehrhard attributes much of the service's slowness in fielding RPAs to the feudal dynamics of its subcultures and the absence of an internal constituency.<sup>107</sup> In short, RPAs did not enjoy the bureaucratic top cover or internal advocacy given to the F-22.

**Self-Aware.** The Air Force's desire for preeminence, particularly in major combat, generally supersedes any satisfaction derived from supporting ground operations in land-centric irregular war. The F-22 and the RPA, therefore, represent contrasting poles of autonomy and support—the F-22 is inherently independent and decisive, while an RPA most often supports a ground commander. Furthermore, all four services are flooding the skies with a teeming armada of unmanned aircraft, but the F-22 comprises a unique capability for the Air Force. The Raptor thus enhances the Air Force's self-styled *raison d'être*, while RPAs confer no such distinction.

As an embodied technology, boasting a unique capacity for autonomously decisive operations and nurtured by 26 years of fighter-pilot patronage, the F-22 is a central icon of Air Force culture. The Air Force's impassioned pursuit of more Raptors, despite clear civilian guidance to the contrary, comes then as little surprise.

## **Public Debate**

The total number of F-22s the Air Force planned to buy was a moving target, tumbling down with the Berlin Wall from 750 to 648, then 442, 333, and 271.<sup>108</sup> In December 2004, with the Army and Marine Corps deeply entrenched in Iraq and Afghanistan, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld released Program Budget Decision (PBD) 753, cutting over \$10 billion from the F-22 program and trimming its purchase to 179 aircraft. The Air Combat Command, however, had fixed on an operational requirement for 381 F-22s—enough to equip a full 24-plane squadron for each of the service's 10 Air Expeditionary Forces.<sup>109</sup> The Air Force remained doggedly committed to this requirement and even slashed its personnel budget to pay for more aircraft. In December 2005, Moseley and Wynne endorsed PBD 720, a draconian plan to chop 40,000 Airmen from the active force to finance more airplanes.<sup>110</sup> By 2007, the planned purchase of F-22s had increased slightly to 183 aircraft, while the Air Force "requirement" of 381 stood unchanged.

In October 2007, General Moseley and Secretary Wynne testified before the House Armed Services Committee, restating their firm requirement for 381 Raptors.<sup>111</sup> Gates, however, quickly assured the Congress that the Defense Department was content with the planned purchase of 183. "I'm persuaded that 183 is probably the right number, or something in that ballpark," Gates testified on 6 February 2008. "I know that the Air Force is up here and around talking about 350 or something on that order . . . The reality is we are fighting two wars, in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the F-22 has not performed a single mission in either theater."<sup>112</sup>

Undeterred by the secretary's pointed testimony, Air Force leaders quickly took up their familiar refrain. One week after Gates' testimony, Gen Bruce Carlson, commander of Air Force Materiel Command, assured reporters, "We think that [183] is the wrong number . . . We're committed to funding 380. We're building a program right now to do that. It's going to be incredibly difficult on the Air Force, but we've done this before."<sup>113</sup> General Carlson's remarks incensed the office of the secretary of defense (OSD), prompting one official to categorize them as "borderline insubordination."<sup>114</sup> Gates tracked down Secretary Wynne on vacation, rebuking Carlson and forcing Wynne and Moseley to disown the errant remarks.<sup>115</sup> Nevertheless, Air Force leaders did not easily back down—in the same news reports that covered Carlson's remarks, General Moseley stated, "We can defend our requirement of 381. You can defend

that on any number of operational analyses but I'm trying not to go down that road."<sup>116</sup> Two weeks later, Moseley and Wynne defended the requirement once again, justifying their budget requests to Congress. Testifying before the Senate Armed Services Committee on 5 March 2008, Moseley trumpeted the long view, looking past the irregular landscape of Iraq to a full-spectrum future—a future underwritten by a deep bench of F-22s.<sup>117</sup> When asked if 183 Raptors were enough, Moseley responded, "No, sir."

Later, in March 2008, Secretary Gates started beating his own familiar drum—support for the current conflicts. Frustrated with the Pentagon's sluggish support for the present instead of the future, Gates lamented: "In ISR, it was business as usual. I really pushed the Army and the Air Force—particularly the Air Force—and I intend to keep pushing because the unmet need is huge."<sup>118</sup> Despite the Air Force's efforts to meet the secretary's intent, Gates remained unimpressed: "I'm not satisfied that anybody in the Pentagon is doing enough to put us on a path where we have adequate resources for this."<sup>119</sup> In his most publicized rebuke of the Air Force ISR effort, Gates addressed future Air Force leaders at Maxwell AFB the following month. On 21 April 2008, he exhorted, "My concern is that our services are still not moving aggressively in wartime to provide resources needed now on the battlefield. I've been wrestling for months to get more ISR assets into the theater. Because people were stuck in old ways of doing business, it's been like pulling teeth. While we've doubled this capability in recent months, it is still not good enough."<sup>120</sup>

In a memo to all Airmen released later that week, Moseley and Wynne were quick to note Gates' comments were directed at "the services" and not the Air Force specifically.<sup>121</sup> Additionally, the Air Force secretary and chief thoroughly detailed the service's massive contribution to the ISR enterprise in-theater, proving that it was truly "all in."<sup>122</sup> Gates, however, wanted Airmen to work smarter, not harder; specifically, he sought to challenge "long-standing service assumptions and priorities about which missions require certified pilots and which do not."<sup>123</sup> While Moseley had repeatedly insisted that bomb-dropping, missile-firing Predator operators be fully qualified pilots, Gates viewed the policy as an "element of the culture that [is a] barrier to progress and achieving the mission."<sup>124</sup> In Gates' estimation, the service willing to mortgage 40,000 Airmen to finance its future F-22 fleet was not making an equally sacrificial commitment to the current fight.

In early May 2008, Secretary Gates addressed the Heritage Foundation, and diagnosed the services with “‘Next-War-Itis’—the propensity of much of the defense establishment to be in favor of what might be needed in a future conflict.”<sup>125</sup> Gates redoubled his commitment to the current wars, repeating his conviction that America’s “most likely and lethal scenarios” for the future included more of the same. “I believe that any major weapons program, in order to remain viable, will have to show some utility and relevance to the kind of irregular campaigns that . . . are most likely to engage America’s military in the coming decades.”<sup>126</sup> Since the secretary had already opined on the F-22’s marginal commitment to such conflicts, the implications of his comments resounded clearly.

The ongoing conflict between Gates, Moseley, and Wynne climaxed the following month in a surprising subplot. After two high-profile mistakes in the Air Force’s handling of nuclear weapons, Gates commissioned ADM Kirkland Donald to investigate the service and its nuclear protocols.<sup>127</sup> Upon receiving Admiral Donald’s report on 5 June 2008, Gates concluded, “The focus of the Air Force leadership has drifted with respect to perhaps its most sensitive mission.”<sup>128</sup> He noted “the gradual erosion of nuclear standards and a lack of effective oversight by Air Force leadership,” commenting further that the “overall mission focus of the Air Force has shifted away from this nuclear mission.” In an unprecedented decapitation of service leadership, Gates accepted the immediate resignations of both Moseley and Wynne.

Despite Gates’ public assurances to the contrary,<sup>129</sup> Pentagon insiders and defense analysts easily recognized the role of the F-22/RPA skirmish in the secretary’s decision. Gates spoke repeatedly of the drift in Air Force priorities away from the nuclear mission—the service’s dogged commitment to the F-22 likely served as the unspoken distraction. John Tirpak observed, “The shake-up was a clear message to the Air Force to quit making a direct case for preferred systems and get more ‘joint’.”<sup>130</sup> Other editorials sounded a harsher tone: “Under Wynne and Moseley, Air Force leaders refused to listen to calls for change, even as the military landscape changed around them. Their disregard of increasingly pointed messages has, at times, bordered on insubordination; for example, their insistence on acquiring twice as many F-22 Raptors as called for in Gates’ budget.”<sup>131</sup> Even Wynne acknowledged the likely influence of their budget sparring on his ouster, “I believe that I had a very big difference of philosophy with my boss, and that he chose this moment to relieve me.”<sup>132</sup>

Gates' nomination to replace Moseley confirmed the cultural undercurrents of the civil-military conflict. Gen Norton Schwartz, a mobility and special operations pilot, replaced Moseley as chief of staff, ending the 26-year reign of the fighter generals. The dour implications for the F-22 were inescapable; a chief of staff with a background in special operations, leading a chastened service, was unlikely to charge the same bull that had gored his predecessor.<sup>133</sup> In the months that followed, Schwartz unsurprisingly announced that the Air Force would seek less than 381 F-22s, hailing as "a sign of a healthy institution that we're willing to revisit long-held beliefs, no matter how central to our ethos they may be."<sup>134</sup> The following spring, Schwartz and Secretary Michael Donley published an op-ed in the *Washington Post*, revising the service's warfighting assumptions and pledging their support for Gates' plan to cap F-22 production at 187 aircraft. "The F-22 is a vital tool in the military's arsenal and will remain in our inventory for decades to come. But the time has come to move on."<sup>135</sup> The hard-fought battle had finally ended—and democratic theory insists that the proper side prevailed.

