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THE US ARMY WAR COLLEGE QUARTERLY PARAMETERS

Contemporary Strategy & Landpower

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Gates Brown

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THE US ARMY WAR COLLEGE
QUARTERLY
PARAMETERS

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151 ARTICLE INDEX, VOL. 46, 2016**ANNOUNCEMENT****2016 Army Historical Foundation Distinguished Writing Awards Finalists**

Each year, *Parameters* nominates articles published in the journal for this award, which recognizes articles that have made a distinctive contribution to US Army history. Articles are judged on five criteria—significance to US Army history, quality of writing, historical accuracy, presentation, and research/resources.

The Army Historical Foundation selected the following *Parameters* nominations as finalists for the 2016 Army Historical Foundation Distinguished Writing Awards:

—Brian McAllister Linn, “The US Army’s Postwar Recoveries,” Summer 2016 issue

—Louis G. Yuegert, “America’s All Volunteer Force: A Success,” Winter 2015–16 issue

The winners of the 2016 Army Historical Foundation Distinguished Writing Awards will be announced at the Foundation’s annual meeting in June 2017.

From the Editor

This issue of the *Quarterly* opens with a special commentary by Gates Brown, who argues the US Army has an identity crisis that ought to be resolved by focusing its efforts on improving its proficiency at combined arms maneuver warfare against a near-peer competitor. His view is sure to inspire debate.

Our first forum, *Toward Strategic Solvency*, features two important contributions. The first, “Ensuring Effective Military Voice,” by MG William E. Rapp, describes how culture, psychology, and the structures involved in decision-making place limits on the development, delivery, and influence of effective military voice in policy discussions. Military and civilian leaders must work together to ensure their dialogue contributes meaningfully to developing solvent national security policies. The second contribution, “The Crisis of American Military Primacy and the Search for Strategic Solvency,” by Hal Brands and Eric Edelman, explores three options America has for achieving primacy with strategic solvency. Their solutions may well gain traction.

This issue’s second and largest forum, *Are Our Strategic Models Flawed?*, considers whether we ought to reexamine our fundamental concepts of war, peace, and strategy. In “Faith in War: The American Roots of Global Conflict,” Gregory A. Daddis argues war has become a form of secular religion for many Americans in the modern era. But he questions whether that faith is justified. In “Solving America’s Gray-Zone Puzzle,” Isaiah Wilson III and Scott Smitson contend America will remain unprepared to fight, win, and fully finish gray-zone wars until its “flawed by design” concepts of war, peace, and strategy are sorted out and deconflicted. In “Strategic Uncertainty, the Third Offset, and US Grand Strategy,” Ionut C. Popescu demonstrates the usefulness of rethinking our understanding of uncertainty and how that might affect the course of America’s Third Offset Strategy, and its grand strategy in general. Finally, in “Ends + Ways + Means = (Bad) Strategy,” Jeffrey W. Meiser builds on Sir Lawrence Freedman’s definition of strategy as a theory of success and suggests the purpose of strategy is to create advantage, generate new sources of power, and exploit weaknesses in our opponents.

Our third forum, *Regional Issues in Asia*, offers two articles concerning recent trends along the Pacific rim. In “Turning It Up to Eleven: Belligerent Rhetoric in North Korea’s Propaganda,” Mason Richey examines some of the rhetoric from Pyongyang and whether (or when) it represents a risk of conflict escalation or even a *casus belli*. In “Foreign Military Education as PLA Soft Power,” John S. Van Oudenaren and Benjamin E. Fisher argue Chinese foreign military education programs are designed to promote a positive international image of China while simultaneously advancing military-to-military relations. In response, US policymakers should reprioritize international military education in support of long-term partnerships. ~ AJE

The Army's Identity Crisis

Gates Brown

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ABSTRACT: While examining effective and ineffective examples of Army modernization, this article explains the importance of focusing efforts on combined arms maneuver warfare with a near-peer competitor.

The Army suffers from an identity crisis: by training forces for all types of wars it ends up lessening combat effectiveness across the entire spectrum. Instead of preparing inadequately for every war, the Army needs to focus on a specific skill set and hone it to a sharp edge. Aware of the risks of preparing for an incorrect type of war, the Army recovered from the consequences of such miscalculations in World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, and more recently, in Iraq and Afghanistan. In short, a well-defined Army can scramble to remedy known deficiencies in combat operations; however, consciously choosing not to set a deliberate course will not serve the Army well.

The Pentomic era of the 1950s and early 1960s as well as the Active Defense and AirLand Battle era of the late 1970s and 1980s provide examples of previous attempts to address this problem. These cases differ in that implementing weapons platforms of the new operational framework during the 1970s and early 1980s were feasible while the Pentomic Division foundered due to matériel and doctrinal problems. Any new operational concept, therefore, should address approaches toward the most serious threat to the United States, appropriate weapons platforms, units, and strategic mobility for these threats.

The primary focus of modernization efforts should be the threat of a near-peer competitor, such as China or Russia. A near-peer competitor is a state or a state-like actor that can challenge US strategic interests or America's ability to influence or protect its strategic interests. China and Russia are currently the most likely near-peer competitor states; they have the ability to challenge US strategic interests in their region. A near-peer competitor does not have to have the capability to challenge the United States globally, but if it can challenge America in a region that is of vital interest, such as Europe or the South China Sea, then it is a potential near-peer threat.

China has the capability to challenge US dominance in the South China Sea; it is building islands to extend its sovereign waters and its airpower projection capability. Similarly, Russia's expansion into Eastern Europe showed the inability of the United States to check such aggression. America's interests in Europe focus on Central and Western Europe; however, without an effective counter to Russian aggression, other ways to shore up the confidence of its allies in the region will have

Dr. Gates Brown, an assistant professor of military history at the Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, served with the 2nd Infantry and the 82nd Airborne Divisions.

to be found. The Islamic State is not a near-peer competitor because it has limited ability to project power beyond the Middle East.

The Pentomic Division

During the 1950s, the Army faced a problem much like today's need to describe its current contribution to national security. President Dwight D. Eisenhower's security policy, known as the New Look, focused American military efforts on a strong nuclear deterrent while reducing conventional forces. General Maxwell D. Taylor, the US Army chief of staff from 1955 through 1959, advocated the pentomic concept to describe how the Army would fight on an atomic battlefield. Although the concept was flawed, it proved the Army could make a cogent argument for a new role in national security.

Unfortunately, two important reasons prevented Taylor's efforts from leading to more resources for the Army. First, the security situation—the building conflict in South Vietnam, instability in Eastern Europe, and the Suez Crisis—was not conducive to expanding preparations for limited war. Moreover, the context of the Cold War militated against directly involving US forces—the risk of war with the Soviet Union was too high for the United States to become decisively involved in a limited conflict outside the US strategic perimeter.

Taylor could not change that security paradigm; however, today's Army leaders do not have such constraints. There is no nation analogous to the Soviet Union in terms of its ability to deter US involvement in limited conflicts on the global stage. This means any decision to deploy ground troops would be based on the relative importance of the region or nation to US interests instead of how that conflict might increase tension with another superpower. This latitude provides more freedom of maneuver, but it also lowers the bar for involvement in limited wars, which in turn, makes properly preparing the Army for future conflict even more pressing.

Army leaders could use global instability as the foundation of an argument for a strong ground force. There are many different security threats ranging from near-peer competitors, such as Russia or China, to terrorist groups, such as the Islamic State. Currently, Army leaders claim to prepare for conflicts across the full spectrum of conflict; however, this spreads resources too thin and requires the Army to have too many disparate missions. Rather than facing the impossibility of building a coherent force structure backed by new matériel that could wage counterinsurgency operations and maneuver warfare against a near-peer competitor with the same type of units, weapons systems, and training requirements, Army leaders should identify the most direct threat to the nation and focus their efforts and acquisitions programs on meeting that threat. Having a clear agenda presents Congressional leaders with a more compelling argument.

Although the strategic context of the Cold War complicated Taylor's advocacy for a larger ground force, this was not the only reason the pentomic force struggled. The pentomic concept required increased

aviation assets, such as convertiplanes similar to the V-22 Osprey.¹ The rationale for convertiplanes was solid: pentomic forces needed mobility on the atomic battlefield to mitigate the effects of a nuclear weapon as well as the ability to mass quickly and fight the enemy. The operational tilt-rotor aircraft the pentomic concept required, however, took almost 60 years to reach the military. Similar problems, as discussed below, arose with the Future Combat Systems program (2003–9).

During Eisenhower's administration, the Army was in a secondary position in terms of national security that made the risk of trying the Pentomic Division acceptable, at least insofar as it attempted to wedge the Army into the new defense policy. Today's Army leaders, however, do not face similar constraints. Rather, current political leaders understand the protracted nature of limited wars all too well. No serious political leader or defense analyst argues the Army is obsolete.² Today's Army leaders need to make the most of this opportunity. By providing direction, they help guide political leaders to understand the important security risks the nation faces, which is why future planning must include a clear link between matériel and doctrine. As Army leaders discovered in the late 1950s, providing an unrealistic proposal will not garner support in the executive or legislative branches.

Active Defense and AirLand Battle

An example of a successful orientation is the Army of the late 1970s and early 1980s. General William E. DePuy used his position as commander of the US Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) to incorporate the experiences of the Yom Kippur War (1973) into US doctrine. DePuy's first iteration, Active Defense, soon shifted to AirLand Battle, which focused analysis on defending Europe and on concentrating effects to attrite Soviet forces as they invaded areas defended by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.³ Since victory required well-trained and well-led troops, the new doctrine focused on the soldier, including the acquisition of new weapons systems such as the M1 Abrams tank, the M2 Bradley fighting vehicle, and the AH-64 Apache attack helicopter, which gave military forces the capability to fight the type of war doctrine described. Both Active Defense and AirLand Battle assumed the main enemy was the Soviet Union and the battlefield would likely be Central Europe.⁴

Army leaders today do not have the clarity of a Cold War adversary to frame their threat assessments; however, the lack of a clear enemy should not stop Army leaders from orienting their efforts to counter the most

1 General Maxwell D. Taylor, "I'm Glad to Be in the Army" (speech, First Annual Meeting of the Association of the United States Army, October 22, 1955), National Defense University Digital Archives, 16–18, <https://digitalndulibrary.ndu.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/taylor/id/125/rec/3> (accessed February 19, 2016).

2 A. J. Bacevich, *The Pentomic Era: The U.S. Army between Korea and Vietnam* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 1986), 19–21.

3 Ingo Trauschweizer, *The Cold War U.S. Army: Building Deterrence for Limited War* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2008), 205–14. The introduction of Active Defense and its evolution to AirLand Battle embodied the shift from a matériel centric view of warfare to one that incorporated soldiers and their weapons systems into a cohesive intellectual framework. For a more detailed discussion of this evolution, see Harold R. Winton, "Partnership and Tension: The Army and Air Force Between Vietnam and Desert Shield," *Parameters* 26, no. 1 (Spring 1996): 100–119.

4 Walter E. Kretchik, *U.S. Army Doctrine: From the American Revolution to the War on Terror* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2011), 197–209.

dangerous or most likely threats. Army leaders should continue to focus on warfare as a human endeavor. The *US Army Operating Concept* makes this point clear; though it is often lost in the vagaries of budget debates.⁵ Decreased forces mean decreased resources for ground conflicts and influencing their outcomes. Any new conception of how the Army fights must communicate soldiers, not weapons, are key to success. Weapons enhance the individual soldier but cannot replace them. There are no quick and easy solutions a new weapons platform will offer that will remove the threat of losing soldiers in combat. Thus, the nation's political leaders should understand the ramifications of sending the Army into combat as well as the implications of creating a force unprepared for war due to a lack of funding or troops.

Recently, the Army attempted to frame fighting war in the twenty-first century through the Future Combat Systems (FCS) program. The effort failed because it was too expensive, lacked feasible weapons systems, and did not fit the strategic context. A RAND study on the reasons for the failure concluded foundational assumptions did not align with the realities of combat. Also, the acquisition requirements the Army generated were unreasonable. These problems were similar to the Pentomic Division in the late 1950s. Due to the Future Combat System's size and complexities, it became unwieldy and the costs were no longer worth the perceived benefits.⁶

One thing the Future Combat System effort did well was to articulate a path ahead for acquisitions. This clarity was also fundamental to establishing the success of the AirLand Battle Army that proved so effective in Desert Storm; however, platforms are only part of the equation in determining the efficacy of a fighting force and do no good if they only exist on the drawing board. In a new vision, Army leaders should identify platforms that are almost ready or are available for fielding to provide confidence in any new doctrine and to connect funding and capability. If legislators have a definitive program outlining not only the security issues but also the weapons platforms addressing those problems, they can more easily understand the consequences of reduced funding. When legislators cut funds from a program decades from realization, immediate budget constraints overwhelm platforms the Army needs in the relatively distant future.

A Way Ahead

To determine how best to address national security issues, the United States first needs a prioritized list of security concerns. With these priorities helping to determine where and how to distribute risk, resource allocations become clearer. Risks will not disappear even if the decision is to continue training for the entire spectrum of conflict. In fact, having too broad of a focus invites just as much risk as too narrow of a focus.

Currently, the Army's Unified Land Operations doctrine characterizes the main threats to the United States as either a "nonstate entity

⁵ US Department of the Army, *The U.S. Army Operating Concept: Win in a Complex World, 2020–2040*, Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) Pamphlet 525-3-1 (Fort Eustis, VA: Headquarters, TRADOC, 2014), 8–9.

⁶ Christopher G. Pernin et al., *Lessons from the Army's Future Combat Systems Program* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2012), 247–51.

possessing weapons of mass destruction or other unique methods to challenge US dominance by attacking the public will” or “a nuclear-capable nation-state partnered with one or more nonstate actors through ideological, religious, political, or other ties.”⁷ The second threat combines the dangers of a near-peer competitor’s conventional force with a sophisticated irregular force, two adversaries requiring different efforts to address. The standard logic of deterrence theory, especially when it assumes each side has similar atomic capabilities, does not apply in this situation: a nonstate actor armed with nuclear weapons would not make this fact known prior to an attack because deterrence is most effective if the cost of aggression is more than the cost of inaction. Namely, nonstate actors who find producing or maintaining even a small nuclear arsenal difficult, let alone garnering an arsenal analogous to that of the United States, face greater risks by making public their possession of nuclear weapons to deter aggression than by publicizing the weapons after use.⁸

Since regular Army units could do little to counter a nonstate actor with a nuclear weapon, which is a task for special operations, a nonstate nuclear armed entity is not relevant for the entire Army and the second threat outlined in *Unified Land Operations* should drive Army planning. Although defining the threat is valuable, that alone is insufficient. We need clarity about the type of conflict the Army should prepare for. A broad range of operations could require Army involvement; it would be difficult, if not impossible, for a force the size of the US Army to be proficient across the entire spectrum. As recently made clear, when Army leaders identify a capability gap, they will make every effort to close it—for example, during Operations Enduring Freedom (2001–14) and Iraqi Freedom (2003–10), the Army changed the focus of its combat training centers to concentrate on counterinsurgency operations. Notably, this shift reduced the emphasis on maneuver warfare and decreased total force proficiency with this type of conflict.

Even though the entire spectrum of conflict requires different, possibly contradictory, skills, the size of the force does not allow for large-scale specialization of units without decreasing the overall capability of the force. Also, if a sizable conflict—on the order of the Persian Gulf War (1990–91) or Operation Iraqi Freedom—did occur, any specialization would become meaningless because units would have to fight in the ongoing war.

Counterinsurgency operations require significant investments of time and personnel. Even after years of fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan, US forces were unable to provide long-term stability. Counterinsurgencies, unless they follow an invasion, will be at the invitation of the host nation and would allow advanced notice. Conversely, high-intensity conflicts, especially with near-peer competitors have not normally permitted prolonged periods of preparation. Any potential aggressor is unlikely to allow US forces to build up over a period of months as Iraq did in 1991.

7 Headquarters, US Department of the Army (HQDA), *Unified Land Operations*, Army Doctrinal Publication (ADP) 3-0 (Washington, DC: HQDA, 2011), 4.

8 Robert Powell, *Nuclear Deterrence Theory: The Search for Credibility* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 10–12.

The Army could find itself having to maneuver forces quickly to gain access to the theater and only subsequently engage enemy forces. Such a high-risk operation affords little time for home-station training. Also, this type of operation requires specialized weapons platforms. A clear doctrinal framework establishing feasible requirements could provide guidance for such systems, however, timely creation of such systems is not likely without such a model.

Although choosing a specific type of conflict requires assuming risk, failing to make a choice also incurs risk. Due to long acquisition timelines, most of the risk lies with not making clear decisions. Weapons platforms are adaptable to an extent; however, a force can only adapt *existing* weapons platforms. The main elements of US landpower are decades old, and there is no clear direction for new platforms.

For these reasons, Army leaders should focus the Army's mission, acquisition strategy, and training efforts for the active force to fight a high-intensity conflict. Prepared for this type of conflict, the Army will be ready to face the most dangerous threat to the nation. Conversely, if Army leaders continue advocating for forces prepared to fight across the spectrum of possible conflicts, then it is entirely possible that the Army might find itself without the proper weapons platforms or capabilities to fight a near-peer competitor. As Field Manual 100-5, *Operations*, made clear in the 1970s, the Army cannot count on the luxury of losing its first battles any more; it must be ready to win from the beginning.⁹

9 HQDA, *Operations*, Field Manual (FM) 100-5 (Washington, DC: HQDA, 1977), 1-1, <http://cgsc.contentdm.oclc.org/utis/getdownloaditem/collection/p4013coll9/id/39/filename/40.pdf/mapsto/pdf/type/compoundobject/cpdtype/monograph/show/39> (accessed March 19, 2016).

Ensuring Effective Military Voice

William E. Rapp

ABSTRACT: Culture, psychology, and decision-making structures place limits on the development, delivery, and impact of effective military voice in national security policy discussions. Only by working together and overcoming these limits will both military and civilian leaders ensure the robust dialogue necessary for solvent national security policies and successful waging of wars.