## **Implications**

Agency theory posits the civil-military relationship as a strategic interaction of civilian principals and military agents responding to material incentives. In this case, the Air Force's deeply rooted culture privileged the F-22 Raptor, prompting tireless advocacy despite resistance from its civilian principals. The preference gap became sufficiently wide that the Air Force shirked the civilian policy and steadfastly trumpeted its ongoing requirement for 381 F-22s.<sup>136</sup> With such shirking clearly detected, the next decision belonged to the civilian principal: whether and how to punish the service for its shirking. Under the proximate cause of nuclear mishandling, Gates found his opportunity to remove the Air Force leaders with whom he could no longer work effectively. Ultimately, the punishment yielded its intended effect: the replacement crop of Air Force leaders assented to Gates' position on the F-22 and rightfully exhorted the service to move on. Having clearly and exhaustively identified the risks incurred by fewer F-22s, the Air Force was not in a position to protest further. For the health of the country's civil-military relationship, "The military can describe in some detail the nature of the threat posed by a particular enemy, but only the civilian can decide whether to feel threatened and, if so, how or even whether to respond. The military assesses the risk; the civilian

judges it.”<sup>137</sup> Perhaps one day the country will wish it had 380 F-22s—but such speculation is largely irrelevant. In a democracy, the “civilians have a right to be wrong.”<sup>138</sup>


## Conclusion

Civilian principals and military agents share a common interest in pursuing healthy civil-military relations. Grounded in democratic theory, each party benefits from knowing both what its role *should* be as well as the meaningful incentives that motivate the other. For civilian principals, this study exposes the illusion of the military as a unitary actor by highlighting the causal impact of organizational culture. In the aggregate, military service members certainly share common characteristics that differentiate them from the civilian public. In the gritty sphere of policy, however, military leaders from different services are not fungible assets. Admirals have reached their positions by thriving within the naval culture, while Air Force generals have grown up thinking like Airmen. The services have markedly distinct cultures that shape their perception of the national security environment.

Consequently, understanding the unique service cultures can improve the creation of viable policy, clarify communication, and help civilians anticipate where pockets of resistance or cooperation are likely to arise. Civilians face no danger of an imminent coup but should recognize that policies inconsistent with the cultural assumptions of a particular service will likely engender hedging or foot-dragging from that service. As this study has shown, the organizational culture of a military service plays a dominant role in shaping its interests and preferences, which in turn inform its calculation of working or shirking the civilian policy.

For military members, this study suggests the value of understanding the origin of one's preferences. Airmen advocating an air-centric position should understand their conclusions may be staked down in cultural assumptions, not anchored in absolute truth. By exposing the tacit assumptions of service culture, military members can recognize the service-colored glasses that naturally color their world. Airmen, Soldiers, Sailors, and Marines could then articulate a service position with rigor and humility, aware of the unproven assumptions animating their ideas.



Humility of perspective is all the more essential in a civil-military exchange. While the military has a duty to provide expert counsel, a civil-military debate of principals and agents is inherently an “unequal dialogue.”<sup>139</sup> The military agent is accountable to its civilian principal, who is in turn accountable to the electorate. By right of place, therefore, civilians command the decision-making high ground—the military’s position is honorably and necessarily subordinate. By appreciating the boundaries of their prescribed role and the cultural origins of their self-interest, military leaders can best uphold and advance a healthy civil-military relationship. Together, civilian and military leaders can thus sharpen their unequal dialogue, improving the armed extension of diplomatic policy to advance the nation’s interests. 

## Notes

1. Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, trans. and ed. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 87.
2. This is the classic portrait of military organizations painted by Barry Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine: France, Britain, and Germany between the World Wars* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984); and Jack Snyder, *The Ideology of the Offensive: Military Decision Making and the Disasters of 1914* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984).
3. Edgar H. Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 3rd ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004), 7.
4. Jeffrey W. Legro, “Military Culture and Inadvertent Escalation in World War II,” *International Security* 18, no. 4 (1994): 108–42.
5. See Elizabeth Kier, *Imagining War: French and British Military Doctrine Between the Wars* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 38.
6. Peter Feaver, *Armed Servants: Agency, Oversight, and Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 3.
7. For commentary on the value of disaggregating military culture into its distinct service components, see Williamson Murray, “Does Military Culture Matter?” *Orbis* 43, no. 1 (1999): 34; Theo Farrell, “Figuring Out Fighting Organisations: The New Organisational Analysis in Strategic Studies,” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 19, no. 1 (1996): 122–35; Deborah D. Avant, *Political Institutions and Military Change: Lessons From Peripheral Wars* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 14; Adam N. Stulberg and Michael D. Salomone, *Managing Defense Transformation: Agency, Culture and Service Change* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007), 20; and Jeffrey Legro, *Cooperation Under Fire: Anglo-German Restraint During World War II* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995).
8. Taken from the title of Feaver’s work.
9. Samuel Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957), 83.
10. Morris Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier: A Social and Political Portrait* (Glencoe, IL.: Free Press, 1960), 420.
11. Feaver, *Armed Servants*, 285.

12. Feaver, *Armed Servants*.

13. Ibid., 60. As Feaver explains, the terms *working* and *shirking* carry loaded connotations in a military context but should be understood more antiseptically, as in the economics literature. Shirking, for example, is not meant to imply “lazy or desultory behavior, or possibly treasonous treachery.”

14. This consideration incorporates the perceived cost of that monitoring, as well as its role as an incentive to the military, which is assumed to prefer autonomy (nonintrusive monitoring).

15. If the military and the civilians want the same thing, there is no incentive to shirk. Conversely, if the military has a divergent interest and believes their shirking will not be detected, or not be punished, or that the punishment would not be costly, its incentive to shirk increases.

16. See Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*; James Q. Wilson, *Bureaucracy: What Government Agencies Do and Why They Do It* (New York: Basic Books, 1989); Ann Swidler, “Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies,” *American Sociological Review* 51, no. 2 (1986); Kim S. Cameron and Robert E. Quinn, *Diagnosing and Changing Organizational Culture: Based on the Competing Values Framework* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1999); Morton H. Halperin et al., *Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy*, 2nd ed. (Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 2006).

17. Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 17.

18. Ibid., 25.

19. Ibid., 28.

20. Ibid.

21. Ibid., 31. Schein attributes the expression “theories-in-use” to the work of Chris Argyris.

22. Ibid., 32.

23. Ibid., 8.

24. Carl H. Builder, *The Masks of War: American Military Styles in Strategy and Analysis* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 19.

25. Perry M. Smith, *The Air Force Plans for Peace, 1943–1945* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1970), 18. Smith writes, “To him the airplane was not just a new and exciting weapon; it was what carried him miles behind enemy lines and brought him back; it was a personal possession which was given a personal, usually feminine, name, kissed upon return from a mission, and painted with a symbol for each enemy plane shot down or bombing mission completed.”

26. While Airmen rightly aver that remotely piloted aircraft constitute *manned* systems given their extensive personnel footprint, the use of “manned” in this article refers to pilots inhabiting airborne cockpits.

27. The story of Air Force development of the ICBM is detailed in Neil Sheehan, *A Fiery Peace in a Cold War: Bernard Schriever and the Ultimate Weapon* (New York: Random House, 2009). For a discussion of resistance to both systems based on organizational identity, see Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), 422.

28. Quoted in Carl H. Builder, *The Icarus Syndrome: The Role of Air Power Theory in the Evolution and Fate of the U.S. Air Force* (London: Transaction Publishers, 1994), 163.

29. Thomas Ehrhard, “Air Force UAVs: The Secret History,” *Mitchell Institute*, July 2010, [http://www.afa.org/Mitchell/Reports/MS\\_UAV\\_0710.pdf](http://www.afa.org/Mitchell/Reports/MS_UAV_0710.pdf). This article comprises a shortened version of Ehrhard’s much longer doctoral dissertation on the adoption of RPAs into each of the services.

30. Ehrhard, “Air Force UAVs,” 44–46.

31. Smith, *Air Force Plans for Peace*, 17.

32. David MacIsaac, *Strategic Bombing in World War Two: The Story of the United States Strategic Bombing Survey* (New York: Garland, 1976).
33. These ideas are reflected in Michael S. Sherry, *The Rise of American Air Power: The Creation of Armageddon* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 251–52.
34. *Ibid.*, 180.
35. Mark Clodfelter, *The Limits of Air Power: The American Bombing of North Vietnam* (New York: Free Press, 1989), 203.
36. The metaphor of the “straitjacket” in fighting limited wars comes from Dr. Tom Hughes, School of Advanced Air and Space Studies, Maxwell AFB, AL.
37. Michael Worden, *Rise of the Fighter Generals: The Problem of Air Force Leadership, 1945–1982* (Maxwell AFB, AL: Air University Press, 1998), 43.
38. Tami Davis Biddle, *Rhetoric and Reality in Air Warfare: The Evolution of British and American Ideas About Strategic Bombing, 1914–1945* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 299. Echoed in Worden, *Rise of the Fighter Generals*, 169.
39. Charles Dunlap, “Understanding Airmen: A Primer for Soldiers,” *Military Review* (2007), 127.
40. Biddle, *Rhetoric and Reality*, 291.
41. Builder, *Masks of War*, 37.
42. James Smith, “Air Force Culture and Cohesion: Building an Air and Space Force for the Twenty-First Century,” *Airpower Journal* (Fall 1998), 46.
43. “Occupational” orientation refers to a primary loyalty to the task or occupation, whereas an “institutional” orientation gives chief loyalty to the institution itself over the task performed within that institution.
44. Builder, *Icarus Syndrome*, 35.
45. Melanie Streeter, “‘We’ve Been Waiting’ Campaign Returns to Television,” *Airman*, November 2004, 9.
46. Quoted in Worden, *Rise of the Fighter Generals*, 235.
47. Edward C. Mann, *Thunder and Lightning: Desert Storm and the Airpower Debates* (Maxwell AFB, AL: Air University Press, 1995), 163.
48. For a full discussion of this time period, see Jeffrey G. Barlow, *Revolt of the Admirals: The Fight for Naval Aviation, 1945–1950* (Washington: Brassey’s, 1998).
49. Builder, *Masks of War*, 27.
50. Greg Jaffe, “Combat Generation: Drone Operators Climb on Winds of Change in the Air Force,” *Washington Post*, 28 February 2010, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/02/27/AR2010022703754.html> (accessed 1 Mar 10).
51. Quoted in Builder, *Icarus Syndrome*, 5.
52. Builder, *Icarus Syndrome*, 10.
53. Thomas Ehrhard, *An Air Force Strategy for the Long Haul* (Washington: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2009), 28, [http://www.csbaonline.org/4Publications/PubLibrary/R.20090917.An\\_Air\\_Force\\_Strat/R.20090917.An\\_Air\\_Force\\_Strat.pdf](http://www.csbaonline.org/4Publications/PubLibrary/R.20090917.An_Air_Force_Strat/R.20090917.An_Air_Force_Strat.pdf).
54. For a summary of the conventional civil-military accounts, see Feaver, *Armed Servants*, 235. Feaver himself, however, is quick to note that Desert Storm had more civil-military conflict than conventional wisdom admits.
55. Gordon and Trainor, *Generals’ War*, 18.
56. Diane T. Putney, *Airpower Advantage: Planning the Gulf War Air Campaign, 1989–1991* (Washington: Air Force History and Museums Program, 2004), 24.
57. Gordon and Trainor, *Generals’ War*, 37.

58. Colin Powell and Joseph Persico, *My American Journey* (New York: Random House, 1995), 450.
59. Gordon and Trainor, *Generals' War*, 31.
60. Ibid., 49.
61. Thomas Keaney and Eliot Cohen, *Revolution in Warfare?: Air Power in the Persian Gulf* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1995), 22.
62. Mann, *Thunder and Lightning*, 27.
63. John Andreas Olsen, *John Warden and the Renaissance of American Air Power* (Washington: Potomac Books, 2007), 145.
64. H. Norman Schwarzkopf and Peter Petre, *It Doesn't Take a Hero* (New York: Bantam Books, 1992), 313.
65. Putney, *Airpower Advantage*, 45.
66. Ibid., 52.
67. Olsen, *John Warden and the Renaissance of American Air Power*, 151; General Loh exhorted Warden, "This is the No. 1 project in the Air Force. You can call on anybody anyplace that you need for anything."
68. Ibid.
69. Putney, *Airpower Advantage*, 81.
70. Ibid., 221.
71. Buster Glosson, *War with Iraq: Critical Lessons* (Charlotte, NC: Glosson Family Foundation, 2003), 58.
72. Ibid.
73. Ibid., 63; and Putney, *Airpower Advantage*, 223.
74. Putney, *Airpower Advantage*, 263.
75. Although the Air Force's cooperative posture has been described first, the causal implication cuts in the other direction. The hypothesis argues that a tight correlation between the national policy and the Air Force's organizational culture will engender working. Having witnessed a unique degree of working in this case (the dependent variable), this section works backward to operationalize the degree of correlation between the civilian's desired policy and the culture of the Air Force.
76. Dennis M. Drew, "Desert Storm as a Symbol," *Airpower Journal* 6, no. 3 (Fall 1992): 4–13.
77. Keaney and Cohen, *Revolution in Warfare?* 191.
78. Gordon and Trainor, *Generals' War*, 474. After civilians were killed in the bombing of the Al Firdos bunker on 13 February 1991, Powell insisted on vetting all targets in Baghdad. Glosson and his team complained to CSAF Gen Merrill McPeak who took it up with Powell, ultimately to be convinced of the chairman's logic. Likewise, when Cheney directed a large apportionment of air assets to the SCUD-hunting mission to keep Israel out of the war, air planners resisted such interference with their plan.
79. Builder, *Icarus Syndrome*, 5.
80. Michael Knights, *Cradle of Conflict: Iraq and the Birth of Modern U.S. Military Power* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2005), 243.
81. John A. Tirpak, "Legacy of the Air Blockades," *Air Force Magazine* 86, no. 2 (February 2003).
82. David Wood, "Workloads and Pay Woes Driving Veteran Pilots Out of Air Force," *Star-Ledger*, 29 May 1997, 12.
83. Paul K. White, *Crises after the Storm: An Appraisal of U.S. Air Operations in Iraq since the Persian Gulf War* (Washington: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 1999), 84.
84. Wood, "Workloads and Pay Woes."
85. White, *Crises after the Storm*, 80.

86. The most useful and comprehensive history of the Iraqi containment can be found in Michael Knights, *Cradle of Conflict: Iraq and the Birth of Modern U.S. Military Power* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2005).

87. White, *Crises after the Storm*, 89.

88. Bryan Bender, "Poisoned Cigars, Perhaps?" *Jane's Defence Weekly* 33 (12 April 2000): 21–25.

89. This insight comes from Dr. James Forsyth, School of Advanced Air and Space Studies, who heard Gen Anthony Zinni assert similar claims.

90. White, *Crises after the Storm*, 59.

91. William Mitchell, *Winged Defense: The Development and Possibilities of Modern Air Power* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2009), 20.

92. Otto Kreisher, "In the Sandbox," *Air Force Magazine* 81, no. 8 (August 1998).

93. Harley A. Hughes, "Bailing Out," *Armed Forces Journal International* (September 1998): 45.

94. Feaver, *Armed Servants*, 6.

95. Thomas Ricks, "Containing Iraq: A Forgotten War," *Washington Post*, 25 October 2000, A01.

96. See, for example, William Matthews and Bruce Rolfsen, "Ryan to JCS: Give Us a Break," *Air Force Times*, 12 July 1999, 8–10.

97. Morton H. Halperin et al., *Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy*, 2nd ed. (Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 2006), 38.

98. Robert Gates, Remarks to the Heritage Foundation, Colorado Springs, 13 May 2008, <http://www.defense.gov/speeches/speech.aspx?speechid=1240>.

99. Robert Gates, Remarks to Air War College, 21 April 2008, <http://www.defense.gov/speeches/speech.aspx?speechid=1231>.

100. The debate between Gates and Air Force leaders was clearly more nuanced than a binary choice between F-22s and RPAs—it was a question of numbers, priorities, and preferences. This case deliberately posits a false choice between two competing systems to suggest their *relative* priority.

101. Robert Gates, Remarks to Pentagon Press Corps, 5 June 2008, <http://www.defense.gov/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=4236>.

102. See Michael Sirak, "The Wynne Outbrief," *Air Force Magazine* 91, no. 9 (September 2008); Loren Thompson, *How the Air Force Fell So Far* (10 June 2008), <http://www.lexingtoninstitute.org/how-the-air-force-fell-so-far?a=1&c=1129>; John A. Tirpak, "Get in Formation," *Air Force Magazine*, 9 June 2008; Guy Norris and Graham Warwick, "End of an Era; USAF Leadership Changes Further Imperil Threatened F-22 as Defense Dept Hails F-35 Progress," *Aviation Week & Space Technology*, 16 June 2008; Rowan Scarborough, "Air Force Firings Followed Budget Battle; Spending, Future Capabilities Split Gates, Top Brass," *Washington Times*, 15 June 2008; Karen Walker, "The Right Direction—Firing of Wynne, Moseley Allows Gates to Select Leadership to Get Air Force Back on Track," *Air Force Times*, 16 June 2008; Erik Holmes, "Ejected—How, and Why, Moseley and Wynne Were Forced Out—and the Report That Was the Final Shot," *Air Force Times*, 16 June 2008; and Gordon Lubold, "When Gates Stared Down the F-22 Lobbyists," *Christian Science Monitor*, 28 September 2009.

103. As stated before, use of term *shirk* does not carry the highly pejorative connotation that it typically does in military usage. It is used here in the principal-agent context to signify the agent pursuing its own interests over those of its principal.

104. "New Technology Proves to Be Dynamite during JEFX 08," *Air Force Print News*, 13 May 2008, [http://www.af.mil/news/story\\_print.asp?id=123098472](http://www.af.mil/news/story_print.asp?id=123098472).