The war in Vietnam was not lost in the field, nor was it lost on the front pages of the *New York Times* or on the college campuses. It was lost in Washington, D.C., even before Americans assumed sole responsibility for the fighting in 1965 and before they realized the country was at war . . . [it was an] abdication of responsibility to the American people.

H. R. McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty*

The Vietnam War was not lost by Lyndon B. Johnson and Robert S. McNamara alone. Regardless of tactical successes on the battlefield, senior military leaders in both Saigon, Vietnam, and Washington, DC, shared culpability for failing to achieve American policy aims.¹ Today, 15 years of largely inconclusive war should demand similar introspection on the moral responsibility of both civilian and military leaders to work together better to wage war effectively, not just fight battles well. This article examines how civilian and military leaders can effectively encourage and express military voice, and thus, improve outcomes from the national security policy process.

In discussions of options and risks occurring prior to the final civilian decision on use of force, military officers have the opportunity to voice their considered advice and, if necessary, their differing opinions. But, what about the moral responsibilities of both civilian and military leaders to align war aims and resources to wage a war successfully, not just to fight a war?² If, as Clausewitz writes, “war is a continuation of political discourse by other means,” how can military leaders help civilian decision-makers strike a balance between political ends sought and resources allocated so the lives of soldiers and civilians in the theater of battle are not wasted?

1 H. R. McMaster makes this point convincingly in his landmark study, *Dereliction of Duty: Lyndon Johnson, Robert McNamara, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Lies that Led to Vietnam* (New York: HarperCollins, 1997).

2 James M. Dubik, *Just War Reconsidered: Strategy, Ethics, and Theory* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2016) makes this critically important distinction. War waging is a whole-of-government endeavor to achieve lasting political outcomes better than those ex ante. Warfighting is the set of tactical combat actions and operational military maneuvers used to win battles and campaigns. Often, both military and civilian leaders equate warfighting with war waging.

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Army War College.

Over the past decade, debates about the surge in Iraq and the war in Afghanistan have put a spotlight on the responsibility of senior military leaders to participate fully in discussions leading to use of force decisions and the ensuing dialogues necessary to adapt those initial decisions to the changing realities of the conflict.³ The goal of this often bruising dialogue is to improve solvency in national security policies—the condition in which policy ends are achievable with the available resources and at acceptable levels of risk.⁴ But since full agreement between military and civilian leaders in this back-and-forth dialogue is frequently absent, the issue at hand is how military leaders can best express their considered military advice—including dissent—in line with American traditions of proper military subordination to civil authority.⁵

Yet military leaders are often at a distinct disadvantage when providing military advice not fully aligned with prevailing civilian leadership direction. Although military members often seem to have advantages in policy discussions due to asymmetric information, and even a deferential aura among some policy elites who have never served in uniform, profoundly held cultural values of obedience and loyalty as well as other psychological and structural factors often inhibit effective expression of voice. These factors limit military participation in dialogue that can lead to the best possible national security policies and the best strategies to implement them.

Notably, voice in this context never advocates usurping civilian authority or disobeying legal orders. Providing quality military advice to civilian leaders clearly demands competence in the professional jurisdictions assigned to the military. And, providing this military advice effectively demands moral character, interpersonal skills, candor, education, and experience. But if military leaders believe, after consultation and reflection, that the potential decisions concerning use of military force are insolvent or ill-advised, they have a moral duty to strongly, but respectfully, express their considered opinion. They have a duty to strive to be heard.

Albert O. Hirschman famously categorized individual responses to weighty decisions in organizations as “exit, voice, and loyalty.”⁶ Unfortunately, the recent dialogue on military dissent has focused too

3 See Richard K. Betts, *American Force: Dangers, Delusions, and Dilemmas in National Security* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012); and Eliot A. Cohen, *Supreme Command: Soldiers, Statesmen, and Leadership in Wartime* (New York: Free Press, 2002). Both authors discuss what Cohen calls the “unequal dialogue” and prescribe vigorous back-and-forth dialogue to refine problems, gain mutual understanding of interests and options, and make more solvent policy decisions.

4 The concept of policy solvency was popularized by Walter Lippman, *U.S. Foreign Policy: Shield of the Republic* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1943). In a campaign speech in 1954, Eisenhower stated that, “We must achieve both security and solvency.” Quoted in Andreas Wenger, *Living with Peril: Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Nuclear Weapons* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1997), 14. Clearly, solvency is not binary, and risk of failure is always present, even in the best constructed and resourced policy decisions. The issue is about improving the probability of policy success.

5 Unfortunately, the state of the current dialogue on dissent focuses on resignation under protest. For this important debate, see *Armed Forces & Society* 43, no. 1 (2016): Peter Feaver, “Resign in Protest? A Cure Worse Than Most Diseases,” 29–40, doi:10.1177/0095327X16657321; Richard H. Kohn, “On Resignation,” 41–52, doi:10.1177/0095327X16657323; James M. Dubik, “Taking a ‘Pro’ Position on Principled Resignation,” 17–28, doi:10.1177/0095327X16659736; and Don M. Snider, “Dissent, Resignation, and the Moral Agency of Senior Military Professionals,” 5–16, doi:10.1177/0095327X16657322.

6 Albert O. Hirschman, *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations, and States* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970).

narrowly on the first and the third options—exit and loyalty—as well as resignation under protest, the ultimate expression of dissent. This emphasis compromises military leaders' ability to develop an ethos of respectful but forceful voice.

Effective voice is the full provision of military advice throughout the policy-strategy-execution process, especially when such advice differs from views held by civilian leaders and their staff. Civilian and military leaders need to broaden their understanding and acceptance of effective military voice and remove the connotations of civil-military impropriety and partisanship. Expressing thoughtful disagreement is vitally important throughout the dialogue leading to a decision, but its value does not end there. Subsequent to decisions to use force, as leaders assess and adapt strategy to changing dynamics in the operating environment or to evolving domestic political realities, room for military leaders to express unbiased assessments and dissenting views is essential. Loyalty and exit remain options for officers, but more voice will lead to less blind loyalty and thoughts of exit—both of which are hazardous to proper civil-military relations. This article explores the cultural, psychological, and structural limits on effective military voice and offers ways for military and civilian leadership to ensure the robust dialogue necessary for successful war waging—the ultimate achievement of national objectives.

Cultural and Psychological Limits

Strongly ingrained military culture and the psychological biases of individual military leaders, and those who support them, provide the first set of limits on effectively providing unconstrained and high-quality military advice.

The most fundamental of these self-imposed limits on voice is the culture of the US military, which determines how the military develops senior leaders and inculcates key values. America's deeply ingrained norms of civil-military relations, which came from the founding of the country, were significantly shaped by Samuel P. Huntington's model of such relations.⁷ Military officers are expected to clearly, but not publicly, voice opinions and give military advice without questioning the final decisions from civilian leaders empowered to make them. Military leaders are taught civilians will clearly articulate the ends of policy, and military advice should be limited to matters of ways, means, and risk.⁸

While this is true of assigned missions at the tactical level, strategic ends are far more likely to emerge from extended dialogue than crystallize at the very beginning. Strategic ends change over time as well. If, during the dialogue, the military leader assesses the ends of policy are not achievable with the resources provided, including time, then he or she is obligated to provide updated military advice. The updated

7 Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1957). Huntington's model, now known as "objective control" of the military by civilian leaders, has been challenged recently by a number of authors, most notably Cohen, *Supreme Command*; Betts, *American Force*; and Peter Feaver, *Armed Servants: Agency, Oversight, and Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003).

8 The civilian purview of ends is ingrained into the military culture. See William E. Rapp, "Civil-Military Relations: The Role of Military Leaders in Strategy Making," *Parameters* 45, no. 3 (Autumn 2015): 13.

information might address the lack of solvency in the military aspects of the policy or identify military task accomplishments that will not lead to overall policy success.

The thorniest cultural problem for military voice occurs when the military can achieve its assigned objectives with the provided resources, but military leaders recognize accomplishing those objectives will not likely lead to the desired strategic ends. This challenge has haunted American foreign policies involving use of force since Vietnam. Arguably, military leaders within the American tradition must consider themselves concurrently responsible with civilian leaders and other agencies to achieve strategic policy ends, not just cognitively stop at the edge of the military playing field as their culture has encouraged. Providing this range of voice on policy solvency is necessary to use the lives and treasure America puts forward into distant lands well, and despite commendable intramilitary coordination, voice helps counter the prevailing norm of “staying in one’s lane” when it comes to civil-military relations.

A second challenge posed by military culture is that candor is often viewed as detrimental to team play. While military leaders say they prize candor and telling truth to power, some authors posit military culture itself often suppresses such forthrightness in favor of conformity to the team.⁹ The lieutenant who questions the wisdom of his captain’s plans, just like the major who constantly questions the musings of his colonel, is not likely to receive favorable evaluations and is thus unlikely to progress in rank and commands.¹⁰ Granted, this culture of deference to power is not true in command climates of the very best units and most certainly has not created a cohort of “yes-men.” However, for the majority of general officers who have risen in rank over a period of 25 years in an environment where “hooah” or “yes sir” is the expected reply to guidance from higher, immediately feeling comfortable offering alternative views to senior military and civilian leaders is a stretch.

Another cultural constraint on effectively providing dissenting opinions is the fear of leaks or publicly revealed military voice. This fear afflicts military and civilian leaders for different reasons and can be used as a lever in intragovernmental debates. Although norms for providing considered military advice dictate it is given strictly in private, especially if it strongly dissents from the civilian viewpoint, the ubiquity of leaks and adverse reactions to public interviews in recent years has further inhibited the full expression of voice. Just as the Donald Rumsfeld Pentagon accused the Joint Chiefs of leaking their displeasure with iterations of the Iraq War plan in 2002, the Barack Obama White House chided General Stanley McChrystal for leaks involving his 2009 Afghanistan assessment.

9 Paul Paolozzi, *Closing the Candor Chasm: The Missing Element of Army Professionalism*, Professional Military Ethics Monograph Series, vol. 5 (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2013), 11–13. See also MG Dennis Laich and LTC Mike Young, “The Million Dollar Muzzle: A Follow-up to Yingling,” *Defense Policy* (blog), August 8, 2011, quoted in Greg Jacob, “Leadership Failure,” *Front and Center*, August 11, 2011, <http://policyfrontandcenter.org/leadership-failure/>.

10 For an outsider’s view of this culture of conformity, see annex C of “US Army Culture: A British Perspective,” in H. R. McMaster and Robert Simpson, *Army Culture* (unpublished white paper, US Army Training and Doctrine Command, August 25, 2009).

Without the expectation of privacy or discretion, officers fear accusations of politicization from the side favoring the administration's view while civilian leaders fear public discord with senior military leaders and artificial constraints from leaked assessments and recommendations. This concern extends beyond deliberations of the executive branch. Because Congress has a constitutional right to request candid military advice from flag officers, dissenting voices, however pure in motive, may rapidly become politicized. Senior leaders may have an abundance of moral courage, but compartmentalizing advice or suppressing alternative opinions to minimize the damage from publicly revealed voice greatly reduces the effectiveness of military advice during policy discussions and in critical decision-making.¹¹

The final cultural limit on military voice comes from the career preferences of officers who studiously try to remain with troops and avoid service in Washington, DC, or evade time in assignments that entail significant contact with civilian thought leaders. This approach reduces opportunities to build relationships, develop trust with other participants in policymaking circles, and learn both the interagency decision process and the relationships between tactical actions and strategic ends. Clearly, some services have a stronger norm of service in DC than others, but all suffer from rapidly rotating officers in and out of billets.

Military advice has meaning only if the voice has gravitas, credibility, and acute strategic tone. Regardless of the soundness of advice, if the military leader has not earned the trust of those receiving it, advice has less value.¹² Rank does not confer this relational trust in either direction, nor does rank automatically confer wisdom in policy deliberations. Personal relationships, social intelligence, operational experiences, and iterations in the policymaking process are required. As with other barriers to full expression of voice, trust and strong relationships increase the probability of a military officer's opinion being heard, but are themselves insufficient for adequate exercise of voice.

Psychological Barriers

Psychological barriers constitute a broad set of limits on effective military advice, which affect the quality of the voice. As we know from social science and economic literature, human rationality is bounded, biases are ingrained, and cognitive heuristics guide our perceptions and interpretations of reality.¹³

Humans are systematically overconfident, overestimating the probability of success and underestimating the probability of failure. These tendencies create a critical psychological barrier to expressing objective

11 Dubik, *Just War Reconsidered*, 147–48.

12 Mackubin Thomas Owens argues that the current erosion in civil-military trust, in both directions, is having a deleterious impact on strategic decision-making quality. See Kori Schake and Jim Mattis, eds., *Warriors & Citizens: American Views of Our Military* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University / Hoover Institution Press, 2016), 71.

13 For a more complete examination of the psychology of strategic decision-making using the Vietnam War as context, see Kenneth Payne, *The Psychology of Strategy: Exploring Rationality in the Vietnam War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015). See also Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011).

dissenting views known as the optimism bias.¹⁴ Military culture exacerbates overconfidence in policy execution by its can-do ethos and bias for action. Generals do not rise to those ranks by being pessimists—in fact, the culture views optimism as a force multiplier.¹⁵ Interestingly, in the wars of limited objectives since Vietnam, this can-do attitude is much more pronounced in policy execution than in policy formation. When policy debates involve potential use of military force, military leaders tend to be more risk averse than their civilian masters.¹⁶

Operational assessments from distant theaters that appear overly optimistic to analysts at home are no surprise. General William Westmoreland and General Paul D. Harkin were not purposefully lying when they persistently transmitted optimistic reports to President Johnson from Vietnam.¹⁷ Naturally, theater commanders' cognizance centers not only on Washington's reaction to their assessments but also on reactions within their own command, especially effects on troop morale and partners. American combat personnel, multinational partners, and host country leaders need reassurance that their sacrifices make a positive difference, while civilian leadership needs what they consider to be unvarnished truth.

Once military force is committed in a conflict with vague strategic objectives and limited resources, the bias for action and can-do attitude can create the pernicious tendency in both civilian and military leaders to “retreat to the tactical.” Marines ashore in Beirut turned into combatants as they experienced this tactical mission creep from November 1982 through September 1983 although the strategy called for them to remain a neutral lever for diplomacy.¹⁸ When this bias happens, warfighting takes precedence over war waging; tactical actions look attractive even if they are strategically unproductive. In this case, those culturally based psychological biases can degrade the quality of voice if quality is measured by the probability of such advice leading to sustainable political outcomes.

Additionally, the challenges of expressing dissenting voice in an optimistic, can-do culture are compounded by the lack of objective reality in assessing the risks of highly complex problems. There is a real and unambiguous answer to the question “How high is Mount Everest?” But, the answer to “How hard will it be to execute this operation?” is much more complicated. Multiple variables—the military's doctrine, organization, training, manning, education, and degree and type of modernization, as well as the enemy's will and capacity to

14 Tali Sharot, *The Optimism Bias: A Tour of the Irrationally Positive Brain* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2011). See also, Dominic D. P. Johnson, *Overconfidence in War: The Havoc and Glory of Positive Illusions* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004).

15 David Roth, *Sacred Honor: A Biography of Colin Powell* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993), 169.

16 The Joint Chiefs, for example, pushed back against the muscular diplomacy desires of Secretaries of State George P. Shultz in Lebanon in 1982–84 and Madeleine Albright in the Balkans more than a decade later.

17 Johnson, *Overconfidence in War*, 140. Westmoreland and Harkin had been greatly influenced by General Maxwell Taylor, who advised both to be optimistic in their reports. See David Halberstram, *The Best and the Brightest* (New York: Random House, 1969), chap. 11.

18 For a history of the microdecisions throughout that year, see Gail Yoshitani, *Reagan on War: A Reappraisal of the Weinberger Doctrine, 1980–1984* (College Station: Texas A&M Press, 2012); and Benis M. Frank, *U.S. Marines in Lebanon, 1982–1984* (Washington, DC: History and Museums Division, Headquarters, US Marine Corps, 1987).

endure—impact the difficulty of a given operation. The can-do culture of the military is essential in dealing with these slippery challenges of military operations in competitive, adaptive environments, but also makes asserting that something cannot be done or even expressing uncertainty in an assessment extremely difficult.¹⁹

Psychologically, humans seek to reduce internal cognitive dissonance—the mental and emotional stress of holding two or more contradictory beliefs or of performing an action contradictory to one's beliefs or values.²⁰ Officers rationalize to reduce this internal dissonance when they want to express dissent but are concerned about how such voice will affect their place at the table of future discussions. The story of President Johnson directly challenging Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Earle G. Wheeler on July 27, 1965, to concur with his plan for Vietnam is a case in point. Halberstram writes, “It was an extraordinary moment, like watching a lion tamer deal with some of the great lions.” After a pause, Wheeler nodded in agreement with the president, though everyone in the room knew he was opposed to the decision.²¹ Army chief of staff at the time, General Harold K. Johnson, later admitted he and the other chiefs rationalized they had to remain part of the process to have later votes. General Johnson said, “I made the typical mistake of believing that I could do more for the country and the Army if I stayed in . . . I am now going to my grave with that lapse in moral courage on my back.”²² A senior leader rationalizing the acceptance of a position to which he or she has great reluctance by thinking they can have a much greater positive effect by staying part of the leadership team rather than diminishing their future influence or exiting altogether is a perfectly human response. However, senior leaders are derelict in their duty by remaining silent when their voice is required to improve the odds of policy solvency and thus strategic success.

Frames of reference and the heavy psychological weight of sunk costs are additional psychological and cultural barriers to expressing dissenting voice in the military. Even when the objective situation on the battlefield is dire, American history provides few examples of senior military leaders in theater who have recommended concluding operations under unfavorable conditions. Past actions and sunk costs affect our assessment of present conditions and may limit the advice military leaders provide.²³

19 I am indebted to Jim Golby for pointing out that the can-do ethos inhibits the expression of uncertainty.

20 Leon Festinger, *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance* (Evanston, IL: Row, Peterson, 1957).

21 Halberstram, *Best and the Brightest*, 599. In reality, all five members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff were largely silent on the president's way forward in Vietnam in July 1965 as McMaster notes in *Dereliction of Duty*, 300–322.