105. Hearing of the House Armed Services Committee, *Air Force Strategic Initiatives*, 24 October 2007.

106. "YF-22 Fact Sheet," National Museum of the US Air Force, <http://www.nationalmuseum.af.mil/factsheets/factsheet.asp?id=2382>.
107. Ehrhard, "Air Force UAVs," 44–46.
108. Ronald O'Rourke, *Air Force F-22 Fighter Program: Background and Issues for Congress*, CRS Report for Congress (Washington: Congressional Research Service, 11 September 2009), 7.
109. In addition to the 240 frontline aircraft, the 381 included the requisite number of training, test, and maintenance aircraft to sustain the fleet.
110. Rod Hafemeister, "The Cuts Are Coming," *Air Force Times*, 30 January 2006.
111. Hearing of the House Armed Services Committee, *Air Force Strategic Initiatives*, 24 October 2007.
112. Hearing of the Senate Armed Services Committee, *Fiscal Year 2009 Defense Authorization Request*, 6 February 2008.
113. Bettina Chavanne, "General: We Will Find a Way to Buy 380 F-22s," *Aviation Week*, 13 February 2008.
114. Peter Spiegel, "Fighter Dispute Hits Stratosphere," *Los Angeles Times*, 15 February 2008.
115. Holmes, "Ejected." Carlson retired 10 months later.
116. Spiegel, "Fighter Dispute Hits Stratosphere."
117. Hearing of the Senate Armed Services Committee, *Department of the Air Force in Review of the Defense Authorization Request for Fiscal Year 2009*, 5 March 2008.
118. Peter Spiegel, "Battle Breaks Out Over the Predator," *Los Angeles Times*, 21 March 2008.
119. Ibid.
120. Gates, Remarks to Air War College.
121. "The Contributions of America's Airmen," *Air Force Print News*, 24 April 2008, [http://www.af.mil/news/story\\_print.asp?id=123095872](http://www.af.mil/news/story_print.asp?id=123095872).
122. Ibid.
123. Gates, Remarks to Air War College.
124. Ibid.
125. Gates, Remarks to the Heritage Foundation.
126. Ibid.
127. The mishandled B-52 flight from Minot AFB to Barksdale AFB is detailed in Joby Warrick and Walter Pincus, "Missteps in the Bunker," *Washington Post*, 23 September 2007. An outline of the mistaken shipment of nuclear fuses to Taiwan is described in "The Gates Case," *Air Force Magazine* 91, no. 7 (July 2008).
128. Gates, Remarks to Pentagon Press Corps.
129. In his Pentagon press conference on 5 June 2008 and his remarks to Airmen at Langley AFB on 9 June 2008, Gates stated the firing decision arose from the nuclear issues only.
130. Tirpak, "Get in Formation."
131. Walker, "The Right Direction."
132. Michael Sirak, "The Wynne Outbrief," *Air Force Magazine* 91, no. 9 (September 2008).
133. Guy Norris and Graham Warwick, "End of an Era; USAF Leadership Changes Further Imperil Threatened F-22 as Defense Dept Hails F-35 Progress," *Aviation Week & Space Technology*, 16 June 2008.
134. August Cole, "Air Force Says Fewer F-22s Needed," *Wall Street Journal*, 17 February 2009.
135. Donley and Schwartz, "Moving Beyond the F-22."
136. For simplicity, this piece treats the secretary of defense as the lone principal. In reality, the military endures the complexity of a "divided principal," answering in different ways to both the executive and legislative branches. The F-22 enjoyed wide political support in Congress, which no doubt contributed to Air Force leaders' steadfast advocacy for more aircraft. For more

on the divided principal issue, see Deborah D. Avant, *Political Institutions and Military Change: Lessons from Peripheral Wars* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994).

137. Feaver, *Armed Servants*, 6.

138. Ibid. Feaver concludes his text with these apt reminders: “The health of the democracy depends . . . as much on respect for the process of democratic politics as on the substance of the policies that process yields . . . But even when the military is right, democratic theory intervenes and insists that it submit to the civilian leadership that the polity has chosen. Let civilian voters punish civilian leaders for wrong decisions. Let the military advise against foolish adventures, even advising strenuously when circumstances demand. But let the military execute those orders faithfully. The republic would be better served even by foolish working than by enlightened shirking.” *Armed Servants*, 302.

139. Eliot Cohen, “The Unequal Dialogue: The Theory and Reality of Civil-Military Relations and the Use of Force,” in *Soldiers and Civilians: The Civil-Military Gap and American National Security*, eds. Peter Feaver and Richard H. Kohn (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001), 433.

# What's Wrong with America's Nuclear Hawks?

*Michael Izbicki, Ensign, USN*

PRESIDENT OBAMA'S pledge during an April 2009 speech in Prague to eliminate nuclear weapons from the US arsenal has been condemned by many military strategists. There are legitimate concerns that need to be addressed with any nuclear reduction; unfortunately, many "nuclear hawks" create false, scary-sounding concerns to argue that disarmament is impractical. Dr. Charles E. Costanzo's "What's Wrong with Zero?" in the summer issue of *Strategic Studies Quarterly* is a recent and flamboyant example of this nuclear scaremongering. Dr. Costanzo claims that no other recognized nuclear weapons state (NWS) shares Obama's disarmament goal. He emphasizes other NWSs' modernization plans while ignoring how modest they seem compared to US modernization. He also neglected to observe the work these countries have already done to reduce their reliance on nuclear weapons. In many cases it is more than the United States'. An honest comparison of modernization plans and the history of nuclear disarmament treaties shows that despite President Obama's stated desire to eliminate nuclear weapons, he will find more opposition domestically than abroad.

A common refrain of nuclear hawks is that other countries do not endorse Obama's vision of nuclear disarmament. This is simply not true. The Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT)—which the five NWSs (China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States) ratified in 1970—mandates these countries to work toward eliminating nuclear weapons. Article VI states, "Each of the Parties to the Treaty undertakes to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a Treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control."

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Please see Dr. Costanzo's reply at SSQ online: <http://www.au.af.mil/au/ssq/2010/winter/costanzoreply.pdf>.

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The debate for the past 40 years has centered on finding the practical steps necessary to achieve this vision. At the 2010 NPT review conference, the NWSs explicitly reconfirmed their continued commitment.<sup>1</sup> Obama's Prague speech did not set a new policy agenda; it simply shifted focus back to a forgotten one.

## **The Problems with Modernization**

"Modernization" is a bad word that fails to communicate effectively. Sometimes modernization means replacing aging equipment with a new but mostly equivalent version. This could more accurately be called maintenance of a country's nuclear arsenal. Sometimes it means developing qualitatively new capabilities. This could more accurately be called an upgrade. It usually serves only to obfuscate the real issues, because the term is used in different ways by different people. For this reason the New America Foundation's Dr. Jeffery Lewis dubbed modernization the "M-word" and recommends people stop using it altogether.<sup>2</sup>

Dr. Costanzo's analysis of modernization plans lacks a clear definition of what he means when using the M-word. This causes him to falsely conclude that the United States is not modernizing its stockpile when other NWSs are. The facts show these countries' modernization plans are really very similar to US plans and in some ways less ambitious.

Not all modernizations of nuclear weapons are equally threatening. Nuclear weapons have both a nuclear component, called the "physics package," and many nonnuclear components. Nonnuclear components can be part of the warhead, the delivery mechanism, or the launch mechanism (airplane or submarine). The development of new nonnuclear components is done regularly. The development of new physics packages, in contrast, is widely considered to be an aggressive move that would set back efforts for arms reductions and nonproliferation. No NWS is thought to have developed a new physics package since the signing of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) in 1996, but when nuclear hawks say they want modernization, this is usually what they mean.

There are two good examples of the United States pursuing physics package modernization. The Reliable Replacement Warhead (RRW) program was proposed in 2005. The program would modernize the weapons production complex to produce new physics packages that take advantage of modern manufacturing techniques. RRWs are new designs with no

need for a test detonation, thus making them less controversial. The JASON group is a panel of independent nuclear experts commissioned by the Department of Energy to evaluate the necessity of the RRW. The report concluded that the RRW program was unneeded; the currently used Lifetime Extension Program (LEP) was sufficient to certify the US arsenal indefinitely.<sup>3</sup> Another example was the robust nuclear earth penetrator (RNEP), designed to target hardened underground facilities. The RNEP was pursued despite the fact that the nuclear arsenal already contains the B61-11 bunker buster capable of targeting similarly hardened structures below ground.<sup>4</sup> Congress canceled both the RRW and the RNEP because these projects would undermine not only the controversial goal of disarmament but also the unanimously sought-after goal of non-proliferation. Presumably, the lack of funding for the new physics packages these projects would provide is Dr. Costanzo's basis for determining that the United States is not modernizing its arsenal.

When nuclear hawks talk about other countries' modernizations, what they really mean is the deployment of new delivery systems. But the United States is modernizing its delivery systems in this way as well. For all countries, including the United States, this is the routine replacement of aging equipment and would more accurately be called maintaining nuclear arsenals. Calling these replacements modernization blurs the distinction between nuclear and nonnuclear components. Dr. Costanzo uses the ambiguous M-word to apply different standards to the US program and those of other NWSs. Using the same standard of modernizing only the delivery systems, we find similar programs in all countries.