22 Quoted in Lewis Sorley, “To Change a War: General Harold K. Johnson and the PROVN Study,” *Parameters* 28, no.1 (Spring 1998): 93–109. The quotation came from an interview of Johnson by Brigadier General Albion W. Knight Jr. on February 1, 1997.

23 See Hal R. Arkes and Catherine Blumer, “The Psychology of Sunk Cost,” in *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes* 35 (1985): 124–40. The Joint Chief's unanimous opinion that the Marines needed to be withdrawn from Beirut following the October 23, 1983 bombing of the Marine barracks is, however, one example where sunk costs did not rule the day.

Military difficulties, instead of prompting a reassessment of strategy, may do just the opposite, and provoke an “escalation of commitment.”²⁴ In a memo to President Johnson, George Wildman Ball pointed out this challenge when he wrote, “Once we suffer large casualties, we will have started a well-nigh irreversible process. Our involvement will be so great that we cannot—without national humiliation—stop short of achieving our complete objectives.”²⁵ Thus, the more significant the expenditure of blood and treasure, the greater the efforts of civilian and military leaders to make some good come from the sacrifice of their soldiers.

The Soldier’s Creed states in part that “I will never accept defeat, I will never quit, [and] I will never leave a fallen comrade.”²⁶ It is hard to expect a senior commander in a failing operation to tell his superiors that the strategy is not working and that we ought to cut our losses and pull out.²⁷ Such a defeatist stance is not in the DNA of military culture.

While cultural and psychological factors tend to limit the expression and content of voice, there are also structural factors that either suppress or prevent senior military leaders from providing their unvarnished alternative views to the prevailing elite opinion within the circles at the highest levels.

Structurally Imposed Limits

Although military leaders are most responsible for identifying and overcoming their own psychological biases and cultural predilections hindering candor and effective voice, civilian leaders are most responsible for setting the conditions facilitating military voice in the process of national security policymaking. Civilian leaders have the authority to make decisions, but they also have the moral responsibility to create space for dissenting views to be heard—and to consider those views. Civilian leadership can support three structural issues to facilitate effective military advice: ensure military voice has access, avoid distorting the military voice within the bureaucracy, and discern and address the squelching effects of inner-ring dynamics on the military voice.²⁸ Senior military leaders, knowing the criticality of participative dialogue, are coresponsible to create these expectations and organizational climates.²⁹

Purposeful, restricted access to the decision-making process is perhaps the most pernicious structural factor limiting full and honest expressions of effective military advice. While Georges Clemenceau,

24 Barry M. Staw, “The Escalation of Commitment: An Update and Appraisal,” in *Organizational Decision Making*, ed. Zur Shapira (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 191–215.

25 “Memo from George Ball to President Johnson: A Compromise Solution in South Vietnam,” in *Vietnam and America: A Documented History*, ed. Marvin E. Gettleman et al. (New York: Grove Press, 1995), 282–83.

26 “Soldier’s Creed,” Army.mil, <https://www.army.mil/values/soldiers.html> (accessed October 28, 2016). This quote is from the version of the creed developed and published in 2003; however, it finds roots in the “Ranger Creed,” which was written in 1974 and reflects the broader Army and military culture. It is an uncertain line between being seen as prudently advocating withdrawal and retrenchment or being viewed as being defeatist in outlook. The latter is anathema to military culture and further amplifies the can-do culture.

27 Though this was essentially what Generals John Abizaid and George Casey, as well as Admiral William Fallon, were saying in 2006–7, a stance for which they were castigated by surge proponents.

28 For discussion on group dynamics influencing advice given to senior decision-makers, see C. S. Lewis, “The Inner Ring” (speech, Memorial Lecture, King’s College, London, 1944).

29 Dubik, conversation with author, November 18, 2016.

a former premier of France, might have famously quipped that war was too serious a matter to entrust to military men, excluding military advice on military matters is a dangerous affront to healthy civil-military relations.³⁰ As early as 1964, President Johnson and Secretary of Defense McNamara had largely excluded the Joint Chiefs of Staff from deliberations about the Vietnam War.³¹ Similarly, General Henry “Hugh” Shelton wrote of Secretary Rumsfeld’s attempt to control military voice when the latter returned to the Pentagon in 2001.³²

There may well also be the existence of “mind-guards” or gatekeepers who prevent off-azimuth opinions from reaching the top decision-makers.³³ The president can organize his or her advisory process in any manner, but precluding military advice will limit informed voices from strengthening policy choices and from preparing the inevitable strategic adaptations needed for lasting, positive political outcomes in war. Similarly, Congress can use techniques such as closed or classified hearings to elicit military candor and voice without politicizing those military leaders. The president and Congress, as coprincipals to the military, must create environments that encourage unguarded access to apolitical military advice.

The bureaucratization of decision-making processes presents the second structural obstacle to providing effective military advice and operates in two profound ways. First, military advice, especially dissenting opinions, may be diluted or distorted on the way to the president. Senior military leaders unfamiliar with the layered national security policy apparatus may find their voice gains no traction in the interagency processes leading to the president. The aims of senior military leaders may also be confounded by the opinions of other senior military leaders who hold different, reasoned opinions on a particular issue and who have a voice in other layers of interagency discussion. It is not unheard of for the chairman of the Joint Chiefs to be at odds with a combatant commander, a service chief, or even the vice chairman! Thus, access to the president is a valuable commodity, and most of what the president sees has been processed through numerous filters. In his 1968 examination of the institutional processes in Washington surrounding the Vietnam War, James C. Thomson called this phenomenon the “curator mentality”—an inertia that confounded dissenting opinions and incongruent situational assessments on the war.³⁴

Secondly, while all agencies utilize various bureaucratic processes, the Department of Defense planning systems are by far the most structured and staff-intensive. However, staffers who work on an issue on behalf of senior military and civilian leaders in the early phases of decision-making may not fully know nor accurately convey their boss’s

30 “La guerre! C’est une chose trop grave pour la confier a des militaires,” quoted in Georges Suarez, *Soixante années d’histoire française* (Paris: J. Tallandier, 1932).

31 The Johnson White House is exemplar of the exclusion of military advice from the inner circle of real decision-making on war waging. See McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty*, 4–5, 41, 208–9; and Matthew Moten, *Presidents and Their Generals: An American History of Command in War* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2014), 293, 299–300.

32 Hugh Shelton, *Without Hesitation: The Odyssey of an American Warrior* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2010), 402, 407–9.

33 David Patrick Houghton, *The Decision Point: Six Cases in U.S. Foreign Policy Decision Making* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 51.

34 James C. Thomson, “How Could Vietnam Happen? An Autopsy,” *Atlantic*, April 1968.

intent. Nor are they commonly allowed to coordinate with equivalent level planners in other agencies until the top-level policy position is determined. Although interagency members, such as political advisers and liaisons, are embedded in other bureaucracies, the relative insularity and differing process timelines of these planning systems create a conundrum for the production of workable, whole-of-government strategies to deal with complex problems.³⁵ Both bureaucratic distortion and insularity during the planning process can inhibit the strategic dialogue needed to craft solvent, viable policy implementation strategies.

The group dynamics in the secretary of defense's and president's inner circles pose a third structural obstacle to the effective expression of military voice. They may limit the extent to which senior military leaders offer dissenting opinions. An examination of the dynamics within John F. Kennedy's Executive Committee of the National Security Council deliberations during the Cuban missile crisis highlights the importance of group dynamics and spawned considerable work in social psychology.³⁶ Graham T. Allison and then Irving L. Janis wrote of the strong social pressures to conform within an elite group of decision-makers. The social need to belong, the sense of camaraderie, leads to self-censorship Janis called "groupthink."

In the spring and early summer of 1965, President Johnson allowed the strongly dissenting George Ball to remain in the inner circle's deliberations, but nearly all participants came to see him as playing the "devil's advocate" role. This socially acceptable role within the inner circle eased the way for the others to remain conformed to Johnson's leanings on the expansion of the US role in South Vietnam.³⁷ But, if the secretary of defense, president, or their inner circles, limit the access of those with alternative opinions either by action or inaction, opposing views may never be fully heard or considered, to the detriment of solvent national security policies.

Changing Culture and Encouraging Voice

Recognizing and addressing cultural biases in expressions of alternative views are necessary for effective civil-military relations and the achievement of well-crafted security policy goals; however, personal and organizational factors that inhibit fully expressing this voice must be addressed by civilian and military leaders.³⁸ Individual thinking

35 Some now argue for the creation of standing interagency planning groups to mitigate this dilemma. See Janine A. Davidson, Emerson T. Brooking, and Benjamin J. Fernandes, "Mending the Broken Dialogue: Military Advice and Presidential Decision-Making," Council on Foreign Relations, November 2016.

36 See Graham T. Allison, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1971); and Irving L. Janis, *Groupthink: Psychological Studies of Policy Decisions and Fiascoes* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1982). In *The Decision Point*, Houghton summarizes the same arguments and provides useful case studies. Although some believe that only General Maxwell Taylor had access to this inner circle, military advice in the Cuban missile crisis was prominent and well-articulated, and then declined.

37 Larry Berman, *Planning a Tragedy: The Americanization of the War in Vietnam* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1982), 85. Thomson, who served on the National Security Council staff in the mid-1960s, wrote on the domestication of dissent noting George Ball's role allowed the bulk of Johnson's advisers to tell themselves that they had allowed for the hearing of a dovish perspective. See also Thomson, "How Could Vietnam Happen?" General Shelton commented on similar dynamics in the Bush White House, *Without Hesitation*, 418–19.

38 See as well the thoughtful piece on improving this dialogue in Davidson, Brooking, and Fernandes, "Mending the Broken Dialogue."

and organizational culture are exceedingly difficult to change, but the imperatives of national security demand that leaders continue making such changes.

Military and civilian leaders in the Department of Defense must begin by reinforcing the good elements while changing military culture to reshape assumptions about the value of candor, thereby changing officers' proclivity to offer dissenting opinions throughout their career. Leaders must demonstrate their belief in the value of such voice in how they develop, reward, and promote officers throughout their careers. It is a case of misplaced hierarchy of loyalties if candor is viewed as counter to the sense of team. The country needs senior military leaders who are accustomed to offering their considered military advice in fraught national security policy debates and who are expected to do so.

We cannot expect generals simply to flip the switch to candor and dissent upon putting on stars if the behavior is not culturally valued during the more than two decades of service preceding their promotion. This prospect requires a cultural shift, an important one. These generals do not lack moral courage, but research suggests they have been conditioned by a culture that values team play, conformity, and collegiality more than candor and voice.³⁹ While difficult to do, culture changes result from sustained behavioral changes; thus, we must create opportunities to build and reward expressions of alternative views in leader development and in developmental exercises that include both military and civilian leaders.

The most difficult question about fostering a culture of candor and voice involves the appropriateness of public expression of military voice. While an individual choice with few historical examples, the only time a uniformed military leader can publicly express dissent is if that voice does not get a fair hearing in the decision process and if that leader deems the potential consequences of policy failure to be far greater than the costs to civil-military relations, which could be severe.⁴⁰ Offering a dissenting voice in public, to Congress in open session, or to the press is not a step for military leaders to take lightly.

Generals and senior civilian leaders must also recognize the common biases and the self-imposed limits on the quality of their voice, which include overoptimism, the sunk cost trap, and the tendency to advocate for escalation when the status quo is not working. Military leaders must recognize these biases tend to work against favoring use of force initially and then work toward continued use of force once committed. They must realize the trust necessary to give their opinions credibility is built over time and over many interactions.

Personal relationships, experience, and education all matter because they lend weight and credibility to dissenting opinions. These building

³⁹ A gentler view of this cultural focus on team is found in Stephen K. Scroggs, *Army Relations with Congress: Thick Armor, Dull Sword, Slow Horse* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2000), 153–36, 155, which is based on interviews with 26 Army senior general officers. The harsher view can be found in Laich and Young, "Million Dollar Muzzle." Similarly, an unpublished study found evidence that team play is valued by some Army generals more than candor in meetings. See Craig Bullis et al., "US Army General Officer Attributes" (unpublished, US Army War College, 2016).

⁴⁰ One of these examples came in 1977, when Major General John Singlaub, then Chief of Staff of US Forces in Korea, came out publicly against the decision to remove forces from Korea and was promptly fired by President Carter and shortly thereafter was retired.

blocks develop leaders' capacity to put their voice into context and in compelling, relevant, and understandable language. Service in inter-agency circles, especially in DC, is important and should be valued in the manner that all military services select and reward officers for these assignments. Creating this competency in senior military leaders needs to be a concerted focus of talent management systems. It will be an important cultural shift when the Services view a colonel serving on the National Security Council staff as important as a colonel commanding at Fort Hood or Camp Pendleton.

Senior military and civilian leaders must next recognize they establish a climate that either elicits or suppresses alternative views. The social science findings about conformity and rationalization are strong. In the absence of a conscious attempt to engender and value candor, group dynamics that seek conformity may dominate debates and suppress discussions of alternatives. All senior leaders must demonstrate intellectual humility and tolerance for alternative views, as well as cultivate the virtues of freethinking and respectful argumentation. Structural and procedural mechanisms that facilitate red teaming or expressing alternatives can help to overcome both psychological biases and group dynamics. Reasoned military voice cannot be viewed, especially by senior civilian leaders, as disloyalty, but should rather be accepted as true faithfulness to achieving policy success for the country.

Finally, senior military leaders must make the distinction between being political and being politically aware. Politics in this sense is partisan and focused on electoral or party issues. For a military leader to be political is completely counter to proper civil-military relations in the United States. In military parlance, being political is no-go terrain. Military leaders cannot trod these grounds and retain the ability to give reasoned military advice on key issues. Among the behaviors that can be considered political are lobbying the public or the Congress on the president's or a candidate's behalf, considering public opinion when providing military advice to civilian leaders, timing decisions or actions to influence US domestic politics, and taking public or partisan positions on issues or policies under debate or execution.

Being politically aware, however, means understanding the interconnected environment into which the advice is given and the action is taken. Such grand strategic awareness is essential to effective participation in the give-and-take dialogue that produces solvent security policies and good strategies. Achieving the long-term political goals of national security policy requires military officers who advise civilian decision-makers understand military force is sometimes necessary but rarely sufficient to achieve the ends of policy.⁴¹ To provide advice effectively, military leaders should understand and appreciate the impact of military action on the other elements of national power, on US relations with international partners, and on the American public's view of legitimacy; of strategic ends and competing interests on national policy motivations; and of the dynamic interplay of agency priorities and resources. Such awareness by military leaders of the ultimate policy ends and what other

41 Clausewitz makes the point that pure military advice is nonsensical at the strategic level. Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. Michael Eliot Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), 606–8. Cohen makes that point in *Supreme Command*, 10, as well as Dubik in *Just War Reconsidered*, 89.

agencies and partners are doing toward those ends will help prevent a “retreat to the tactical” that focuses heavily on warfighting and increases the probability of waging war successfully.

Finally, being politically aware, or strategically astute, does not and must not compromise a military leader’s apolitical nature. General Matthew B. Ridgway stiffly prescribed, “Under no circumstances, regardless of pressures from whatever source or motive, should the professional military man yield, or compromise his judgment for other than convincing military reasons. To do otherwise would destroy his usefulness.”⁴² Military leaders intuitively agree with Ridgway; however, to ensure tactical actions on the battlefield support, rather than confound, the larger strategic aims of the government, they must see military action as only part of a whole-of-government approach toward achieving lasting positive political outcomes and not an end itself. They must also be part of the dialogue that produces and adapts those policies and strategies.

Retired Army Lieutenant General James M. Dubik writes, “Moral agency is expected of the general just as it is for any other soldier or leader. . . . Senior civilian leaders rightly have the final decision authority as to political aims as well as military and nonmilitary strategies, policies, and campaigns necessary to achieve those aims. But those senior military leaders who are in dialogue about the efficacy of the final decisions are co-responsible for both the decision-making process and its outcomes.”⁴³ Addressing the limits on effective military advice to policy decision-making—to include appropriate approaches for the expression of dissenting voice—will improve dialogue and lead to better national security outcomes.

42 Matthew B. Ridgway, *Soldier: The Memoirs of Matthew B. Ridgway, as Told to Harold H. Martin* (New York: Harper, 1956), 272. Although the connotation is “change,” Ridgway actually uses the term “compromise.”

43 Dubik, “Taking a ‘Pro’ Position.”

The Crisis of American Military Primacy and the Search for Strategic Solvency

Hal Brands and Eric Edelman

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ABSTRACT: The authors discuss the erosion of US military primacy and the corresponding dangers for American grand strategy and international security. They analyze three options for restoring strategic solvency and recommend a significant expansion of US defense resources to bring capabilities back into alignment with US global commitments.

America is hurtling toward strategic insolvency.¹ For two decades after the Cold War, Washington enjoyed essentially uncontested military dominance and a historically favorable global environment—all at a comparatively low military and financial price. Now, however, America confronts military and geopolitical challenges more numerous and severe than at any time in at least a quarter century—precisely as disinvestment in defense has left US military resources far scarcer than before. The result is a creeping crisis of American military primacy, as Washington’s margin of superiority is diminished, and the gap between US commitments and capabilities grows. “Superpowers don’t bluff,” went a common Obama-era refrain—but today, America is being left with a strategy of bluff as its preeminence wanes and its military means come out of alignment with its geopolitical ends.

Foreign policy, Walter Lippmann wrote, entails “bringing into balance, with a comfortable surplus of power in reserve, the nation’s commitments and the nation’s power.” If a statesman fails to preserve strategic solvency, if he fails to “bring his ends and means into balance,” Lippmann added, “he will follow a course that leads to disaster.”² America’s current state of strategic insolvency is indeed fraught with peril. It will undermine US alliances by raising doubts about the credibility of American guarantees. It will weaken deterrence by tempting adversaries to think aggression may be successful or go unopposed. Should conflict actually erupt in key areas, the United States may be unable to uphold existing commitments or only be able to do so at prohibitive cost. Finally, as the shadows cast by US military power grow shorter, American diplomacy is likely to become less availing, and the global system less responsive, to US influence. The US military remains far superior to any single competitor, but its power is becoming dangerously insufficient for the grand strategy and international order it supports.

¹ This article is derived from a longer report: Hal Brands and Eric Edelman, *Avoiding a Strategy of Bluff: The Crisis of American Military Primacy and the Search for Strategic Solvency* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments [CSBA], forthcoming, 2017).

² Walter Lippmann, *U.S. Foreign Policy: Shield of the Republic* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1943), 9–10.

Great powers facing strategic insolvency have three basic options. First, they can decrease commitments thereby restoring equilibrium with diminished resources. Second, they can live with greater risk by gambling that their enemies will not test vulnerable commitments or by employing riskier approaches—such as nuclear escalation—to sustain commitments on the cheap. Third, they can expand capabilities, thereby restoring strategic solvency. Today, this approach would probably require a concerted, long-term defense buildup comparable to the efforts of Presidents Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan near the end of the Cold War.³

Much contemporary commentary favors the first option—reducing commitments—and denounces the third as financially ruinous and perhaps impossible.⁴ Yet significantly expanding American capabilities would not be nearly as economically onerous as it may seem. Compared to the alternatives, in fact, this approach represents the best option for sustaining American primacy and preventing a slide into strategic bankruptcy which will eventually be punished.

I

Since the Cold War, America has been committed to maintaining overwhelming military primacy. The idea, as George W. Bush declared, that America must possess “strengths beyond challenge” has been featured in every major US strategy document and reflected in concrete terms.⁵ Since the early 1990s, for example, the United States has accounted for 35–45 percent of world defense spending and maintained peerless global power-projection capabilities.⁶ Perhaps more important, US primacy was unrivaled in key strategic regions such as Europe, East Asia, and the Middle East. From thrashing Saddam Hussein’s million-man Iraqi military during Operation Desert Storm (1991) to deploying two carrier strike groups off Taiwan during the third Taiwan Strait crisis (1995–96) with impunity, Washington has been able to project military power superior to anything a regional rival could employ, even on its own geopolitical doorstep.

This military dominance has constituted the hard-power backbone of an ambitious global strategy. After the Cold War, US policymakers committed to averting a return to the unstable multipolarity of earlier eras and to perpetuating the more favorable unipolar order. They committed to fostering a global environment in which liberal values and an open international economy could flourish and in which international scourges such as rogue states, nuclear proliferation, and catastrophic terrorism would be suppressed. And because they saw

3 In practice, these options are not mutually exclusive—one could conceivably pursue a hybrid approach. But here, we treat these options as distinct to better flesh out their respective risks and merits.

4 Michael J. Mazarr, “The Risks of Ignoring Strategic Insolvency,” *Washington Quarterly* 35, no. 4 (Fall 2012): 7–22, doi:10.1080/0163660X.2012.725020.

5 George W. Bush, “Commencement Address at the United States Military Academy in West Point, New York,” June 1, 2002; and Eric S. Edelman, “The Strange Career of the 1992 Defense Planning Guidance,” in *In Uncertain Times: American Foreign Policy After the Berlin Wall and 9/11*, ed. Melvyn P. Leffler and Jeffrey W. Legro (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011), 63–77.

6 Military spending statistics are drawn from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) database, <https://www.sipri.org/databases/milex>.

military force as the *ultima ratio regum*, they understood the centrality of military preponderance.

Washington would need the military power to underwrite worldwide alliance commitments and preserve substantial overmatch versus any potential great-power rival. The United States must be able to answer the sharpest challenges to the international system, such as Saddam's invasion of Kuwait in 1990 or jihadist extremism today. Finally, because prevailing global norms reflect hard-power realities, America would need superiority to assure its own values remain ascendant. Saying US strategy and the international order required "strengths beyond challenge" was impolitic, but it was not inaccurate.⁷

American primacy, moreover, has been eminently affordable. At the height of the Cold War, the United States spent over 12 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) on defense; since the mid-1990s, the number has usually been 3–4 percent.⁸ In a historically favorable international environment, Washington has enjoyed primacy—and its geopolitical fruits—on the cheap.

Until recently, US strategy also heeded the limits of how cheaply primacy could be had. The American military shrank significantly during the 1990s, but US officials understood that if Washington cut back too far, US primacy would erode to a point where it ceased to deliver its geopolitical benefits. Alliances would lose credibility, stability of key regions would be eroded, rivals would be emboldened, and international crises would go unaddressed. American primacy was thus like a reasonably priced insurance policy, requiring nontrivial expenditures—and protecting against far costlier outcomes.⁹ Washington paid the premiums for two decades after the Cold War. But more recently American primacy and strategic solvency have been imperiled.

II

For most of the post-Cold War era, the international system was—by historical standards—remarkably benign. Dangers existed, and as the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 demonstrated, they could manifest with horrific effect. But for two decades after the Soviet collapse, the world was characterized by remarkably low levels of great-power competition, high levels of security in key theaters such as Europe and East Asia, and the comparative weakness of "rogue" actors—Iran, Iraq, North Korea, and al-Qaeda—who most aggressively challenged American power. Now, however, the strategic landscape is darkening due to four factors.

First, great-power military competition is back. The world's two leading authoritarian powers—China and Russia—are seeking regional

7 On post-Cold War grand strategy, see Hal Brands, "The Pretty Successful Superpower," *American Interest* 12, no. 3 (January/February 2017): 6–17; and Hal Brands, *Making the Unipolar Moment: US Foreign Policy and the Rise of the Post-Cold War Order* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2016).

8 John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of American National Security Policy during the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 393; and "Military Expenditure (percent of GDP)," World Bank, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/MS.MIL.XPND.GD.ZS?locations=US&page=3./databases/milex>.

9 William S. Cohen, *Report of the Quadrennial Defense Review, May 1997* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense [DoD], 1997).

hegemony, contesting global norms such as nonaggression and freedom of navigation, and developing the military punch to underwrite these ambitions. Notwithstanding severe economic and demographic problems, Russia has conducted major military modernization emphasizing nuclear weapons, high-end conventional capabilities, and rapid-deployment and special operations forces—and utilized many of these capabilities in Ukraine and Syria.¹⁰ China, meanwhile, has carried out a buildup of historic proportions, with constant-dollar defense outlays rising from \$26 billion in 1995 to \$215 billion in 2015.¹¹ Ominously, these expenditures have funded power-projection and anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) tools necessary to threaten China's neighbors and complicate US intervention on their behalf. Washington has grown accustomed to having a generational military lead; Russian and Chinese modernization efforts are now creating a far more competitive environment.

Second, international outlaws are no longer so weak. North Korea's conventional forces have atrophied, but Pyongyang has amassed a growing nuclear arsenal and is developing intercontinental delivery capability.¹² Iran remains a nuclear threshold state, which continues to develop ballistic missiles and A2/AD capabilities while employing sectarian and proxy forces across the Middle East. The Islamic State is headed for defeat, but has displayed military capabilities unprecedented for any terrorist group and shown that counterterrorism will continue to place significant operational demands on US forces. Rogue actors have long preoccupied American planners, but the rogues are now more capable than at any time in decades.

Third, the democratization of technology has allowed more actors to contest American superiority in dangerous ways. The spread of antisatellite and cyberwarfare capabilities, the proliferation of man-portable air defense systems and ballistic missiles, and the increasing availability of key elements of the precision-strike complex have had a military-leveling effect by giving weaker actors capabilities formerly unique to technologically advanced states. Indeed, as these capabilities spread, fourth-generation systems, such as F-15s and F-16s, may provide decreasing utility against even nongreat-power competitors, and far more fifth-generation capabilities may be needed to perpetuate American overmatch.

Finally, the number of challenges has multiplied. During the 1990s and early 2000s, Washington faced rogue states and jihadist extremism but not intense great-power rivalry. America faced conflicts in the Middle East, but East Asia and Europe were comparatively secure. Now, old threats still exist, but the more permissive conditions have vanished. The United States confronts rogue states, lethal jihadist organizations, and great-power competition; there are severe challenges in all three Eurasian theaters. The United States thus faces not just more

10 International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), *The Military Balance 2015* (London: IISS, 2015), 159–67; and Catrin Einhorn, Hannah Fairfield, and Tim Wallace, “Russia Rearms for a New Era,” *New York Times*, December 24, 2015.

11 SIPRI database.

12 Barbara Staff and Ryan Browne, “Intel Officials: North Korea ‘Probably’ Has Miniaturized Nuke,” CNN News, March 25, 2016; and David Albright, *Future Directions in the DPRK's Nuclear Weapons Program: Three Scenarios for 2020*, North Korea's Nuclear Futures Series (Washington, DC: US-Korea Institute at SAIS, 2015).

significant but also more numerous challenges to its military dominance than it has for at least a quarter century.

III

One might expect the leader of a historically favorable international system to respond to such developments by increasing its relatively modest investments in maintaining the system. In recent years, however, Washington has markedly disinvested in defense. Constant-dollar defense spending fell by nearly one-fourth, from \$768 billion in 2010 to \$595 billion in 2015.¹³ Defense spending as a share of GDP fell from 4.7 percent to 3.3 percent, with Congressional Budget Office projections showing military outlays falling to 2.6 percent by 2024—the lowest level since before World War II.¹⁴

Defense spending always declines after major wars, of course. Yet from 2010 onward, this pressure was compounded by the legacy of Bush-era budget deficits, the impact of the Great Recession (2007–9), and President Obama’s decision to transfer resources from national security to domestic priorities. These forces, in turn, were exacerbated by the terms of the Budget Control Act of 2011 and the sequester mechanism. Defense absorbed roughly 50 percent of these spending cuts, despite accounting for less than 20 percent of federal spending. By walling off most personnel costs and severely limiting flexibility in how cuts could be made, moreover, the sequester caused the Department of Defense to make reductions in blunt, nonstrategic fashion.¹⁵

This budgetary buzz saw has taken a toll. Readiness has suffered alarmingly with all services struggling to conduct current counterterrorism operations while also preparing for the ever-growing danger of great-power war. “The services are very good at counterinsurgency,” the House Armed Services Committee noted in 2016, “but they are not prepared to endure a long fight against higher order threats from near-peer competitors.”¹⁶ Modernization has also been compromised; the ability to develop and field promising future capabilities has been sharply constrained by budget caps and uncertainty. This problem will only get worse—in the 2020s, a “bow wave” of deferred investments in the nuclear triad and high-end conventional capabilities will come due.¹⁷

Finally, force structure has been sacrificed. The Army has fared worst—it is slated to decline to 450,000 personnel by 2018, or 30,000 personnel fewer than prior to 9/11.¹⁸ But all the services are at or near post-World War II lows in end strength, and the US military is significantly smaller than the 1990s-era “base force,” which was designed as

13 SIPRI database.

14 “Military Expenditure,” World Bank; and Loren Thompson, “Pentagon Budget Headed Below 3% of GDP as Warfighting Edge Wanes,” *Forbes*, February 2, 2015.

15 Robert Zarate, “FPI Analysis: Obama’s FY2014 Defense Budget & The Sequestration Standoff,” *Foreign Policy Initiative*, April 11, 2013; and Todd Harrison, *Analysis of the FY 2013 Defense Budget and Sequestration* (Washington, DC: CSBA, 2012).

16 Quoted in Dave Majumdar, “The Pentagon’s Readiness Crisis: Why the 2017 Defense Bill Will Make Things Worse,” *Buzz* (blog), *National Interest*, July 13, 2016.

17 Todd Harrison and Evan Braden Montgomery, *The Cost of U.S. Nuclear Forces: From B.C.A. to Bow Wave and Beyond* (Washington, DC: CSBA, 2015).

18 Jim Tice, “Army Shrinks to Smallest Level Since Before World War II,” *Army Times*, May 7, 2016; and Tony Capaccio and Gopal Ratnam, “Hagel Seeks Smallest U.S. Army Since before 2001 Attack,” *Bloomberg*, February 24, 2014.

the “minimum force . . . below which the nation should not go if it was to remain a globally engaged superpower.”¹⁹ “Strategy wears a dollar sign,” Bernard Brodie wrote, and Washington is paying for less capability relative to the threats it faces than at any time in decades.²⁰

IV

Cumulatively, these developments have resulted in a creeping crisis of US military primacy. Washington still possesses vastly more military power than any challenger, particularly in global power-projection capabilities. Yet even this global primacy is declining. The United States faces a Russia with significant extraregional power-projection capabilities as well as near-peer capabilities in areas such as strategic nuclear forces and cyberwarfare. China’s military budget is now more than one-third of the US budget, and Beijing is developing its own advanced power-projection capabilities.²¹ Perhaps more importantly, US global primacy is also increasingly irrelevant, because today’s crucial geopolitical competitions are regional contests, and here the trends have been decidedly adverse.

In East Asia, China’s two-decade military buildup has allowed Beijing to contest seriously US power projection within the first island chain. “The balance of power between the United States and China may be approaching a series of tipping points,” RAND Corporation analysts observe.²² The situation in Eastern Europe is worse. Here, unfavorable geography and aggressive Russian modernization have created significant Russian overmatch in the Baltic; US and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) forces are “outnumbered and outgunned” along NATO’s eastern flank.²³ In the Middle East, the balance remains more favorable, but Iranian A2/AD and ballistic missile capabilities could significantly complicate US operations, while the reemergence of Russian military power has narrowed US freedom of action. In key areas across Eurasia, the US military edge has eroded.

This erosion, in turn, has profound implications for American strategy. For one thing, US forces will face far harder fights should conflict occur. War against Iran or North Korea would be daunting enough, given their asymmetrical capabilities. Even Iran, for instance, could use its ballistic missile capabilities to attack US bases and allies, employ swarming tactics and precision-guided munitions against US naval forces in the Persian Gulf, and activate Shi’ite militias and proxy forces, all as a way of inflicting higher costs on the United States.²⁴

Conflict against Russia or China would be something else entirely. Fighting a near-peer competitor armed with high-end conventional weapons and precision-strike capabilities would subject the US military to an environment of enormous lethality, “the likes of which,” Army Chief of Staff General Mark A. Milley has commented, it “has not

19 Mark Gunzinger, *Shaping America’s Future Military: Toward a New Force Planning Construct* (Washington, DC: CSBA, 2013), 2–3.

20 Bernard Brodie, *Strategy in the Missile Age* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 1959), 358.

21 On Chinese spending, see SIPRI database.

22 Eric Heginbotham et al., *The U.S.-China Military Scorecard: Forces, Geography, and the Evolving Balance of Power, 1996–2017* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2015), 342.

23 *Ibid.*

24 Mark Gunzinger, *Outside-In: Operating from Range to Defeat Iran’s Anti-Access and Area-Denial Threats* with Chris Dougherty (Washington, DC: CSBA, 2011), 21–52.

experienced . . . since World War II.”²⁵ American forces might still win—albeit on a longer time line and at a painfully high cost in lives—but they might not.

According to open-source analysis, US and forces would have little chance of halting a determined Russian assault on the Baltic states. Facing severe disadvantages in tanks, ground-based fires, and airpower and air defenses, those forces would likely be destroyed in place. NATO would then face an agonizing dilemma—whether to mobilize its resources for a protracted war that would risk nuclear escalation, or acquiesce to an alliance-destroying fait accompli.²⁶

Similarly, whereas the United States would have dominated any plausible conflict with China in the 1990s, according to recent assessments the most likely conflicts would be nearer run things today. Consider a conflict over Taiwan. Beijing might not be able to defeat Washington in a long war, but it could establish air and maritime superiority early in a conflict and thereby impose unacceptable losses on US air and naval forces. The crucial tipping point in a Taiwan contingency could come as early as 2020 or even 2017; in the Spratly Islands, it could come within another decade.²⁷ As US superiority erodes, America runs a higher risk of being unable to meet its obligations.

In fact, Washington’s ability to execute its standing global defense strategy is increasingly doubtful. After the Cold War, the United States adopted a two major regional contingency standard geared toward preventing an adversary in one region from undertaking opportunistic aggression to exploit US preoccupation in another. By 2012, budget cuts had already forced the Obama administration to shift to a 1.5 or 1.7 war standard premised on decisively defeating one opponent while “imposing unacceptable costs” on another.²⁸ Yet the US capacity to execute even this less ambitious strategy is under strain, just as the international environment raises questions about whether the strategy is ambitious enough.

This doubt has arisen because the Obama administration’s 2012 defense strategy was announced prior to sequestration, and prior to Russian aggression in Ukraine in 2014—which raised the disturbing possibility that one of America’s wars might be against a nuclear-armed, great-power competitor. And beyond these issues, events in Europe and the Middle East since 2012 have raised doubts about whether a 1.7 war standard is sufficient given the possibility the Pentagon might confront conflicts in three strategic theaters—against Russia in Europe, Iran or an Islamic State-like actor in the Middle East, and China or North Korea in East Asia—on overlapping time frames. In sum, the United States is rapidly reaching, if it has not already reached, the point of strategic insolvency. And even beyond the aforementioned risks, this situation poses fundamental strategic challenges.

25 Sydney J. Freedberg Jr., “Army \$40B Short on Modernization Vs. Russia, China: CSA Milley,” *Breaking Defense*, October 3, 2016.

26 David A. Shlapak and Michael W. Johnson, *Reinforcing Deterrence on NATO’s Eastern Flank* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2016).

27 Heginbotham et al., *U.S.-China Military Scorecard*, xxx, 338, 342.

28 DoD, *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense* (Washington, DC: DoD, 2012), 4.

The cohesion of US alliances will likely suffer, as American allies lose confidence in Washington's ability to protect them. Adversaries, in turn, will become more likely to test US commitments, to gauge Washington's willingness to make good on increasingly tenuous promises, and to exploit its declining ability to respond decisively. Russian intimidation of the Baltic states, Iranian expansionism in the Middle East, and increasingly aggressive Chinese coercion of the Philippines and Japan illustrate these dynamics in action.

Finally, as US military power becomes less imposing, the United States will find its global influence less impressive. Norms, ideas, and international arrangements supported by Washington will lose strength and increasingly be challenged by actors empowered to imprint their own influence on global affairs. American grand strategy and the post-Cold War system have rested on American military overmatch; as that overmatch fades, US grand strategy and the order it supports will come under tremendous strain.