Dr. Costanzo claims modest, routine improvements in foreign nuclear-armed ballistic-missile submarine (SSBN) programs show that other NWSs are not as serious as the United States about reducing nuclear stockpiles. He fails to compare other countries' modernizations to those of the United States, which are much more extensive. The four other NWSs are simply replacing aging equipment that is already obsolete when compared to the US fleet. Take Russia as an example; unlike the United States, it does not constantly have an SSBN on patrol. Russians do not see a continuous at-sea deterrent as vital to their defense now that the Cold War has ended.<sup>5</sup> Even if the Russian OPTEMPO were to increase significantly, the new Russian SSBNs are less capable than the current US fleet. The Russian *Borei*-class SSBN can carry 16 submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBM), while the American *Ohio*-class can carry 24. Each of the

new Russian *Bulava* SLBMs can carry six MIRVs, whereas each American Trident II D5 carries eight. Furthermore, the *Bulava* is widely considered a failure; of 12 test flights so far, seven have been unsuccessful.<sup>6</sup> Compare this to the American Trident II D-5 SLBM, which has conducted 134 consecutive successful test flights since 1989. This is the longest-running set of successful tests by any nuclear delivery system. Despite the frightening rhetoric of nuclear hawks, the United States remains the uncontested leader in SSBN technology, and we remain similarly uncontested in air- and land-based nuclear forces.

The United States intends to maintain this technological lead. It has started the design process for the *Ohio* replacement SSBNs and has already awarded contracts to Electric Boat and Newport News Shipyard.<sup>7</sup> These SSBNs will be procured from 2028 to 2040 and will have a nominal service life of 40 years.<sup>8</sup> By Dr. Costanzo's standard, this development makes it appear the United States is not serious about pursuing the "zero" policy.

The last point to make on the M-word is how the United States is modernizing its nuclear production complex. According to a White House fact sheet on the New START, "The President requested \$7 billion in FY 2011 for stockpile sustainment and infrastructure investments, a nearly 10% increase over FY 2010. . . . The Administration intends to invest \$80 billion in the next decade to sustain and modernize the nuclear weapons complex."<sup>9</sup>

How will this funding in the nuclear infrastructure be spent? Although the United States has observed the informal international moratorium on nuclear weapons tests since 1992, it has continued to make significant upgrades to its arsenal, even since the start of the Obama administration. The process began in 1994 with the Stockpile Stewardship Program (SSP), which was tasked with maintaining the stockpile of aging nuclear weapons without nuclear tests. The US nuclear labs are continuing to conduct research into new types of weapons systems. In 2010, Sandia National Laboratory developed 16 major new advances in nuclear weapons engineering,<sup>10</sup> while Los Alamos National Laboratory has completed the first production unit for the W76-1 warhead for submarines.<sup>11</sup> Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory continues to conduct plutonium and uranium subcritical tests,<sup>12</sup> and a major new operational site is being built for the Kansas City branch of the National Nuclear Security Administration.<sup>13</sup> Many more projects are underway. It will be difficult for foreign

powers to conclude that the United States is serious about a long-term reduction in nuclear weapons while we are modernizing our infrastructure so dramatically.

Based on the fact the United States is modernizing as much if not more than other NWSs, military commanders should stop making the M-word comparison. The American emphasis on modernization undermines our antiproliferation efforts, which should form the heart of nuclear security policy in the twenty-first century.

### **International Treaties**

To best infer a country's attitude toward nuclear disarmament, we must look at the international treaties it has ratified. The role of these treaties is unfortunately often overlooked. For a country to ratify a treaty means it has the overwhelming support of its leaders. A treaty "enters into force" and becomes legally binding only after all parties to the treaty have ratified it.<sup>14</sup> The United States has too often prevented nuclear treaties from entering into force. In this area, the other NWSs have made more progress toward reducing the role of nuclear weapons in their security posture than the United States.

The NPT entered into force in 1970 and is often called the "grand bargain." Article VI of the NPT mandates that NWSs continually work toward eliminating their nuclear weapons, and in exchange Article II prohibits nonnuclear weapons states (NNWS) from acquiring them. This is the only political tool that the United States has to stem the proliferation of nuclear weapons to rogue states such as Iran. If the NWSs do not continue to make progress on this track, then the NNWSs will conclude the treaty is meaningless, withdraw from the treaty, and build their own weapons. We have already seen this happen with North Korea, and many people fear this will happen soon with Iran. Many states (e.g., Iran) have refused the International Atomic Energy Agency's (IAEA) Additional Protocol for more-intrusive inspections for this reason. These states can be expected to oppose any future nonproliferation efforts until the NWSs have made significant progress toward disarming. No one has proposed a way to satisfy the NNWSs if the NWSs cannot eliminate their stockpiles. More so than any other country, the United States is seen as "violating the spirit" of the NPT for its lack of progress toward disarmament and its policies which sometimes encourage proliferation to "friendly" states.

At the 2010 NPT review conference, each of the NWSs reaffirmed its commitment to eliminating nuclear weapons. The 2010 conference was widely seen as a major success in comparison to the failed 2000 and 2005 conferences, and this is widely attributed to President Obama's renewed efforts to honor our obligation to eliminate nuclear weapons. It is also worth noting that the indefinite extension of the NPT in 1995 would not have been achieved without convincing the NNWSs that the NWSs were serious about their commitment to disarm. This was achieved by the simultaneous effort to sign the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. The NNWSs currently feel betrayed that the CTBT has not yet entered into force, and the United States is largely to blame for this.

The CTBT provides an excellent test case to show that other NWSs have reduced their reliance on nuclear weapons. The United Kingdom, France, and all 15 former Soviet republics, including Russia, have ratified the treaty, but the US Senate declined to ratify it in 1999.<sup>15</sup> It is widely believed the remaining nuclear powers have not ratified the treaty in response to US inaction.<sup>16</sup>

American nuclear hawks who want continued development of US physics packages prevented the CTBT from being ratified. They frequently claim that nuclear tests may be required in the future to certify the reliability and safety of the nuclear arsenal. If this were really true, the United States should be embarrassed that the other NWSs have managed to achieve this technological capability while we have not. Other critics were skeptical that the treaty could not be verified, but the CTBT organization's provisional body has successfully verified the nuclear tests conducted by North Korea in 2006<sup>17</sup> and 2009.<sup>18</sup> There is no legitimate reason for the United States not to ratify this treaty. Other countries will be unable to take President Obama's efforts to reduce our dependence on nuclear weapons seriously if he cannot get the CTBT ratified. Based on the mixed reception for the New START, we can expect significant opposition from nuclear hawks to future efforts to ratify the CTBT.

In reality, the United States has consistently dragged its feet in terms of international treaties that would reduce the world's dependence on nuclear weapons. The Obama administration has had to severely cripple its Prague vision for nuclear disarmament based on domestic politics. Ratifying the New START is seen as an essential first step toward reducing American dependence on nuclear weapons. Currently, support for the treaty is divided largely along partisan lines, and there is some doubt

as to whether the New START will be ratified. Nuclear modernization and missile defense are seen in the international community as undermining Obama's vision; however, they have been required to gain the necessary support for the New START. The Senate ratification resolution makes these links explicit. It states, "The United States is committed to proceeding with a robust stockpile stewardship program, and to maintaining and modernizing the nuclear weapons production capabilities and capacities." It has three full paragraphs describing missile defense, concluding that the "unilateral statement by the Russian Federation on missile defense does not impose a legal obligation on the United States." These statements were added to appease nuclear hawks both in and out of the military. Based on the perceived need for these concessions, it will be difficult for foreign observers to conclude that the United States is really serious about nuclear reductions. How can a country that increased its spending on nuclear infrastructure by 13.4 percent be serious about getting rid of that infrastructure?

Furthermore, the United States does not have the best track record with regards to nonproliferation. For example, it deploys nuclear weapons under NATO command in five European countries. Many NNWSs see this nuclear weapons sharing program as a direct violation of Article I of the NPT, which states, "Each nuclear-weapon State Party to the Treaty undertakes not to transfer to any recipient whatsoever nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices or control over such weapons or explosive devices." In 2006, the United States traded nuclear technology to India, seriously threatening the NPT's long-term viability.<sup>19</sup> The NPT forbids giving even civilian nuclear assistance to "rogue" countries, fearing that it may encourage other states to disregard the nonproliferation rules. Pakistan has benefitted from the United States just as much. During the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, the United States repeatedly certified that Pakistan did not have a nuclear weapons program, despite the fact that it did. It remains unclear the extent to which the United States currently supports the Pakistani nuclear program to obtain support for the fight against terrorism. Certainly it has prevented the United States from blocking the Chinese transfer of nuclear reactors. The United States has been accused of contributing over 200 pounds of U-235 to the Israeli nuclear program.<sup>20</sup> A congressional investigation into the incident was hindered by an uncooperative CIA.<sup>21</sup> And, the presence of Israeli spies in the US nuclear program provides further evidence of this alleged transfer.<sup>22</sup>

Finally, the war in Iraq, the only war ever to have been declared to stop proliferation, may have inadvertently led to the two most recent proliferation crises. North Korea has consistently cited this as the cause of its withdrawal from the NPT and resumption of plutonium production and bomb development. There is widespread concern that Iran will soon do the same, for similar reasons.

These American gaffes are in stark contrast to the nonproliferation successes of other states. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine inherited some 3,000 strategic and many more substrategic nuclear weapons. By 1996 these weapons had all been transferred to Russia.<sup>23</sup> These three states have now joined the NPT as NNWSs. South Africa remains the only country to have dismantled its indigenously produced nuclear weapons program and is a strong advocate of universal disarmament.

The United States' inability to reduce its dependence on nuclear weapons due to domestic politics and its many nuclear faux pas in the international community have given it a reputation for violating the spirit of the NPT.

## **Conclusion—The Real Debate on How to Proceed**

That other countries are deploying new nuclear delivery systems is not a concern, because they are simply replacing aging parts. The United States is doing the same thing. So what are the legitimate concerns? One comes to mind immediately: How will other countries take US disarmament seriously when its modernization plans and past treaty experience tell them *it* will be relying on nuclear weapons long into the future? The United States must take a sober look not at other countries' nuclear policies but at its own. This will mean making concessions to other countries and addressing their legitimate concerns. Achieving US security does not require expanding US nuclear hegemony.

A fissile material cutoff treaty (FMCT) is widely seen as the next necessary step on the road to disarmament. The FMCT would prevent the production of new weapons-grade uranium or plutonium via a system of international inspections. This would modestly limit US nuclear capabilities but in exchange would greatly reduce the risk of proliferation. If past experience is any indicator, the United States will have difficulty ratifying the treaty because the nuclear establishment will be un-

willing to make this concession.<sup>24</sup> But, the United States simply cannot stem nuclear proliferation in the twenty-first century as long as it continues to strengthen its own nuclear deterrent. This means nuclear hawks need to stop hawking. **SSQ**

## Notes

1. Paragraph 80 of the 2010 NPT review conference final document states, "The conference notes the reaffirmation by the nuclear-weapons states of their unequivocal undertaking to accomplish, in accordance with the principle of irreversibility, the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals leading to nuclear disarmament, to which all States are committed under article VI." All NPT review conference final documents must be adopted by consensus. The ability to find consensus is the main measure in determining whether a conference has failed or succeeded.

2. Jeffery Lewis, "The Kyl Amendment," *Arms Control Wonk*, 30 July 2009, <http://lewis.armscontrolwonk.com/archive/2401/the-kyl-amendment>.

3. "Lifetime Extension Program (LEP) Executive Summary," 9 September 2009, <http://www.fas.org/irp/agency/dod/jason/lep.pdf>; and "Reliable Replacement Warhead Executive Summary," 7 September 2007, <http://www.fas.org/irp/agency/dod/jason/rww.pdf>.

4. The RNEP would have penetrated farther into the ground before detonation causing the explosion to transfer more energy into the ground. This would allow it to target structures buried deeper underground or to use a lower-yield warhead to target structures that could also be targeted by the B61-11. The lower yield would result in fewer civilian casualties, and thus the RNEP was considered to be a more humane weapon. The exact depths and types of structures these weapons could target remains classified, but for an excellent unclassified discussion, see *Effects of Nuclear Earth-Penetrator and Other Weapons* (Washington: National Academies Press, 2005), [http://www.nap.edu/catalog.php?record\\_id=11282](http://www.nap.edu/catalog.php?record_id=11282).

5. Hans Kristensen, "Russian Nuclear Missile Submarine Patrols Decrease Again," *Federation of American Scientists Strategic Security Blog*, 28 April 2008, <http://www.fas.org/blog/ssp/2008/04/russian-nuclear-missile-submarine-patrols-decrease-again.php>.

6. "Russia to overhaul Bulava production if tests fail again—Serdyukov," *Rianovosti*, 17 September 2010, [http://en.rian.ru/military\\_news/20100917/160619849.html](http://en.rian.ru/military_news/20100917/160619849.html).

7. Peter Frost, "New Sub Role Could Buoy Our Economy," *Daily Press*, 24 April 2009, [http://articles.dailypress.com/2009-04-24/news/0904240025\\_1\\_newport-news-shipyard-northrop-ohio-class](http://articles.dailypress.com/2009-04-24/news/0904240025_1_newport-news-shipyard-northrop-ohio-class).

8. Ronald O'Rourke, *Navy SSBN(X) Ballistic Missile Submarine Program: Background and Issues for Congress* (Washington: Congressional Research Service, 27 July 2010), 8, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/weapons/R41129.pdf>.

9. "The New START Treaty—Maintaining a Strong Nuclear Deterrent," White House fact sheet, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/New%20START%20section%201251%20fact%20sheet.pdf>.

10. "Labs Accomplishments: Nuclear Weapons Engineering," [http://www.sandia.gov/LabNews/labs-accomplish/2010/nw\\_eng.html](http://www.sandia.gov/LabNews/labs-accomplish/2010/nw_eng.html).

11. "Project Profiles: Los Alamos National Laboratory," [http://www.babcock.com/library/project\\_profiles\\_lanl.html](http://www.babcock.com/library/project_profiles_lanl.html).

12. Livermore Labs website, <https://www.llnl.gov/#labtabs-1>.

13. "NNSA National Security Campus," <http://www.gsa.gov/portal/content/102613>.



14. Technically, this is incorrect. Many treaties specify that they will enter into force on some other condition, such as a certain number of states (but not all) ratifying the treaty. The CTBT requires that 44 specific states must ratify before it enters into force. In practice, US ratification is required for all nuclear treaties to enter into force.

15. "History of Efforts for the CTBT," <http://www.projectforthectbt.org/history>.

16. Wade Boese, Paul Kerr, and Daryl Kimball, "Interview with Dr. Hans Blix," *Arms Control Today*, 6 June 2006, [http://www.armscontrol.org/interviews/20060606\\_blix](http://www.armscontrol.org/interviews/20060606_blix).

17. "The CTBT Verification Regime put to the Test: The Event in the DPRK on 9 October 2006," <http://www.ctbto.org/press-centre/highlights/2007/the-ctbt-verification-regime-put-to-the-test-the-event-in-the-dprk-on-9-october-2006/page-1/?Fsize=wpupaqsyzg>.

18. "Overview: DPRK 2009 Announced Test," <http://www.ctbto.org/the-treaty/developments-after-1996/2009-dprk-announced-nuclear-test/>.

19. "Implications of the US-India Nuclear Deal," *Harvard International Review*, 6 May 2006, <http://hir.harvard.edu/implications-of-the-us-india-nuclear-deal>.

20. The IAEA defines a significant quantity (roughly defined as enough to make a crude bomb) as 25 kg of enriched uranium.

21. "Nuclear Diversion in the US? 13 Years of Contradiction and Confusion," Report by the Comptroller General of the United States, 18 December 1978, <http://www.irmep.org/co1162251.pdf>.

22. Grant Smith, "Declassified GAO Report Exposes Fatally Flawed Israel Investigations," *Antiwar*, 10 May 2010, <http://original.antiwar.com/smith-grant/2010/05/09/declassified-gao-report/>.

23. The United States played some role in smoothing this transition process, notably with the Nunn-Lugar program. Most of the work, however, was done by the countries directly affected, and from an international perspective they rightly take all the credit. See the Nunn-Lugar scorecard for more detailed information about the program, <http://lugar.senate.gov/nunnlugar/scorecard.html>.

24. FMCT negotiations have been ongoing since 1993, with many countries expressing concerns that have stalled the process. Currently, Pakistan is moving to block negotiations on the FMCT, again due to the perceived unfairness in currently proposed solutions. The United States is largely unable to apply political pressure to Pakistan due to the need to maintain Pakistani support for the ongoing war in Afghanistan. See, Zia Mian and A.H. Nayyar, "Playing the Nuclear Game: Pakistan and the Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty," *Arms Control Today*, April 2009, [http://www.armscontrol.org/act/2010\\_04/Mian](http://www.armscontrol.org/act/2010_04/Mian).

# Book Review Essay

## Strategic Trailblazers

*Edwina S. Campbell*

***The Hawk and the Dove: Paul Nitze, George Kennan, and the History of the Cold War*** by Nicholas Thompson. Henry Holt and Co., 2009, 403 pp., \$27.50.

***The Atlantic Century: Four Generations of Extraordinary Diplomats Who Forged America's Vital Alliance with Europe*** by Kenneth Weisbrode. Da Capo Press, 2009, 470 pp., \$30.00.

We did not realize it at the time, but those of us commissioned as US military and Foreign Service officers (FSO) in the mid 1970s did not have much intellectual heavy lifting to do. The generation of officers that came of age professionally in the first two decades after World War II had done it for us. By the late 1960s, all of the key concepts that underpinned American foreign and defense policy until 1989 were in place: containment in a bipolar world; deterrence based on the nuclear triad; forward basing of US conventional and nuclear forces; constant attention to the cohesion of the Alliance (we wrote it with a capital “A”)—NATO; and a willingness to engage in the “carrot” of East-West dialogue (*détente*), provided it did not call into question the aforementioned “sticks.” These concepts were applied and refined by us baby boomers born during the Cold War, but we were the heirs, not the founders, of the United States’ intellectual strategic fortune.

Since 9/11, a new generation of American military officers and diplomats has had to take on the threefold task that faced their predecessors in the Truman and Eisenhower years: understanding a radically changed strategic context, defining a strategy for the United States in that new context, and implementing that strategy to secure American interests and advance American values. Nearly a decade after the attacks on New York City and the Pentagon, today’s majors and lieutenant colonels are in the same position as the field grade officers of 60 years ago. In the fall of 1950, as the Chinese crossed the Yalu and General Eisenhower arrived in Paris as the first SACEUR, midcareer US diplomats and their uniformed counterparts found that they represented a different country than the one that had commissioned them as junior officers only a decade before. America’s role in

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the world had changed, and by 1950 the assumptions of American foreign and defense policy in the 1930s served those officers no better than the assumptions of the 1990s serve the officers of today.