V

So how should America respond? One option is reducing commitments. If the United States cannot sustain its existing global strategy, then it could pare back global obligations until they are more commensurate with available capabilities.

The United States might, for instance, embrace a twenty-first century Nixon Doctrine, by stating that it will protect Middle Eastern partners from conventional, state-based aggression, but that they must defend themselves against nontraditional threats such as the Islamic State.²⁹ Or, America could simply delegate Persian Gulf security to its Arab allies in the region. Most dramatically, if the United States were really serious about slashing commitments, it could dispense with the obligations most difficult to uphold—to Taiwan and the Baltic states, for instance. In short, America would reduce commitments proactively, rather than having their hollowness exposed by war.

There are historical precedents for this approach. The Nixon Doctrine and US withdrawal from Vietnam helped Washington retreat to a more defensible strategic perimeter in the 1970s following strategic overstretch in the decade prior. More significantly, beginning in the late-nineteenth century, the United Kingdom gradually conducted an elegant global retreat by first relying upon rising regional powers such as the United States and Japan to maintain acceptable regional orders, and later encouraging Washington to shoulder many of London's global burdens after World War II. Graceful retrenchment, then, is not an impossibility.³⁰

It is, however, extremely problematic today. This approach—particularly the more aggressive variants—would be enormously difficult to implement. The US commitment to the Baltic states is part of a larger commitment to NATO; shredding the former guarantee

29 Under the Nixon Doctrine, Washington would keep existing treaty commitments in Asia and defend allies against aggression by a nuclear power, but it would provide only military and economic assistance to allies and partners facing other threats, namely insurgencies.

30 See, generally, Paul K. MacDonald and Joseph M. Parent, "Graceful Decline? The Surprising Success of Great Power Retrenchment," *International Security* 35, no. 4 (Spring 2011): 7–44.

risks undermining the broader alliance. Even in Asia, where the United States has bilateral alliances, withdrawing the US commitment to Taipei could cause leaders in Manila, Seoul, or Tokyo to wonder if they might be abandoned next—and to hedge their strategic bets accordingly. Alliances hinge on the credibility of the patron's promises; revoking some guarantees without discrediting others is difficult.³¹

This dynamic underscores another liability—the likelihood of profound geopolitical instability. Retrenchment works best when the overstretched hegemon can hand off excessive responsibilities to some friendly power. But today, there is no liberal superpower waiting in the wings. Rather, the countries most sympathetic to America's view of the international order—Japan, the United Kingdom, and key European allies—confront graver long-term economic and demographic challenges than the United States. The countries most likely to gain influence following US retrenchment—Russia and China—have very different global visions.

In these circumstances, US retrenchment seems unlikely to succeed. Rather than simply forcing friendly local actors to do more to defend themselves and check revisionist powers, the outcome might easily be underbalancing—in which collective action problems, internal political divisions, or resource limitations prevent timely action against a potential aggressor—or bandwagoning, in which exposed countries buy a measure of safety by aligning with, rather than against, an aggressive power.³² Meanwhile, although writing off Taiwan or Estonia might produce a near-term improvement of relations with Beijing or Moscow, the longer-term effect would be to remove a chief constraint on the aggressive behavior these powers have been increasingly manifesting. If Moscow and Beijing seem eager to bring their “near abroads” to heel now, just wait until the United States retracts its security perimeter.³³

If more aggressive variants of retrenchment are thus deeply flawed, even more limited versions, such as a Middle Eastern Nixon Doctrine, have weaknesses. As Iran's military power continues to grow, and the recent removal of nuclear-related sanctions makes this seem likely, even the wealthy Persian Gulf kingdoms will have great difficulty dealing with Tehran's advanced and asymmetric capabilities without US assistance. In fact, without US leadership, the long-standing collection action problems between the Gulf countries are likely to worsen. Moreover, the United States essentially tried a version of this approach by withdrawing from Iraq in late 2011. But as soon became clear, Iraq, a vital state in a key region, could not withstand challenges from nontraditional foes such as the Islamic State on its own. In fact, US retrenchment actually encouraged developments that left Iraq more vulnerable to collapse, such as the increasingly sectarian nature of Nūrī al-Mālikī's governance

31 On credibility and reputation, see Alex Weisiger and Keren Yarhi-Milo, “Revisiting Reputation: How Past Actions Matter in International Politics,” *International Organization* 69, no. 2 (Spring 2015): 473–95, doi:10.1017/S0020818314000393.

32 On these phenomena, see Randall L. Schweller, *Unanswered Threats: Political Constraints on the Balance of Power* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008); and Randall L. Schweller, “Bandwagoning for Profit: Bringing the Revisionist State Back In,” *International Security* 19, no. 1 (Summer 1994): 72–107, doi:10.2307/2539149.

33 Hal Brands, *The Limits of Offshore Balancing* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2015), 49–52.

and the hollowing out of the Iraqi Security Forces.³⁴ Retrenchment, then, may narrow the gap between capabilities and commitments in the short run, but only by inviting greater global dangers and instability.

VI

If the United States is unwilling to spend significantly more on defense, but does not wish to invite the geopolitical instability associated with retrenchment, a second option is to live with greater risk. Living with greater risk could take two different, but not mutually exclusive, forms. First, the United States could accept higher risk with respect to its global commitments by wagering that even exposed commitments are unlikely to be tested because US adversaries are risk averse and are unwilling to start a war, even a potentially successful one, that might cause American intervention. In other words, the United States might not be able to defend Taiwan effectively, but the mere prospect of an invasion provoking a Sino-American war would stay Beijing's hand.

Second, the United States could bridge the capabilities-commitments gap through riskier strategies substituting escalation for additional resources. Most likely, this would entail relying more heavily on nuclear warfighting and the threat of nuclear retaliation to defend vulnerable allies in East Asia or Eastern Europe. Because US allies are already covered by the US extended nuclear deterrent, this approach would involve making more explicit nuclear threats and guarantees and integrating greater reliance on nuclear weapons into US plans. Similarly, this approach could entail the use, or the threat of use, of powerful nonnuclear capabilities such as strategic cyberattacks against critical enemy infrastructure for the same purpose—bolstering deterrence on the cheap by raising the costs an aggressor would expect to pay.³⁵

Lest these approaches sound ridiculous, both have a distinguished pedigree. In the late 1940s, the United States could not credibly defend Western Europe from a Soviet invasion. But the Truman administration still undertook the security guarantees associated with NATO on the calculated gamble that Moscow was unlikely to risk global war by attacking US allies, particularly during the period of the US nuclear monopoly.³⁶ And in the 1950s, to control costs and address the continuing deficiency of US and allied conventional forces, the Eisenhower administration relied heavily on nuclear threats to deter aggression.³⁷ Throughout much of the Cold War, in fact, the United States compensated for conventional inferiority—particularly in Central Europe—by integrating early recourse to nuclear weapons into its war plans. Accepting greater risk would mean updating Cold War-era approaches for today's purposes.

34 Rick Brennan, “Withdrawal Symptoms: The Bungling of the Iraq Exit,” *Foreign Affairs* 93, no. 6 (November/December 2014): 25–34; and Dexter Filkins, “What We Left Behind,” *New Yorker*, April 28, 2014.

35 To clarify, this would entail more than simply using cyber as part of a US conventional defense of Taiwan or the Baltic. Rather, it would entail using strategic cyberattacks against strategic targets—economic, military, or infrastructure—not directly associated with the aggression.

36 Marc Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace: The Making of the European Settlement, 1945–1963* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 87–90.

37 H. W. Brands, “The Age of Vulnerability: Eisenhower and the National Insecurity State,” *American Historical Review* 94, no. 4 (October 1989): 963–89, doi:10.2307/1906591.

Yet substituting risk for cost entails serious liabilities. Simply hoping exposed commitments will not be challenged might work—for a while. But this strategy carries enormous risk of those guarantees eventually being tested and found wanting, with devastating effects on America's reputation and credibility. Meanwhile, a strategy of bluff could weaken deterrence and reassurance on the installment plan as allies and adversaries perceive a shifting balance of power and understand US guarantees are increasingly chimerical.

The second variant of this approach, embracing more escalatory approaches, lacks credibility. Consider threatening to employ strategic cyberattacks against an aggressor in a conflict over Taiwan or the Baltic states. Such threats are problematic, because as President Obama acknowledged in 2016, "open societies" such as the United States are "more vulnerable" to massive cyberattacks than authoritarian rivals such as Russia or China.³⁸ America may simply lack the escalation dominance needed to make a strategy of cyber-retaliation believable.

So too in the nuclear realm. Threats to punish Communist aggression with nuclear retaliation might have been credible in the 1950s, when China lacked nuclear weapons: Washington had a massive nuclear advantage over Moscow, and neither adversary could reliably target the US homeland. But today, both rivals possess secure second-strike capabilities and could inflict horrific damage on America should nuclear escalation occur. This approach thus risks leading the United States into a trap where, if its interests are challenged, it faces a choice between pursuing escalatory options carrying potentially unacceptable costs and acquiescing to aggression. Awareness of this dynamic may, in turn, make adversaries more likely to probe and push. Trading cost for risk may seem attractive in theory, but in practice the risks may prove far more dangerous than they initially seem.

VII

This leaves a final option—significantly increasing resources devoted to defense, thereby bringing capabilities back into alignment with commitments and strengthening the hard-power backbone of US strategy. Given current trends, this strategy would likely entail a sustained, multiyear buildup of magnitude roughly similar to the Carter-Reagan buildup, when real defense spending increased by around 50 percent. This buildup would require permanently lifting the Budget Control Act caps to provide increased resources and budgetary stability. It would require not just procuring larger quantities of existing capabilities but also investing aggressively in future capabilities geared toward defeating great-power challengers as well as middle-tier problem countries such as Iran and North Korea. And crucially, greater resources would have to be coupled with developing innovative operational concepts, streamlining Defense procedures and acquisition processes, and maximizing the Pentagon's other efforts toward effectiveness and efficiency.

Recent proposals demonstrate the likely parameters of this approach. If the goal was to restore an authentic two major regional

³⁸ Ron Synovitz, "Europe Bracing against Risk of Russian 'Influence Operations,'" Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, January 16, 2017.

contingency capability, the United States might follow the recommendations issued in 2014 by the National Defense Panel, which call for a force consisting, at minimum, of 490,000 active duty Army personnel and 182,000 marines, a Navy of between 323 and 346 ships (versus 274 today), and an Air Force of unspecified size but substantially larger than the end-strength envisioned in late Obama-era budgets.³⁹ If, more ambitiously, the United States sought a two-plus or even a three-war standard, a more significant buildup would be required.

One recent estimate issued by Senator John McCain calls for a three-theater force—a Navy of over 330 ships and nearly 900 frontline naval strike fighters, an Air Force of 60 combat squadrons and 1,500 combat aircraft, an Army of at least 490,000–500,000 active duty soldiers, and a Marine Corps of at least 200,000 active duty marines. Because McCain’s budget reaches out only 5 years, these numbers would presumably grow further over time.⁴⁰ Another three-theater proposal by the American Enterprise Institute advocates a 10-year expansion to 600,000 active duty Army soldiers, over 200,000 active duty marines, a Navy of 346 ships, and an Air Force of unspecified but significantly increased end-strength. The number of F-22s, for instance, would rise from 185 to 450.⁴¹

These proposals would require significant new investments. The McCain budget calls for \$430 billion in new money over 5 years, culminating in a Fiscal Year 2022 budget of roughly \$800 billion.⁴² The American Enterprise Institute proposal, issued in late 2015, calls for \$1.3 trillion in new money over 10 years.⁴³ All of these force constructs reflect a high-low mix designed to enable effective operations ranging from counterterrorism, to major conventional war against Iran or North Korea, to high-end combat against a great-power adversary. All the proposals include robust recapitalization of the US nuclear triad. And although these proposals differ on specifics, all are meant to enable a range of investments necessary to maintaining US primacy in a more competitive environment.

If the United States were to undertake a buildup of this magnitude, it could, for instance, invest in a more survivable, multibrigade presence in Eastern Europe. America could significantly increase investments in capabilities—from additional *Zumwalt*-class destroyers and nuclear attack submarines, to stealthy fighters and penetrating long-range bombers, to vastly enhanced stocks of precision-guided and standoff munitions, to improved air and missile defenses necessary to retain air and sea control in high-end conflicts as well as to maintain the upper

39 National Defense Panel, *Ensuring a Strong U.S. Defense for the Future: The National Defense Panel Review of the 2014 Quadrennial Defense Review* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2014).

40 Senator John McCain, *Restoring American Power: Recommendations for the FY 2018–FY 2022 Defense Budget* (Washington, DC: Senate Armed Services Committee, 2017), 9–14.

41 Marilyn Ware Center for Security Studies, *To Rebuild America’s Military* (Washington, DC: American Enterprise Institute, 2015), 25.

42 McCain, *Restoring American Power*, 20.

43 Thomas Donnelly, “Great Powers Don’t Pivot,” in *How Much is Enough? Alternative Defense Strategies*, ed. Jacob Cohn, Ryan Boone, and Thomas Mahnken (Washington, DC: CSBA, 2016), 7; also Ware Center, *To Rebuild America’s Military*, 70.

hand in fights with Iran and North Korea.⁴⁴ This approach would ease the tradeoffs between critical capabilities for today's fight, such as the A-10, and those critical for tomorrow's fight, such as the F-35. Crucially, this approach would also allow aggressive development and production of future technologies in areas from hypersonics to directed energy, which currently receive seed funding but cannot be adequately fielded without additional resources.⁴⁵ Finally, this approach, particularly the more aggressive, three-theater option, would permit the increased force structure necessary to cover a larger number of contingencies and reduce stress on the current force.

So how viable is this option? Critics offer four primary objections. The first critique deems this approach unnecessary, because the Pentagon can maintain US primacy at existing budget levels either by pursuing technological innovation and strategic offsets or by undertaking business and acquisition reforms. The second critique asserts a sustained, multiyear buildup will overtax the US economy, given persistent budget deficits and a debt-to-GDP ratio of 76 percent.⁴⁶ The third critique views this approach as self-defeating because it will spur arms races with American adversaries. The fourth critique holds this approach will incentivize continued free-riding by US allies and partners by forcing Washington to continue subsidizing their defense. All of these arguments have some logic, but none is persuasive.

The first argument—about innovation, offsets, and defense reform—is alluring but unsatisfying. To be sure, repurposing existing capabilities, developing high-end future capabilities to create significant dilemmas for competitors from Iran to China, and designing innovative operational concepts—essentially, what former Secretaries of Defense Hagel and Ashton Carter termed the Third Offset Strategy—are absolutely vital to restoring strategic solvency. Yet offsets and innovation cannot by themselves compensate for the lack of resources Washington faces in covering the range of plausible contingencies.

Moreover, any meaningful offset strategy is dependent on significantly greater resources. As senior Pentagon officials have acknowledged, right now the United States simply cannot field even promising technologies in numbers sufficient to have strategic impact. “We’ll do the demo, we’ll be very happy with the results, [but] we won’t have the money to go on,” Undersecretary of Defense Frank Kendall warned in 2016.⁴⁷ Offsets and innovation are necessary for sustaining American primacy, but they are hardly sufficient. Similarly, although virtually all experts consider defense reform essential, no one has identified a feasible reform program sufficient to close the capabilities-commitments gap.

The economic argument is also deceptive. Although a multiyear buildup would be very expensive, it would hardly be unmanageable. Even

44 On the importance of these various capabilities, see Evan Braden Montgomery, “Contested Primacy in the Western Pacific: China’s Rise and the Future of U.S. Power Projection,” *International Security* 38, no. 4 (Spring 2014): 140–43, doi:10.1162/ISEC_a_00160; Timothy A. Walton, “Securing the Third Offset Strategy: Priorities for the Next Secretary of Defense,” *Joint Force Quarterly* 82 (3rd Quarter 2016): 6–15; and Gunzinger, *Outside-In*.

45 Sydney J. Freedberg Jr., “Pentagon Can’t Afford to Field 3rd Offset Tech under BCA: Frank Kendall,” *Breaking Defense*, October 31, 2016.

46 On debt-to-GDP ratio, see Congressional Budget Office (CBO), *The Budget and Economic Outlook: 2016 to 2026* (Washington, DC: CBO, 2016), 3.

47 Freedberg, “Pentagon.”

the most aggressive proposed buildups would push defense spending only to 4 percent of GDP. The United States has previously supported far higher relative defense burdens without compromising economic performance.⁴⁸ One cannot draw a perfect parallel with earlier eras, of course, because during the 1950s America enjoyed higher growth and lower levels of deficits and debt. But these factors do not make a major buildup economically impossible.

For one thing, defense spending increases can actually stimulate growth. As Martin Feldstein, a former chair of the Council of Economic Advisers, has noted, “Military procurement has the . . . advantage that almost all of the equipment and supplies that the military buys is made in the United States, creating demand and jobs here at home.”⁴⁹ Moreover, defense spending simply does not drive federal spending or deficits to the extent often imagined. In fiscal year 2016, defense consumed 16 percent of federal spending; domestic entitlements consumed 49 percent.⁵⁰ As a result, the growth of federal debt is influenced far more by unconstrained entitlement spending and insufficient tax revenues than by defense outlays. Put differently, if Washington can make politically difficult decisions regarding tax increases and curbing entitlement growth, it can spend significantly more on defense while also getting its fiscal house in order. If, conversely, the United States is unwilling to confront such politically difficult decisions, then the deficit will explode, the debt-to-GDP ratio will skyrocket, and Social Security and Medicare/Medicaid will go bankrupt regardless of how much or how little the country spends on defense.

The third objection, regarding intensified competition with US rivals, is also problematic. It is hard to see how increased US defense spending could trigger an arms race with Russia or China, or Iran or North Korea, because these countries are already developing significant military capabilities aimed at the United States. China, for instance, has averaged double-digit annual defense spending increases for two decades. Strenuous military competition is already underway; US adversaries are just the ones competing most seriously. Moreover, although increased US defense efforts, particularly if paired with additional forward presence in Eastern Europe or East Asia, might cause increased near-term tensions with Moscow or Beijing, over the longer-term, failure to counter Russian and Chinese buildups and limit their opportunities for successful coercion might well prove more destabilizing.

To be sure, Russia and China, or even Iran and North Korea, are not powerless to respond to US capability enhancement, and there may come a time when Washington simply cannot preserve the desired level of overmatch at an acceptable cost. Yet in light of the significant internal challenges—political, economic, demographic, or all of the above—facing each of America’s adversaries, the passing of US primacy is hardly

48 Ware Center, *To Rebuild America’s Military*, 2.

49 Martin Feldstein, “Defense Spending Would Be Great Stimulus,” *Wall Street Journal*, December 24, 2008.

50 “Policy Basics: Where Do Our Federal Tax Dollars Go?,” Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, March 4, 2016, <http://www.cbpp.org/research/federal-budget/policy-basics-where-do-our-federal-tax-dollars-go>.

inevitable.⁵¹ Given how advantageous US primacy has proven over the decades, America's goal should be to push that point of unsustainability as far into the future as possible.

The fourth and final objection, regarding allied free riding and the need for a collective approach, can also be answered. US strategy has always been a concert strategy, and so this approach certainly requires enhanced allied efforts. Countries from Japan and Taiwan to Poland and the Baltic states will have to spend more on defense if their situation is not to become untenable. They will, in many cases, also have to adopt more cost-effective and realistic defense strategies.⁵² But because the United States cannot simply make this decision for its allies, the question is which US approach will best encourage constructive changes. And although advocates of retrenchment often argue allies will only do more if the United States does less, the United States has been most successful at securing increased allied contributions when it, too, has been willing to do more.

In previous instances when NATO allies collectively increased military spending—during the early 1950s or under the long-term defense program of the Carter-Reagan years—they did so as part of a broader program in which Washington also significantly increased its contributions to European security.⁵³ Likewise, the United States elicited the best performance from the Iraqi military and government when the American commitment to Baghdad was greatest, during the surge of 2007–8. The performance declined rather than improved as the US commitment was subsequently reduced.⁵⁴ In sum, the United States may actually get the most out of its allies and partners when those countries are reassured of the American commitment and thus prepared to take risks of their own.

As the principal objections to increasing defense resources fall away, the advantages and logic become clearer. This approach recognizes, for instance, how beneficial US military primacy has been in shaping a relatively stable, prosperous, and congenial international order, and it makes the investments necessary to sustain as much of this order as possible. This approach provides the United States with greater ability to meet aggression from a range of enemies and rivals without resorting to dangerously escalatory strategies in the most operationally demanding scenarios. As a result, this approach is arguably best suited to avoid the use of force over the long term, by averting situations in which American adversaries from Iran and North Korea to Russia and China think aggression might pay. “Peace through strength” is not a meaningless catchphrase; it is good strategy. Closing the capabilities-commitments

51 See, for instance, Robert D. Kaplan, “Eurasia’s Coming Anarchy: The Risks of Chinese and Russian Weakness,” *Foreign Affairs* 95, no. 2 (March/April 2016).

52 See Jim Thomas, John Stillion, and Iskander Rehman, *Hard ROC 2.0: Taiwan and Deterrence through Protraction* (Washington, DC: CSBA, 2014); and Hal Brands, *Dealing with Allies in Decline: Alliance Management and U.S. Strategy in an Era of Global Power Shifts* (Washington, DC: CSBA, 2017).

53 See Richard L. Kugler, *Laying the Foundations: The Evolution of NATO in the 1950s* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 1990).

54 Stephen Biddle, Michael E. O’Hanlon, and Kenneth M. Pollack, “How to Leave a Stable Iraq,” *Foreign Affairs* 87, no. 5 (September/October 2008): 40–58; also Peter R. Mansoor, *Surge: My Journey with General David Petraeus and the Remaking of the Iraq War* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013).

gap by dramatically increasing the former therefore represents the best available approach.

VIII

“Without superior aggregate military strength, in being and readily mobilizable, a policy of ‘containment’ . . . is no more than a policy of bluff.”⁵⁵ This admonition, written by the authors of NSC-68 in 1950, reflected a dawning realization that insufficient military power endangered America’s global commitments. The United States faces another crisis of strategic solvency today as gathering international threats combine with dwindling military resources to leave the American superpower in an increasingly overextended and perilous state.

America thus confronts a stark choice about how to proceed. *Of the options considered here, the best approach is to find the resources necessary to bring American forces back into line with the grand strategy they are meant to support.* Undertaking a sustained, major military buildup will not be cheap, but is not unaffordable for a wealthy superpower that has benefitted so much from military primacy and its geopolitical benefits. Indeed, the fundamental question regarding whether America can undertake this course is not an economic one. It is whether the country will politically prioritize the investments needed to sustain its primacy or allow itself to slip further into strategic insolvency with all the associated dangers for the United States and global order.

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⁵⁵ National Security Council, “NSC-68, United States Objectives and Programs for National Security,” April 14, 1950, <http://fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsc-hst/nsc-68.htm>.

ARE OUR STRATEGIC MODELS FLAWED?

Faith in War: The American Roots of Global Conflict

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ABSTRACT: War has become a form of secular religion for many Americans in the modern era. Much of our deployment of military power during the last 50 years has rested on a set of absolute beliefs about the overall utility of war. In the process, policymakers and citizens alike maintain an enduring faith that the United States, via its military forces, has the power to transform societies abroad.

Religious fundamentalism. For at least the last decade and a half, countless Americans have relied on this one phrase to help them interpret violence across the globe and most certainly in the Middle East. More often than not, the words “religious” and “Islamic” become easily conflated, convenient aphorisms explaining what drives contemporary conflict. Many Westerners tend to view Islamic fundamentalism as a medieval, if not primitive, outlook; its adherents as not simply lagging in social and cultural development but turning their backs on the modern world. In the process, the lines between identity groups blur. Whether Taliban, al-Qaeda, Hezbollah, or the Islamic State, religious zealots—militants who have forsaken not only modernity but also Western values and the civilized world—are “savages” who kill apostates, Muslim and Christian alike, to purify the world.¹

If subversive Islamic fundamentalists selectively interpret the sacred text of the Qur’an to justify violence, is it possible Americans are equally discriminatory when defending their own, seemingly moral, obligations for waging war?² In truth, much of America’s deployment of military power during the last 50 years, even back to the early twentieth century, rested on a set of absolute beliefs, convictions amounting to a sort of secular fundamentalism. Policymakers and citizens alike possess an enduring faith that the United States, via its military forces, has the power to transform societies abroad.

While less religious in its call to arms than militant Islamic extremism, the devotion to reforming the world order in the American image still has strong theological underpinnings. Senator Albert J. Beveridge illustratively exclaimed God had “marked the American people as His chosen nation to finally lead in the regeneration of

1 Manfred Gerstenfeld, “Islamic Fundamentalism, the Permanent Threat,” *Jerusalem Post*, July 20, 2014; and Graeme Wood, “What ISIS Really Wants,” *Atlantic*, March 2015. Of note, President Barack Obama has attempted to disassociate “extremism” from “religious fundamentalism.” See Kathleen Hennessey and Christi Parson, “At Summit on Extremism, Obama Defends His Semantic Choices regarding Islam,” *Los Angeles Times*, February 19, 2015.

2 Bernard Lewis, *The Crisis of Islam: Holy War and Unholy Terror* (New York: Modern Library, 2003), 138.

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the world” in the late 1890s.³ Over a century later, Chris S. Kyle, the American Sniper, deployed to the Middle East to fight against “fanatics” who “hated us because we weren’t Muslim.” According to one account, Kyle, like many soldiers, was “deeply religious and saw the Iraq War through that prism.”⁴

Such devotionals suggest many Americans feel war is not a necessary evil; it is simply necessary. This obligation to wage war rests on the conviction that nearly all American interventions abroad are both politically and morally justifiable. Even when questions are raised about legitimacy, such as the 2003 invasion of Iraq, Americans’ faith in the transformative capacities of US military power is hardly dented. Thus, at the close of 2015, Senators John McCain and Lindsey Graham could argue proper military strategy would enable the United States not only to destroy the Islamic State quickly but also to do so while “creating conditions that can prevent it, or a threat like it, from ever re-emerging.”⁵ These aspirations rested on little evidence that the United States could achieve such far-reaching goals in a region stubbornly resistant to American influence.

Moreover, dogmatic faith in what war can deliver limits serious debate about the utility of force in achieving foreign policy objectives. Since the American invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, most policy deliberations centered upon the mechanics of military strategy—troop strengths, stay-behind forces, and expansion of combat beyond certain countries’ borders. Left unexamined is the potentially flawed supposition that war is in fact furthering US policy goals. Hence, Andrew J. Bacevich observes that even in an era of “persistent conflict,” few senior officials, even those in the Pentagon, can explain why war has become “inescapable.”⁶ With little reflection, war has become a reflexive, if not permanent, part of American conduct overseas.

Faithful Works

The ideological underpinnings of this martial faith have a long history in the United States. Since at least the World War I era, Americans have fashioned war as a necessary struggle between democratic good and totalitarian evil. No doubt Woodrow Wilson’s rhetoric matched his religious principles when he asked Congress for a declaration of war against Germany and its allies in April 1917. Though Wilson lamented leading a “great peaceful people into war,” the president nonetheless felt obliged to “fight for the things which we have always carried nearest our hearts—for democracy” and for rights shared “by such a concert of free peoples as shall bring peace and safety to all nations and make the world itself at last free.”⁷

3 Beveridge quoted in John Lamberton Harper, *The Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 25.

4 Chris Kyle, *American Sniper: The Autobiography of the Most Lethal Sniper in U.S. Military History*, with Scott McEwen and Jim DeFelice (New York: William Morrow, 2013), 86; and Nicholas Schmidle, “In The Crosshairs,” *New Yorker*, June 3, 2013.

5 John McCain and Lindsey Graham, “How to Defeat ISIS Now—Not ‘Ultimately,’” *Wall Street Journal*, December 7, 2015.

6 Andrew J. Bacevich, *The New American Militarism: How Americans Are Seduced by War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 234.

7 Woodrow Wilson, “War Message” (address, 65th Congress, Washington, DC, April 2, 1917), http://www.lib.byu.edu/index.php/Wilson's_War_Message_to_Congress.

Wilson's postulation of American democracy as the apogee of modern political development could be shared even by those citizens unenthusiastic about the American role in creating a liberal world order. When compared to Russian Bolshevism or German militarism, American-conceived liberalism, according to Wilson, was "the only thing that can save civilization from chaos."⁸

This sense of exceptionalism, hardly a cynical faith, became reified after the Allied victory in World War II. Americans believed they had fought for freedom and won, in part, because they were on the right side of history. The awareness of Japanese atrocities in China and German genocidal policies in Europe bolstered this sense of American moralism. Thus, historian Stephen E. Ambrose could look back admiringly and argue Americans won because of "moral superiority" and an open national system. "Democracy," Ambrose trumpeted, "proved better able to produce young men who could be made into superb soldiers than Nazi Germany."⁹

Ambrose's conception of democratic citizen-soldiers successfully fighting a global war against totalitarianism may have reinforced congenial notions of the "greatest generation," but World War II remained highly atypical. In fact, most of America's interventions in the twentieth century were undeclared executive actions. In Haiti, Nicaragua, the Philippines, and Korea, Americans went to and remained at war for decades with little Congressional debate or oversight. In the process, US soldiers, sailors, and marines found themselves more frequently serving across the globe in police functions to stabilize hot spots and to facilitate enduring American access and influence abroad. This involvement was not an American version of imperialism, policy leaders contended, but rather a "Pax Americana" in which a strong, righteous nation was fulfilling its moral obligation to stabilize and secure the international system.

Though this confidence in American power has strong roots, we would be misguided to assume all policymakers and citizens embrace a faith-based approach to waging war. A national "way of war" paradigm is problematic given the ever-changing factors influencing both the causes and conduct of war. And yet, cultural constraints often do define how we think about conflict. As Patrick Porter convincingly asserts, Western exceptionalism has long viewed non-Western cultures as "naturally, irrationally violent." Thus, the idea that "the enemy is singularly obsessed with strength and weakness, impressed only by dash and brutal treatment" emerged.¹⁰

In the process, Americans easily fashioned any call to arms as a crusade for survival and national identity. In his state of the union address in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 attacks, President George W. Bush expressed hope that "all nations will heed our call, and

8 Wilson quoted in Susan A. Brewer, *Why America Fights: Patriotism and War Propaganda from the Philippines to Iraq* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 79.

9 Stephen E. Ambrose, *Band of Brothers: E Company, 506th Regiment, 101st Airborne from Normandy to Hitler's Eagle's Nest* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992), 224.

10 Patrick Porter, *Military Orientalism: Eastern War through Western Eyes* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 40. On questioning the "way of war" thesis, see Antulio J. Echevarría II, *Reconsidering the American Way of War: US Military Practice from the Revolution to Afghanistan* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2014).

eliminate the terrorist parasites who threaten their countries and our own.” His remarks were pure Wilsonian in tone and language. “History has called America and our allies to action,” Bush exclaimed, “and it is both our responsibility and our privilege to fight freedom’s fight.”¹¹ Throughout that summer the president proclaimed our “nation is the greatest force for good in history.”¹²

A decade of war in Afghanistan and Iraq—not to mention US drone strikes across the Middle East—did little to challenge such faith-based assumptions. In late 2015, Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter insisted the United States was going to “beat” the Islamic State because “we are . . . the noble and they are the evil. And we are the many and they are the few. And fundamentally we’re the strong.”¹³ Could American strength truly emanate from our nobility and goodness? It seems doubtful the Islamic State sees the United States as a force for global good. In fact, from a different vantage point, crusading American rhetoric employed during the Global War on Terror could be interpreted as its own form of jihad.¹⁴

The duty to preserve, if not expand, American influence abroad has come at a cost. Since the end of World War II, US servicemen and women have served in what increasingly resembles an expeditionary force, akin to those of the British Empire in the late-nineteenth century. In fact, not long after 9/11, interventionist Max Boot advocated for a more imperial role. To Boot, the problem had “not been excessive American assertiveness but rather insufficient assertiveness.” In short, the United States was not acting “as a great power should.”¹⁵ Such arguments, however, dismissed the historical record suggesting much of the Cold War era could be framed by the anticolonial struggle in the Third World. Nor did advocates of an American empire acknowledge, as did Douglas Porch recently, that throughout much of the past two centuries “soldiers on the colonial fringe deployed brutal tactics increasingly at odds with legal restraints.”¹⁶

This blurring of lines between the legitimate and extralegal use of force stems, in part, from how our faith shapes interpretations of the enemy. A crusading spirit drives Americans to believe their enemies, however defined, have aspirations of, and the capacity to achieve, global dominance. In short, all threats are existential. In the aftermath of the Paris attacks of 2015, Thomas Donnelly argued in the *Weekly Standard* that “Europe, in particular, faces what might well be an existential threat; a way of life does seem to hang in the balance.” The reason for Europe’s “collapse?” Because, Donnelly maintained, “the United States has stepped back from playing its role as the defender of the West.”

11 George W. Bush, “State of the Union Address” (speech, US Capitol, Washington, DC, January 29, 2002), <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2002/01/20020129-11.html>.

12 George W. Bush, *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States George W. Bush, 2002*, bk. 2 (Washington, DC: Office of the Federal Register, March 2006), 1517.

13 “Remarks by Secretary [Ashton] Carter at Fort Wainwright, Alaska,” US Department of Defense, October 31, 2015, <http://www.defense.gov/News/News-Transcripts/Transcript-View/Article/626820/remarks-by-secretary-carter-at-a-troop-event-at-fort-wainwright-alaska>.

14 Chris Hedges, *War Is a Force That Gives Us Meaning* (New York: Public Affairs, 2002), 4.

15 Max Boot, “The Case for American Empire,” *Weekly Standard*, October 15, 2001.

16 Douglas Porch, *Counterinsurgency: Exposing the Myths of the New Way of War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 29.

Americans had lost their will and thus their way. Not so for the Islamic State. As Donnelly claimed, “This is a contest between the faithful—them—and the increasingly faithless—us.”¹⁷

Donnelly bewailed the loss of faith in a war against evil as nothing new. During the Cold War, for instance, nearly all politicians could lash out at opponents for not prosecuting the war against communism with more vigor. Truman’s supposed “loss of China” carried political weight for Republicans as few Americans wished to consider the possibility that US influence mattered little in the Chinese civil war between Mao Zedong’s communists and the Kuomintang-led government. In an ironic twist, the words of Wisconsin Senator Joseph McCarthy pontificated fellow Americans should not only build and maintain free nations abroad, but also to defend the one at home. H. W. Brands could thus wryly dub the height of McCarthy-era America as the “national insecurity state.”¹⁸

Invested Talents

These Cold War and contemporary assumptions about the enemy undergirded Americans’ faith in war, both home and abroad. But so too, however, has been our faith in technology to defeat evil around the globe. Advanced weaponry promised victories at low cost (at least in American lives) and served as valuable symbols “of prestige, of technological prowess, [and] of national power and identity.” Yet as the twentieth century wore on, popular resistance movements proved frustratingly resistant to sophisticated military hardware. As Tami Davis Biddle notes, even the “overall political influence that was achieved by the possession of a vast nuclear arsenal is difficult to measure.”¹⁹ Still, US policymakers believed throughout much of the Cold War that technological superiority enhanced national prestige and thus confirmed the strength (and righteousness) of a liberal democratic system over communism.

Technology also eased American incursions into postcolonial markets, a seeming necessity in the zero-sum game against Cold War communism. For the consumer-based culture of the 1950s, interventions abroad not only served to demonstrate resolve against the Red Scare of encroaching communism, but also ensured global economic access by shouldering American prosperity at home. American leaders still employed Wilsonian rhetoric when depicting their war aims: democracy and freedom remained at the center of faith-based calls for war. Moreover, the ever-growing market economy depended upon the expansion of US power overseas, and waging faith-based wars bridged the gap between domestic and foreign policies.²⁰

17 Thomas Donnelly, “An Existential Threat,” *Weekly Standard*, November 19, 2015.

18 H. W. Brands, *The Devil We Knew: Americans and the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 31.

19 Tami Davis Biddle, “Shield and Sword: U.S. Strategic Forces and Doctrine since 1945,” in *The Long War: A New History of U.S. National Security Policy since World War II*, ed. Andrew J. Bacevich (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 140; and Jeremy Black, *War and the World: Military Power and the Fate of Continents, 1450–2000* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), 285.