Nicholas Thompson and Kenneth Weisbrode have written insightful books about the men (mainly) who overthrew those assumptions, developed a strategy to deal with the Cold War, and implemented that strategy for 40 years.

Thompson tells the story of his grandfather, Paul Nitze, and of George Kennan, whose 1947 “X” article in *Foreign Affairs* gave to US foreign policy the word—*containment*—that would describe Washington’s approach to the Soviet Union for the next four decades. Containment meant many things over those 40 years to various American administrations (hence, the plural in the title of John Lewis Gaddis’ classic 1982 history, *Strategies of Containment*), but one aspect remained constant: the centrality of Europe and the transatlantic relationship. That is the focus of Weisbrode’s book, a history of EUR, the State Department’s Bureau of European Affairs.

EUR, the “mother bureau,” had within its purview much of the Northern Hemisphere, from Vancouver to Vladivostok. Its desks included Canada (as a NATO member) and the Soviet Union, the alliance’s protagonist extraordinaire. But its focus was Germany. The German wars, hot and cold, preoccupied Europe for well over a century, from 1870 to 1990; and after the sinking of the *Lusitania* in 1915, they preoccupied the United States, too, for 75 years. The small cadre of EUR’s “German hands” had watched Europe succumb to the dictators in the 1930s. But it was the next generation that played the crucial role in American foreign and defense policy after 1945. They were the founding fathers of “pol-mil,” the intertwining of American diplomacy and the projection of American military power overseas, specifically to NATO Europe.

The Cold War corresponded almost exactly with their adult working lives. Born circa 1920, they were in 1950 young men “who came to Europe either as military or civilian agents of the [US] occupation [of Germany], along with another group of roughly the same age . . . that provided legal, economic, and other forms of technical advice to the occupation authorities.”<sup>1</sup> They had fought in World War II or served in intelligence or other civilian capacities during the war. In 1961 they were approaching middle age as East Germany erected its wall in Berlin, and in 1989, as that wall came down, many of them were still active in public service. Emblematic of this generation was Arthur Hartman, a career FSO who served before he was 20 in the US Army Air Corps, worked in the Economic Cooperation Administration (Marshall Plan) office in Paris from 1948 to 1952, and retired from the Foreign Service in 1987 after nearly a decade and a half as, consecutively, assistant secretary of state for European Affairs (head of EUR), ambassador to France, and ambassador to the Soviet Union.<sup>2</sup>

While the Marshall Planners were hobnobbing with cabinet ministers, union leaders, and journalists in Paris,<sup>3</sup> other future stars of EUR were sharing experiences in Germany with their US Army colleagues:

[Foreign Service] Officers like [future ambassador Jonathan] Dean were posted in small villages and charged with everything from helping to get the sewer systems to work, to hunting down Nazi officials, to keeping watch on the political activities of local Communists. The impact such power and authority had on these young officers—many just out of the war and serving in their first posts—cannot be emphasized too heavily. . . . They had, after all, helped to convert the largest country at the heart of Europe into a loyal, democratic, and prosperous American ally. There seemed little else they could not accomplish. They were, therefore, a supremely confident and even idealistic group of people.<sup>4</sup>

In Iraq and Afghanistan today, US military and Foreign Service officers are creating personal and professional ties with each other in similar circumstances. It remains to be seen if these ties will be as important in shaping US foreign policy in the first half of the twenty-first century as those formed among military officers and diplomats in postwar Europe were in shaping the second half of the last century.

Weisbrode, as a young intern at the Atlantic Council in the early 1990s, came to know many members of the Marshall Plan/Occupation generation in retirement and is, as he admits, an unabashed admirer of their work, accomplishments, and commitment to public service. He is an Atlanticist—perhaps the last of the breed. But his personal admiration and affection for his subjects in no way colors the story he tells. The book began life as his Harvard dissertation, directed by the late Prof. Ernest May and Profs. Waldo Heinrichs and Akira Iriye. It is thoroughly researched and beautifully written.

Thompson has also written a beautiful book. He tells the story of the Cold War through the dual biographies of Nitze and Kennan, one of Weisbrode's EUR hands for the first 20 years of his career and the founding director of the State Department's Policy Planning Staff under Secretary George Marshall. Nitze came into the department sideways, via Wall Street and the US Strategic Bombing Survey, which had taken him to the ruins of Hiroshima in 1945. First Kennan's deputy, he succeeded him as head of Policy Planning at a crucial moment in 1949–50, bracketed by the Soviets' detonation of an atomic bomb and the invasion of South Korea by the North.

Kennan provided the name for the Truman administration's emerging approach to the USSR, but Nitze in *NSC-68* recommended the arms buildup that became the chief characteristic of containment as practiced by every US president from Truman to Reagan. Two generations of Cold War policy practitioners grew up aligning themselves with Kennan, the dove, or Nitze, the hawk; and the two men argued with each other for 50 years over how best to implement the policy largely rejected by the man who had named it. Thompson believes that

Kennan's ideas and methods were not practical and could do little to help solve day to day problems. He could not, for example, have been an effective arms negotiator. Nonetheless, he played a crucial role, both in framing the conflict and then serving as his nation's conscience as those horrifying weapons hypnotized the superpowers more and more. Kennan, the outsider, accurately foresaw how the Cold War would play out. Nitze, the insider,

helped bring about the Cold War's end by behaving as if Kennan's prophecy would never come true.<sup>5</sup>

The two men were friends “despite their vast differences on issues of national security,”<sup>6</sup> and they were rivals for the ear of the presidents who would decide those issues. Born three years apart—Kennan in 1904, Nitze in 1907—they lived long lives and died within months of each other, Nitze in October 2004 and Kennan in March 2005.

Thompson acknowledges that his family ties to Nitze gave him both access and insights that an outsider could never have. “Had I never known Nitze, I might have begun with the preconception that he was the hard-line demon so often portrayed in modern Cold War histories.”<sup>7</sup> But his book in no way attempts to prove that Nitze was “right” and Kennan “wrong” about how to wage the Cold War: “Each was profoundly right at some moments, and profoundly wrong at others.”<sup>8</sup> And, Thompson does what Kennan's own memoirs and other published personal reflections do not: he leaves his readers with a sympathetic appreciation of Kennan, not as an ascetic academic but as a man of the twentieth century, who “spent an absolutely extraordinary amount of time in his 101 years with his mind focused, trying to understand himself and the world around him.”<sup>9</sup>

Nitze and Kennan were never household names. Neither held elective office or achieved cabinet rank; even if they had, like once-famous senators and secretaries, they would have slipped from public memory 20 years after the end of the Cold War they waged and won. In their time, both aspired for more public and presidential recognition, but like their one-time State Department colleagues, they were also quintessential professionals. As Weisbrode describes EUR, it “never had many officers who sought controversy or many noteworthy ideologues.” Instead, it “came closest to serving as the country's permanent foreign secretary, a kind of self-appointed guardian, conscience, or kingmaker, for nearly four generations.”<sup>10</sup> Kennan and Nitze played both roles. They certainly sought controversy (and it sought them), and they were two of the “diplomatic giants, both inside and outside the foreign service . . . who wrote the rules of the Cold War, who established structures and patterns for a half century of international affairs.”<sup>11</sup>

In their time, unlike most of their colleagues, they were not “nearly anonymous bureaucrats mentioned only in the occasional back pages of official chronicles,”<sup>12</sup> but in the long run, that is likely to be the fate of Kennan and Nitze, too. When their names do appear, Kennan's will be at the beginning of the Cold War story, the Soviet expert who set containment in motion with the “Long Telegram” from Moscow and the “X” article a year later. The picture of him, if there is one, in the history books will be of an already weary-looking diplomat in his mid 40s. Nitze will appear not as the young man at the beginning of the story but at the end of the tale, a man just shy of 80, also looking weary in the history book photo because he has been up all night negotiating

with his Soviet counterpart at Reykjavik in 1986, the Reagan-Gorbachev summit that set in motion the beginning of the end of the Cold War.

But what of the others, the diplomats and military officers whose names are unknown to even the most conscientious historians? It is hard to imagine, given the headlines of the last few years, that obscurity could ever be the fate of Amb. Ryan Crocker and Gen David Petraeus, but who today can identify Gen Lucius Clay, military governor of the US zone of occupied Germany (OMGUS), or his civilian successor as high commissioner of that zone (HICOG), John J. McCloy? Also forgotten is Robert Murphy, Eisenhower and Clay's foreign policy adviser (POLAD), a Foreign Service officer who spent much of his career as a "diplomat among warriors" (the title of Murphy's autobiography). They are, indeed, in Weisbrode's words, "footnotes to footnotes,"<sup>13</sup> if they are mentioned at all. The working-level FSOs and the majors, lieutenant colonels, and colonels who served with Clay, McCloy, and Murphy do not appear in any footnotes at all.

Together on the ground in Germany in 1945, the two groups were not naturally compatible, and the struggles in recent years to achieve interagency unity of effort in Iraq and Afghanistan would be familiar to them. Then, as now, State was playing catch-up:

Before the war, there was no established German Desk or corps of experts, and most of the bureau's talent gravitated to France. During the war, of course, the State Department drew on the few German specialists it had to plan for the aftermath, although, again, most of the initiative for running German affairs rested elsewhere, primarily in the War Department. . . .

[The diplomats assigned to Murphy's POLAD office had a] relationship with the [military] occupation authorities, and to their bosses in State, [that] was complex and often tense. Clay was known to disdain diplomats and to go out of his way to exclude them from decisions. But the bias never seemed to apply to the individual diplomats with whom he worked . . . nor were they known to put Clay's staff on the defensive or to seek to undercut him.<sup>14</sup>

Working together to get the job done, both military and Foreign Service officers found that "pol-mil" was not so bad after all; and when State set up a temporary bureau, GER, in the late 1940s to backstop HICOG, it asked "a military officer [who] had been the Pentagon's 'leg man' on Berlin" to "shed his uniform [and] run German affairs during these critical years."<sup>15</sup>

Does it matter that the names of these individuals are largely forgotten? Maybe to those whose personal aspirations to rank and status went unfulfilled, but perhaps they, too, eventually came to agree with Weisbrode that they "succeeded precisely because they did not proclaim, or even fully recognize, the extent of their accomplishment. There was always another problem to manage, another aggrieved party to assuage, another job to do."<sup>16</sup>

Throughout the Cold War, the diplomats among warriors and the warriors among diplomats provided flesh and blood to grandiose strategic phrases—national strategic guidance, as the military calls it—by accomplishing mundane

tactical tasks “collectively and anonymously, less as conquerors than as subtle missionaries.”<sup>17</sup> And over the course of 40 years, their accumulated successes at the tactical and operational levels offered new strategic options to successive US presidents. The young men of 1945 ended their professional lives as Germany unified, the Soviet Union collapsed, and the two superpowers negotiated an end to their nuclear arms race. Footnotes to history though they may be, few generations have accomplished more in 45 years.

**Editor’s note:** For an insightful look at proliferation, see the SSQ online book review of Matthew Kroenig, *Exporting the Bomb: Technology Transfer and the Spread of Nuclear Weapons* (Cornell University Press, 2010), [http://afri.au.af.mil/review\\_full.asp?id=102](http://afri.au.af.mil/review_full.asp?id=102).

## Notes

1. Kenneth Weisbrode, *The Atlantic Century: Four Generations of Extraordinary Diplomats Who Forged America’s Vital Alliance with Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2009), 87.
2. Ibid., 310.
3. Ibid., 93.
4. Ibid., 92.
5. Nicholas Thompson, *The Hawk and the Dove: Paul Nitze, George Kennan, and the History of the Cold War* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 2009), 313.
6. Ibid., 2.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid., 378.
9. Ibid., 379.
10. Weisbrode, *Atlantic Century*, 6.
11. Ibid., 149.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid., 5.
14. Ibid., 90–91.
15. Ibid., 92.
16. Ibid., 302.
17. Ibid., 149.

## Book Review

***Washington Rules: America's Path to Permanent War*** by Andrew J. Bacevich.  
Metropolitan Books, 2010, 286 pp., \$25.00.

It was given to Edward Gibbon, sitting “musing amid the ruins of the Capitol, while the barefooted friars were singing vespers in the temple of Jupiter,” to conceive the decline and fall of the Roman Empire. Two centuries later Army colonel Andrew Bacevich, standing by the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin in 1989, experienced an epiphany revealing to him that America’s benign leadership in the world was pernicious malarkey. The soldier turned polemicist invites readers to share his “education,” as he chronicles the decline and fall of an “evil empire,” America.

According to Bacevich, two beliefs comprise our post–World War II national security “credo:” the United States should lead and transform the world, and America’s activist role should rely on hard power, not suasion. This credo entails a “sacred trinity” of operational military precepts: global military presence, global power projection, and global interventionism. Four dogmas underlie the “catechism of American statecraft:” the world must be reshaped to avert chaos; the United States will prescribe and enforce the global order; America will define the principles of that order; and except for a few recalcitrants, everyone accepts this reality. He portrays two chief “evil empire” builders, Allen Dulles (CIA) and Gen Curtis LeMay (SAC), as establishing the “yin and yang of the new National Security State.” President Obama has brought no real change we can believe in, for no president dares question the “Washington consensus.” In fact, it matters not who holds political office. American politics is merely “theater.”

The Kennedy administration used “flexible response” to provide options for conventional war fighting and unconventional special operations. The result was a Vietnam War “to sustain the Washington consensus” and a campaign of “state-sponsored terrorism” to topple the Castro regime. Presidents Ronald Reagan, George H. W. Bush, and Bill Clinton collaborated to shed the constraints of the Vietnam era, pursuing global interventionism under the guise of “forward deployment” of troops, the Navy’s mission of sea control, and “America’s far-flung empire of bases” to strike targets wherever Washington imagines demons. The bungling of the Iraq and Afghan wars gave rise to the doctrine of counterinsurgency (COIN) to repackage the “sacred trinity.”

In characteristically self-righteous, demeaning language, Bacevich derides COIN as a fraud (“lots of foam, but not much beer”), designed to give leaders the illusion of control over chaotic warfare. COIN (“social work with guns”) was hawked with slick marketing by Gen David Petraeus, an “ambitious soldier” with a “courtier’s” manner, and his “lobby” of supporters, such as John Nagl



of the Center for a New American Security, while Generals Petraeus and McChrystal basked in a “revived cult of generalship”—“Prince Stanley heir to King David.”

Inspired by the wisdom of his sages (George Kennan, Sen. J. William Fulbright, Christopher Lasch, and Martin Luther “come home, America” King), Bacevich proffers readers an alternative “isolationist credo.” First, the purpose of the US military is not to remake the world but to defend America’s “most vital interests” (undefined). Second, the US military belongs at home in America! What it would do here Bacevich does not say; patrol Washington’s Metro system to make it safe? Hence, the United States should scuttle its overseas bases and get out of the Persian Gulf (al-Qaeda’s goal) and Central Asia. Elsewhere [“Let Europe Be Europe: Why the United States Must Withdraw from NATO,” *Foreign Policy* (March/April 2010), 71–72], Bacevich has argued that America should ditch NATO and let Europe fend for itself. That leaves a major US regional presence only in East Asia, but scrapping US sea power and force projection would remove that distraction from “cultivating our own garden.” Finally, Bacevich would allow the use of force only as a last resort and in self-defense. Yet, why would anyone much care about an island fortress America?

Bacevich’s caricature of America is shared by Richard Immerman’s *Empire for Liberty* [Princeton University Press, 2010, 6], a term he calls an “oxymoron” because in creating its imperium, the United States oppressed peoples and did “evil in the name of good.” In *The Frugal Superpower* [(New York: Public Affairs, 2010), 53], Michael Mandelbaum views the coming retrenchment of America’s global leadership far differently. He explains how economic constraints will curtail America’s post–World War II role. The world will suffer the baleful results of a United States with too little power. “Since World War II,” Mandelbaum writes, “the United States play(ed) a major, constructive, and historically unprecedented role in the world,” bringing peace and prosperity to much of the globe. Mandelbaum foresees dim prospects for a world with a cash-strapped Uncle Sam: “One thing worse than an America that is too strong, the world will learn, is an America that is too weak” (p. 194).

The age of austerity and a domestically focused America has arrived. For the sake of perspective, it is important to recognize that US defense spending represents less than 4 percent of GDP and less than 20 percent of the federal budget, far less than in recent decades. Since the end of the Cold War and the Persian Gulf War, our armed forces shrank from 2.1 million personnel in 1989 to 1.3 million in 1999; the Army decreased from 769,000 soldiers to 479,000, resulting in an overstretched force. From a 1,000-ship Navy in President Kennedy’s time, after the fall of the Soviet Union the fleet numbered 466 ships. By 2001 it fell to 316; currently, it stands at 285 ships. In years ahead the fleet will likely contract to 237 ships, 25 percent less than the fleet the Navy judges necessary to execute its missions. This is not a picture of robust power projection.

Nevertheless, in a May speech at the Eisenhower Library, Defense Secretary Gates cited President Obama’s invocation of Eisenhower’s counsel to maintain

spending “balance in and among national programs.” Gates stated that the splurge of military spending cannot continue as it has, doubling in the last decade: “The gusher has been turned off, and will stay off for a good period of time.” The president signaled a domestic refocus in his speech on the end of combat operations in Iraq, declaring “our most urgent task is to restore our economy.”

Bacevich does not see the ground shifting before his eyes because he is a “Johnny one-note:” “Amerika.” A “jaded governing class,” he rails, manipulates a nation of hedonists afflicted with a desiccated “civic culture” to perpetuate the “Washington consensus” leading to perdition. Our institutions are dysfunctional. Elections do not matter. Leaders and citizens alike are morally bankrupt. A pox on all your houses! Bacevich’s isolationism would be a risible anachronism, if it were not so dangerous, now that he has achieved media celebrity as a talking “expert” on world affairs. His excoriation of nearly everyone as obtuse or corrupt and his historically discredited prescription for national salvation reflect the irresponsibility of an academic unburdened with making the difficult choices and compromises that are the essence of statecraft in the world as it exists. One wonders why he wrote this book.

**John Coffey, PhD**  
*Fairfax, Virginia*

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