20 As early as 1959, William Appleman Williams had established the quest for overseas markets had driven American interventions around the world long before the Cold War in *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1959, 1972), 10.

Sustaining economic growth at home meant building a stable international system that allowed American access. To best achieve this vision, policymakers in the Kennedy era placed their faith in modernization theory. According to advocates like Walt Whitman Rostow, the United States would guide developing nations along a linear path to liberal capitalism. As Rostow explained, US mentorship would lead to “a new post-colonial relationship,” forming “a new partnership among free men—rich and poor alike.” Of course, such ambitions rested on the tenuous assumption that all “free men” embraced the American definition of modernity. Rostow and his supporters gave little heed to foreign political leaders, especially those in the Third World, who considered the source of their troubles not insufficient but rather excessive modernization. “Traditional” societies, modernizers argued, simply needed to overcome “pre-Newtonian science” and “long-run fatalism.”²¹

If modernization theorists erred in reducing the complexities of local histories and habitudes, so too did their successors in promoting nation-building abroad. Neoconservatives and liberal interventionists alike fashioned nation-building for their own needs to counter terrorism, to spread democracy, and to rebuild economies in war-torn countries. Underlying all of these aims was the faith Americans could create lasting democracies abroad. Even in the aftermath of the Iraq invasion (2003) and the erratic performance of US nation-building efforts, critics of the Bush administration leveled their charges on processes rather than objectives. Thus, one analysis of the Iraq reconstruction endeavor concluded successful “nation-building requires unity of effort across multiple agencies” and the creation of a “full integrated political-military plan.”²² Whether such bureaucratic efficiencies would inspire a postconflict or failing state’s transformation into a lasting democracy was left unstated.

A crucial assumption laced within the promises of both modernization theory and the assurances of nation-builders is foreign people will always see Americans as liberators, never as invaders or occupiers. As Fred Anderson and Andrew Cayton note, the “need to protect American freedom by the direct exertion of power has always coexisted uneasily with the American faith that other peoples if offered the chance will voluntarily adopt political systems and values consistent with those of the United States.”²³ Yet historical case studies ranging from the Philippines and Indochina to Somalia and Afghanistan suggest this faith is far too often misplaced. Of course, US forces have served admirably and been welcomed as part of numerous peacekeeping and humanitarian missions. Military interventions in support of nation-building efforts, however, regularly produced local fighters who judged Americans as doing little more than invading their own social and political spaces.

No US intervention during the Cold War better illustrated this point than the failed nation-building effort in South Vietnam. The Johnson administration never unlocked the mystery of simultaneously fighting a war and building a noncommunist nation. Though President

21 Rostow quoted in Michael E. Latham, *Modernization as Ideology: American Social Science and “Nation Building” in the Kennedy Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 16, 45.

22 James Dobbins et al., *After the War: Nation-Building from FDR to George W. Bush* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2008), 135–36.

23 Fred Anderson and Andrew Cayton, *The Dominion of War: Empire and Liberty in North America, 1500–2000* (New York: Viking, 2005), 424.

Johnson spoke in April 1965 of building schools, power plants, and farm programs, American outsiders could never convince the majority of the South Vietnamese population that their future best lay with the Saigon government.²⁴ Ultimately, failure in Vietnam may have soured Americans on war, but only briefly. The decade following the fall of Saigon saw enough fighting for a recently retired US Army general to dub it an “era of violent peace.”²⁵ Post-Vietnam critics might question American exceptionalism, yet war’s exceptionalism seemed well intact.

Even if Americans were wary of foreign interventions after Vietnam, they still hardly denounced the frequent military operations taking US armed forces around the globe in the post-Cold War era. Once more, faith in American power reinforced overseas deployments. As Roland Paris notes of the period, “Peacebuilding missions in the 1990s were guided by a generally unstated but widely accepted theory of conflict management: the notion that promoting ‘liberalization’ in countries that had recently experienced civil war would help create the conditions for a stable and lasting peace.”²⁶ Yet from Africa to the Middle East to Eastern Europe lasting peace never seemed to quite take hold. Was it possible American influence and leadership could only achieve so much, even in an era when European allies were labeling the United States a “hyperpower?”

Rightful Divisions

Such questions remained largely unanswered as American interventionists placed their faith in yet another application of military strategy: counterinsurgency. Written in 2006 as the war in Iraq was unraveling, the new counterinsurgency field manual conceded insurgencies were protracted affairs; thus, soldiers and their commanders had to manage their expectations. Yet the doctrine also promoted ambitious aims: military forces would help regain the population’s “active and continued support”; local security forces would assist in securing the population and separating them from the insurgents; and clear-hold-build operations would convince the populace to support the host-nation government. The doctrine’s writers hoped commanders could translate the lessons of the manual into practice and, with wise execution of their plans, “adapt and win.”²⁷

This new doctrine fostered unrealistic expectations outside the military ranks about the possibilities of counterinsurgency. In the cities of Iraq and provinces of Afghanistan, however, the allegedly progressive, humanist approach retained a violent edge tending to undercut the more long-term goals of social and political stability. According to one survey, a massive increase in bombing to support military operations as part of

24 Lyndon B. Johnson, “Peace without Conquest” (speech, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD, April 7, 1965), <http://www.lbjlib.utexas.edu/johnson/archives.hom/speeches.hom/650407.asp>.

25 Daniel P. Bolger, *Americans at War, 1975–1986: An Era of Violent Peace* (Novato, CA: Presidio, 1988).

26 Roland Paris, *At War’s End: Building Peace after Civil Conflict* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 5.

27 Headquarters, US Department of the Army (HQDA), *Counterinsurgency*, Field Manual (FM) 3-24 (Washington, DC: HQDA, 2006), 2-1, 5-20, A-1. Of note, page 1-11 of HQDA, *Stability Operations*, FM 3-07 (Washington, DC: HQDA, 2008), emphasized US national security strategy goals, including promoting “effective democracies.”

“the surge” resulted in US airstrikes killing “nearly four times as many Iraqis in 2007 than in 2006.”²⁸ Three years later Americans in Marjah, Afghanistan, spoke in violent clear-hold-build terms. After defeating a resurgent Taliban—“‘Mowing the grass,’ the soldiers and Marines derisively call[ed] it”—American commanders would bring government and police forces into the cleared area. “We’ve got a government in a box, ready to roll in,” claimed General Stanley McChrystal, the top American commander at the time.²⁹

Looking back, the logic flaws become clear; for instance, how could counterinsurgents provide effective population-centric security leading to lasting local political reform if the population and its governmental leaders too often saw US soldiers as “anti-bodies” invading their body politic?

The tactical impracticalities of counterinsurgency paled in comparison to the larger faith that American forces overseas could change the very culture of local inhabitants and the armed forces in which they served. Paula Broadwell, David Petraeus’s biographer, cited the general’s challenge to a young American officer to help “change the culture of the Afghan military.”³⁰ Though public pronouncements of progress met with warm reception at home, they arguably lacked credible evidence in theater. After Petraeus’s departure, one US Army colonel wrote a searing epitaph on the counterinsurgents’ ambitions: “Ultimately, American strategy had failed in Afghanistan (and Iraq) because it was founded on an illusion—that American-style counterinsurgency could win Muslim hearts and minds at gunpoint and create viable nation-states on the Western model virtually from scratch in a short time.”³¹

Yet the lackluster record of American interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan did little to dissuade the disciples of war from supporting US ground troops in Syria, Libya, and even the Ukraine. Michael O’Hanlon, for example, envisioned a “force package” of 25,000 American troops in Syria as part of a much larger international peacekeeping force. “It would not be an easy mission,” O’Hanlon acknowledged, “and Syria is not ripe for such a peace deal or peacekeeping force now.” Still, deploying US soldiers would be “promising.”³² In a similar vein, Samantha Power, US ambassador to the United Nations, warned “against a kind of intervention fatigue, emphasizing that US leadership is needed now more than ever amid global threats from Ebola to the Islamic State.”³³

28 Michael A. Cohen, “The Myth of a Kinder, Gentler, War,” *World Policy Journal* 27, no. 1 (Spring 2010): 83, doi:10.1162/wopj.2010.27.1.75. Importantly, the new counterinsurgency doctrine did not eliminate the need for combat operations and noted the role violence plays in attempts to create a secure environment in which political progress might be made.

29 Dexter Filkins, “Afghan Offensive Is New War Model,” *New York Times*, February 12, 2010.

30 Paula Broadwell and Vernon Loeb, *All In: The Education of General David Petraeus* (New York: Penguin, 2012), 195. Of course, one could argue changing the culture of a military organization and of the local population are two separate matters, as well as American made progress in altering the culture of the Afghan military to be less corrupt and less brutal, while making comparatively little gains in changing civilian attitudes. On this issue, see Rochelle Davis, “Culture as a Weapon,” *Middle East Report* 40, no. 255 (Summer 2010): 8–13.

31 Gian P. Gentile, *Wrong Turn: America’s Deadly Embrace of Counterinsurgency* (New York: New Press, 2013), 135.

32 Michael O’Hanlon, “What 100,000 U.S. Boots on the Ground Get You in Syria,” Reuters, November 19, 2015.

33 Molly O’Toole, “UN Ambassador Warns against Intervention Fatigue,” *Defense One*, November 19, 2014.

If Power advised being “careful about overdrawing lessons” from US interventions abroad, then what should Americans take from decades of war that have at best unevenly realized foreign policy objectives? First, we should question the notion that democratic ideals and liberal capitalism are universal ideologies. During the Cold War, as David Engerman points out, both the United States and Soviet Union “held that their conceptions of society applied to all nations and people.”³⁴ Far from ushering in an era of peace after World War II, this ideological competition only furthered the global violence unleashed by colonialism’s demise. For Americans in particular, a longer view of history might have suggested that any transition to democracy was an inherently violent affair. Thus, perhaps it is beneficial to question our messianic faith that all peoples deem the US political system as the end state of history.

Second, Americans should realize that foreign policy rests on domestic consent and that dissent against military adventurism overseas is not an unpatriotic act. Like many fundamentalist faiths, our conviction in the utility of force abroad has little room for dissenting voices. When it comes to any talk of our armed forces, what emanates from the body politic is, in Cecilia E. O’Leary’s words, a “culturally conformist, militaristic patriotism.”³⁵ In the process, failure to wage war becomes an act of weakness rather than an act of restraint. Inaction becomes a failure of resolve. National Security Advisor McGeorge Bundy spoke for many Americans in 1965 when he argued the “international prestige of the United States, and a substantial part of our influence, are directly at risk in Vietnam.”³⁶ But were they? Was the prominence of one of the world’s superpowers truly at stake if the Vietnamese people chose communism over democracy in a civil war over national identity in the postcolonial era?

The crucial assumption that inaction axiomatically leads to loss of prestige, should be examined more forcefully by both policymakers and the citizens electing them to office. Jeremi Suri has called Americans a “nation-building people,” but these people hardly question the efficacy of the nation-building process or whether those receiving US aid actually desire to be built in an American image. Suri rightfully contends “nation-building always requires partners” and relationships are more important than raw power.³⁷ Yet, recent experiences indicate such relationships are often coercive and host-nation leaders invariably play the junior partners. While leaders such as South Vietnamese President Ngo Dinh Diem (1955–63) and Iraqi Prime Minister Nūrī al-Mālikī (2006–14) may have held immense leverage over their American benefactors, the unequal nature of allying with the United States often spreads bitterness and resentment rather than a faith in democratic ways.

34 David C. Engerman, “Ideology and the Origins of the Cold War, 1917–1962,” in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War, Volume I: Origins*, eds. Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 23.

35 Cecilia E. O’Leary, *To Die For: The Paradox of American Patriotism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 7.

36 Quoted in Andrew Preston, *The War Council: McGeorge Bundy, the NSC, and Vietnam* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 177.

37 Jeremi Suri, *Liberty’s Surest Guardian: Rebuilding Nations after War from the Founders to Obama* (New York: Free Press, 2011), 8, 271.

These unintended consequences lead to a final point: the employment of military force can actually run counter to desired policy objectives. Strategic miscalculations are hardly new. The Pearl Harbor and 9/11 attacks surely wrought unforeseen aftereffects for their architects. The same, however, could be said of US interventions over the last 15 years. Americans too easily dismissed Osama bin Laden's denunciations of US military presence on Islamic holy lands in the Middle East. It is unlikely the Bush administration anticipated a full-blown insurgency in response to the 2003 invasion of Iraq. Thus, Americans should think more deeply about the repercussions of wielding their power so readily across the globe. As Alex Braithwaite persuasively argues, "the deployment of troops overseas increases the likelihood of transnational terrorist attacks against the global interests of the deploying state."³⁸ War is not without its consequences.

Self-Examinations

Perhaps, then, our unquestioning faith in military force is misplaced. Despite defeat in Vietnam, which led to a temporary dip in enthusiasm for war, many (if not most) Americans still believe war can deliver. While we may not relish war—the challenges of military recruitment imply a lack of zeal in being part of war—we still have faith in it. But, on what evidence does this faith rely? A more critical appraisal might result in deeper inquisitions on the utility of force in the modern era. As Andrew Bacevich has asked, "How is it that our widely touted post-Cold War military superiority has produced not enhanced security but the prospect of open-ended conflict?"³⁹ If war only promotes more war, then why do we continue to turn to it?

In large sense, the United States' global application of force has become a new manifest destiny: our efforts around the world legitimize the belief that our calling is from some higher being. Our faith supports not only the goals of American-led democratic liberalism, but the means to achieve those ends as well. Yet "manifest destiny," a phrase first coined in the 1840s, has always been a myth, continuing to be, a conveniently persuasive cover for expanding the American empire. In the process, our faith in war goes largely unquestioned.

None of this is to argue, as Martin van Creveld did at the Cold War's end, that "present-day military power is simply irrelevant as an instrument for extending or defending political interests over most of the globe."⁴⁰ Rather, the point is Americans need to scrutinize their faith in military power. Internationalism and interventionism must be balanced with humility and an acceptance of limits. Collective security must be collective; coalitions cannot be built just as window dressing. And, Americans must accept not every foreign policy problem has a military solution.

Reflecting upon and challenging faith in the utility of military force is not unpatriotic, and questioning war's efficacy should not be a

38 Alex Braithwaite, "Transnational Terrorism as an Unintended Consequence of a Military Footprint," *Security Studies* 24, no. 2 (June 2015): 374, doi:10.1080/09636412.2015.1038192.

39 Andrew J. Bacevich, *The Limits of Power: The End of American Exceptionalism* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2008), 156.

40 Martin van Creveld, *The Transformation of War* (New York: Free Press, 1991), 27.

third rail in American politics. War is unpredictable, chaotic, and more often than not destabilizing, even when outsiders endeavor to import freedom and democracy to a society. True, war helps “make the world understandable, a black and white tableau of them and us,” as Chris Hedges argues. But, Hedges is also correct in suggesting war frequently “suspends thought, especially self-critical thought.”⁴¹ In an era of persistent conflict, it seems the time has come to think more critically about our faith in the power of military might.

War has become a secular religion for Americans. Yet, no religion promotes the best in humanity when its adherents narrowly view the world only through the lens of their own faith. If Anderson and Cayton are correct in proposing “Americans have fought less to preserve liberty than to extend the power of the United States *in the name of* liberty,” then the time is ripe for all of us to question not only our faith in war, but why we turn to it all too often.⁴²

41 Hedges, *War Is a Force*, 10.

42 Anderson and Cayton, *Dominion of War*, 421.

ARE OUR STRATEGIC MODELS FLAWED?

Solving America's Gray-Zone Puzzle

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ABSTRACT: Until the missing pieces of the role of global power transitions, of American “flawed by design” concepts of war and peace, and of paradoxical consequences resulting from America’s roles and actions to maintain and disrupt the international system are calculated into the ongoing strategy and force planning reforms, any resulting changes of those efforts will inadequately prepare America to fight, win, and fully finish gray-zone wars.

For anyone paying even the slightest attention to recent global security affairs, particularly over the past three to five years, denying the significant change and disruption of what has long been the conventional sense of world order would be difficult. Determining *if* and *how* the character, scope, and direction of geopolitical competition has changed, and is changing, from the previous and current norms is the most fundamental, and arguably the most essential, imperative facing grand and military strategists as well as the national leaders and polities they serve at such times of major geostrategic inflection.

Perhaps the clearest recognizable signs supporting such a claim are the measurable rise in adversarial actions taken by a number of nation-states and nonstate actors as well as the prolific increase in scholarship related to their activities. Nonstate actors such as al-Qaeda and hybrid non-Westphalian forms of self-declared alternative statehoods such as the Islamic State challenge the legitimacy of both the norms, principles, rules, and decision-making processes of the current Western advanced-industrial state-based majoritarian international order and the United States as lead nation, hegemon, and “guaranteeing power” of the current world order.¹ Another sign lies in the heuristic devices and labels scholars and practitioners alike adopt and use to describe and assign meaning to these adversarial behaviors in simple understandable terms and the early practical responses and reactions to match, counter, and then ultimately, overmatch these challenges and restore the *status quo ante*.

The increasingly adversarial relationships the United States faces with great powers such as Russia and China, in addition to regional-level disruptors such as North Korea, Iran, and the self-declared Islamic State lead the concerns of America’s senior defense leadership. Consequently, the Pentagon and the armed services call for major strategic shifts in

1 Sebastian Gorka notes the Islamic State “is the world’s first transnational and multiregional insurgency, as opposed to al-Qaeda, which was just an international terrorist group.” See Sebastian Gorka, “Adapting to Today’s Battlefield: The Islamic State and Irregular War as the ‘New Normal,’” Center for Complex Operations, October 25, 2016, <http://cco.ndu.edu/News/Article/980871/16-adapting-to-todays-battlefield-the-islamic-state-and-irregular-war-as-the-ne/>; Stephen Krasner, ed., *International Regimes* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983); and Leslie H. Gelb, *Power Rules: How Common Sense Can Rescue American Foreign Policy* (New York: HarperCollins, 2009).

policy, war plans, planning architectures, and approaches. The United States' top general, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Joseph Dunford, recently stated “our traditional approach where we are either at peace or at war is insufficient to deal with that dynamic”—the ‘four-plus-one’ challenges [of Russia, China, Iran, and North Korea, as well as Islamist extremism] and the five domains” of land, sea, air, space, and cyberspace. Moreover, Dunford recognizes the state of “adversarial competition with a military dimension short of armed conflict” military and security studies scholars and practitioners have come to label gray-zone conflict.²

This particular description, which answers the key questions of whether and how the character of geopolitical competition has changed, now represents an increasingly resonant line of inquiry in defense circles. But, just how smartly are we forming our understandings of, redesigning our overmatching strategies for, and planning our operational approaches to these so-called gray-zone problems?

In the following pages, we argue current US defense efforts to better understand and to deal with this gray-zone puzzle, while sound and necessary, remain insufficient. In short, these three missing cause-and-effect pieces to the complete gray-zone puzzle are missing. If these elements are not soon acknowledged and sufficiently incorporated into our planning and capability development activities, future strategic efforts of the United States national security and defense enterprise to meet, overmatch, and overcome future gray-zone threats will be left wanting.

What Is Gray-Zone Conflict?

The adversarial competition short of armed conflict the chairman of the Joint Chiefs describes is what a growing number of experts and students of global security affairs have come to label gray-zone conflict or gray-zone warfare—the latest “new wars” boutique enterprise within security studies, national defense, and global affairs communities.³

Many experts today see, characterize, and assess these gray-zone challenges as uniquely relevant and consequential to US defense issues. As a recent US Army War College study report on gray-zone conflict describes,

For defense and military strategists, the gray zone is a broad carrier concept for a universe of often-dissimilar strategic challenges. Defense-relevant gray zone threats lie between “classic” war and peace, legitimate and illegitimate motives and methods, universal and conditional norms, order and anarchy; and traditional, irregular, or unconventional means. All gray zone challenges

2 Colin Clark, “CJCS Dunford Calls for Strategic Shifts; ‘At Peace or at War Is Insufficient,’” *Breaking Defense*, September 21, 2016.

3 See Mary Kaldor, *New & Old Wars: Organized Violence in a Global Era* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001); Michael J. Mazarr, *Mastering the Gray Zone: Understanding a Changing Era of Conflict* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute [SSI], 2015); Nathan P. Freier et al., *Outplayed: Regaining Strategic Initiative in the Gray Zone* (Carlisle, PA: SSI, 2016); Adam Elkus, “50 Shades of Gray: Why the Gray Wars Concept Lacks Strategic Sense,” *War on the Rocks*, December 15, 2015, <https://warontherocks.com/2015/12/50-shades-of-gray-why-the-gray-wars-concept-lacks-strategic-sense/>; Hal Brands, “Paradoxes of the Gray Zone,” *Foreign Policy Research Institute*, February 5, 2016, <http://www.fpri.org/article/2016/02/paradoxes-gray-zone/>; and Joseph L. Votel et al., “Unconventional Warfare in the Gray Zone,” *Joint Force Quarterly* 80 (1st Quarter, 2016): 101–9.

are distinct or unique, yet nonetheless share three common characteristics: hybridity, menace to defense/military convention, and risk-confusion.⁴

Another relatively recent US Army War College monograph offered a more conceptual and measured examination and evaluation of the characteristics, causes, and consequences of gray-zone conflict, specifically of gray-zone strategies many argue are increasingly and uniquely being employed pointedly against the United States by revisionist states such as China, Russia, North Korea, and Iran:

This series of [gray-zone warfare] actions is a powerful example of an approach being used by more and more states with partial, but still obvious, revisionist intent—that is to say, states dissatisfied with the status quo and determined to change important aspects of the global distribution of power and influence in their favor. Unwilling to risk major escalation with outright military adventurism, these actors are employing sequences of gradual steps to secure strategic leverage. The efforts remain below thresholds that would generate a powerful US or international response, but nonetheless are forceful and deliberate, calculated to gain measurable traction over time . . . They maneuver in the ambiguous no-man’s-land between peace and war, reflecting the sort of aggressive, persistent, determined campaigns characteristic of warfare but without the overt use of military force.

[The] monograph suggests that large-scale operations in this indistinct landscape will be the dominant form of state-to-state rivalry in the coming decades. Henceforth, international rivalry may be characterized largely by such campaigns, which go today by a confusing array of names—unconventional, hybrid, gradualist, nonlinear, unrestricted, and more.⁵

Some notable gray-zone strategic theorists do acknowledge much of this supposed new gray world reordering is not all that new. One such expert, Michael J. Mazarr, emphasizes, “States have been using these kinds of approaches for centuries, in some ways for millennia.”⁶ That caveat made, however, Mazarr does contend there are at least three reasons why we should all pay more attention to gray-zone issues. First, a growing number of leading aggressive powers—notably China, Russia, and Iran—make extensive use of these strategies. Second, the cost of major aggression has become so severe, and economic and social interdependence so powerful, that states with some degree of aggressive intent arguably will be in the market for alternative ways to achieve their goals. Finally, Mazarr offers that while some gray-zone tools have been used since ancient times, others—such as cyberweapons, advanced forms of information campaigns, and elaborate civilian tools of statecraft such as coast guards—are relatively recent and lend growing intensity to these campaigns.⁷

Why Does the Gray Matter?

Some will obviously ask why the attention afforded to gray-zone challenges matters: there are real practical risks at stake here. Use of the term gray-zone conflict and choosing to perceive the global contemporary threat and operating environment through gray-colored glasses can

4 Freier et al., *Outplayed*.

5 Mazarr, *Mastering the Gray Zone*, 1–2. See also Freier et al., *Outplayed*.

6 Mazarr, *Mastering the Gray Zone*.

7 Ibid.

have significant deleterious effects on future US and Western alliance foreign and security policy writ large.

Treating gray-zone conflict as a new theory, doctrine, and paradigm of war can tragically narrow and retard America's, and Americans', sense of what is required in, and what is to be expected from, war and uses of force as well as dull our sensibilities for what constitutes legitimate, rightful, and just practices in the use of force and conduct of war. Currently, an overt fixation on adversaries' conduct—behavior, immediate actions, and activities—compromises what should be at least equal focus on the sources of adversaries' gray-zone conduct. This challenge should be viewed through strategic Kennanesque eyes to consider the *casus belli* of the gray-zone adversary at least as much as, or even more than, the *modus operandi*.

At least three big missing pieces in the puzzle of gray-zone conflict have been found at the grand (global) strategic level of thought and practice. If ignored, each one individually, as well as in combination with the others, has significant negative consequences at operational and tactical levels.

All Power Is in Transition.

Strategic historian Walter Russell Mead has offered a description aptly capturing the change in character of geopolitical competition defining the current and future global security environment: “geography, once again, matters,” but particularly and uniquely so at certain historically key transregional nexus pivot space locations.

Sometime in 2013, we reached a new stage in world history. A coalition of great powers has long sought to overturn the post-Cold War Eurasian settlement that the United States and its allies imposed after 1990; in the second half of 2013 that coalition began to gain ground. The revisionist coalition hasn't achieved its objectives, and the Eurasian status is still quo, but from this point on we will have to speak of that situation as contested and American policymakers will increasingly have to respond to a challenge that, until recently, most chose to ignore.

The big three challengers—Russia, China and Iran—all hate, fear and resent the current state of Eurasia. The balance of power it enshrines thwarts their ambitions; the norms and values it promotes pose deadly threats to their current regimes. Until recently there wasn't much they could do but resent the world order; now, increasingly, they think they have found a way to challenge and ultimately to change the way global politics work.⁸

As such strategic estimates attest, an identifiable change in *patterns of behavior*—part of a wider change in the character of global geopolitical competition—is taking place in global affairs. The changes not only threaten US and allied interests but also pose a grave and growing threat to the present stability of the international order writ large.

These behavioral changes reflect a shift from a balance of power environment of geopolitical competition to one of instability and unpredictability; in essence, a return to pre-World War I geomercantilism rife with beggar-thy-neighbor competitive behaviors that encourage

⁸ Walter Russell Mead, “The End of History Ends,” *American Interest*, December 2, 2013.

go-it-alone and do-it-your-own-way attitudes and approaches to solving security dilemmas within individually perceived spheres of influence. This competitive environment makes forming and norming—holding together capable and willing coalitions for collective security and defense—all the more difficult while also making the formation of such coalitions all the more essential.

This alone is a gray-zone paradox elevated to the geostrategic level and the genesis of gray-zone conflict. As such, we argue and offer a new important insight and proposition—we are witnessing and facing the totality of today's and tomorrow's problems presented by gray-zone adversaries, which constitute, from a global geopolitical perspective, *a globalizing insurgency challenging the foundational regime of the current advanced-industrial nation-state based (and largely Western) international system and order*; the insurgency equally contests the legitimacy of the United States as global leading power.⁹

Making major changes to America's future application of force to defeat gray-zone competitors absent a full and comprehensive appreciation for and analysis of the grand strategic "whys" undergirding and fueling gray zoners conduct and gray-zone conflicts is a recipe for finding America's and Western alliances' solutions short shrift and anemic. Routine actions, activities, and investments may be insufficient, ephemeral, and unsustainable treatments to systemic gray-zone problems.

To counter adversaries' gray-zone approaches, we must acknowledge that by challenging the existing international order (and the Westphalian concept of legitimate power), antagonist states offer an alternative form of governance that undercuts the resiliency of the international system as we know it. Likewise, for the United States and the Western community of nation-states, these behaviors create an Aurelius moment—point of marginal return on power investment all leading great powers (hegemons, empires, and prior status quo international systems alike) have historically faced in the long cycle of power transitions.¹⁰ No single power, not even the United States, has enough capacity to produce enough power to independently maintain global order and balances of power. There are Newtonian physics limitations to the power equation of any single national state.¹¹

9 By common description, an insurgency is an organized movement aimed at overthrowing or destroying a constituted government through the use of subversion, espionage, terrorism, and armed conflict. See James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War," *American Political Science Review* 97, no. 1 (February 2003): 75–90, doi:10.1017/S0003055403000534. It is our contention that what so many strategic studies analysts, scholars, and defense and security policy practitioners are beginning to recognize and acknowledge as a growing movement of anti-Western, anti-American global leadership (hegemony), adversarial assault, revanchism, and revisionist activities can be labeled in totality as an insurgency and should be seen and approached in counterinsurgency ways and forms. For more on the prevailing scourge of global terrorism in insurgency terms, see David Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerilla: Fighting Small Wars in the Midst of a Big One* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

10 For more details on the "Aurelius moment," referring to the epoch of territorial security and the strategy of preclusive defense established with the declaration of the end of territorial imperial expansion—the declaration of Rome's strategic defense—by Marcus Aurelius during his reign, which persisted roughly until the emperor's death in AD 275, see Edward Luttwak's, *The Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire from the First Century A.D. to the Third* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979).

11 Isaiah Wilson III, "The True Tragedy of American Power," *Parameters* 43, no. 4 (Winter 2013–14): 15–26.

Reasoning how, where, when, and why, as well as where not and why not, America intervenes has both causal and potentially mitigating effects on the future of gray zones and their impact on global security and stability. At specific geostrategic locations throughout history, when and where power, authority, and legitimacy of the existing order is challenged, retrenchment by the leading power marks an inflection point in the decline and eventual fall of the leading power and the *status quo ante* of the preexisting world order.

Classic Peace and War Are Flawed by Design.

Any nation's concepts of war and peace are ultimately social constructs. A nation-state's, or a community of nation-states', view and practice of war and peace are choices representing norms, principles, rules, and decision making processes. These choices color operational planning, doctrinal methods, and procedures that reflect how the nation-state or collective of states sees and therefore defines the relationships between war and warfare, peace and peacefare at any given time. Ideas of what constitutes war, most importantly in relation to the desired peace, predetermines how and why we design and redesign our warfighting apparatus, how we employ and fight those formations, and ultimately what we learn and understand about the meanings of war and peace as well as our purposes in both endeavors.

Gray-zone scholars and Chairman Dunford similarly note these defense-relevant gray-zone threats lie between classic notions of war and peace; legitimate and illegitimate motives and methods; universal and conditional norms; order and anarchy; and traditional, irregular, or unconventional means—classic distinctions and jurisdictional boundaries predominating and defining what constitutes rightful, allowable, and legitimate acts of war and actions in warfare, in contrast to those of peace, since the Treaty of Westphalia.

A foundation of institutional structure and organizational culture contributes to a “flaw by design” within the chosen American and Western way of war and peace that actually creates the very gaps and seams gray-zone adversaries pursue and exploit. This flaw gives rise to an inherent paradox where the United States and the Western community of nation-states repeatedly and increasingly fall short of strategic political aims through the use of forced interventions, despite remaining unmatched at winning tactical military battles.

A number of scholars, military historians, and defense and security practitioners have described, researched, and theorized this paradox of the American and Western way of war and peace, especially over the past couple of decades America and the international community have been involved in Iraq and Afghanistan.¹² Through these war experiences, we can see, and certainly have felt, the effective limits and frustrations of classic approaches to traditional war—the apparent lack of our traditional military force's capability and capacity to fight to a full and complete win. This paradox is real and particularly impacts the promise of future wins or losses in gray-zone conflicts. And as research

¹² See Isaiah Wilson III, *Thinking beyond War: Civil-Military Relations and Why America Fails to Win the Peace* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); and Antulio J. Echevarria II, *Reconsidering the American Way of War: US Military Practice from the Revolution to Afghanistan* (Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, 2014).

and experiences have borne out, organizational structure and culture explains much about this paradox.¹³

Institutional stovepiping, which separates the civil aspects and functions of war—the *close with to restore* functions of war—from the more traditional martial—*close with to destroy* functions of war, is one part of the flawed by design problem. The second component, found in contemporary military doctrine as well as within defense and security enterprise lexicon, persistently categorizes the civil functions of war policy as actions or operations other than war, short of war, prehostilities, or beyond a war. Such demarcations, fictive creations of our own choices, consequently and arbitrarily limit the military's scope and focus in a war action, a campaign, largely if not completely to the "dominate" phases of military-supported and enabled humanitarian operations or integrated civil-military campaigns.

Defining the parameters and jurisdictions of war matters; the definitions will be used to determine approaches to war efforts, including time and resource commitments. The definitions and descriptions of war and peace not only extend well beyond modern American and Western notions but actually contradict modern notions, reminding us peace is not separate from but rather a reciprocal part of war: war is the method, peace its aim.¹⁴

As US Army Chief of Staff General Mark A. Milley has said,

While we focused on the counter-terrorist fight, other countries—Russia, Iran, China, North Korea—went to school on us. They studied our doctrine, our tactics, our equipment, our organization, our training, our leadership. And, in turn, they revised their own doctrines, and they are rapidly modernizing their military today to avoid our strengths in hopes of defeating us at some point in the future.¹⁵

And, the chief of staff is exactly right: time may now be favoring our adversaries. Because time is fleeting, and our adversaries are ahead of us—maybe even making investments in asymmetrical methods and capabilities of warfare to apply against us everywhere where we are not—what we need most today is strategic patience and deliberateness, turned toward our considerations and understandings, eventually even toward our actions, to counter the gray zone and all things now gray to us regarding the future of war and peace.

Starting at the grand strategic and political level, classical views and understandings of war and peace have historically found the United States well and robustly prepared for fighting and winning America's battles—for *initiating* the fight—but late and wanting in its preparedness for the day after, or rather the *decisive* military battles.

13 For more on the paradox, specifically explanations for the prevalence of states and insurgents victories from 1800–2005, see Jason Lyall and Isaiah Wilson III, "Rage against the Machines: Explaining Outcomes in Counterinsurgency Wars," *International Organization* 63, no. 1 (January 2009): 67–106, doi:10.1017/S0020818309090031. For practical accounts of the paradox, see Shankar Vedantam, "Don't Send a Lion to Catch a Mouse," *Washington Post*, March 5, 2007; Julian E. Barnes, "In Afghanistan, Less Armor May Be More," *Los Angeles Times*, September 6, 2009; and Thomas E. Ricks, "Army Historian Cites Lack of Postwar Plan for Iraq," *Washington Post*, December 25, 2004.

14 Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976).

15 Dwight Davis, Eisenhower luncheon, Mark A. Milley (speech, Association of the United States Army, Washington, DC, October 4, 2016, 38.02–10).

As this tendency filters down to the strategic and operational context of the theater, America and its military are more often than not unprepared and uncommitted to *shape, deter, and prevent* civil-military campaigns and underprepared and postured for the more protracted activities of stabilization and reconstruction. Perhaps Operation Iraqi Freedom during the first year of the Iraq War (2003–11) remains the most publicly recognized example.¹⁶ It therefore should not come as any shock or surprise to US civilian and military leadership that adversaries are increasingly attacking us at these seams between the early and late phases of our war campaigns that have been long left gapped and underplanned for, leaving more questions unanswered than answered regarding day-after outcomes. Iraq, Afghanistan, and now Syria are the more poignant of recent examples. Gray-zone adversaries challenge us, and the Western sociopolitical international order, at the places where we have been too slow and stubborn to challenge ourselves, the places where we are still reluctant to think and act anew.

America Is the Original Gray-Zone Disruptor.

The United States, not only as the strongest nation-state of the international system but also as the system's lead and regulating power, is itself—in what it does and how it does it, as well as where and when it chooses to act or not act—a *system effect*.¹⁷ While this might sound like a superficial truth, it is an oversight of potentially grand strategic consequence.

As the first nation-state born out of the eighteenth century collision of the Great Awakening and the Enlightenment, the United States was the first global insurgent, rejecting the control and challenging the authority of the system guarantor of the standing international order, the British Empire. Yet since 1945, the United States has been the regulating power and authority tasked with the responsibilities of leading, maintaining, and when necessary, rebalancing the *status quo* (prewar) *ante*. And so, here lies the root of the paradox of American ways of war and peace simultaneously maintaining and disrupting the international order: *we are at the same time, largely responsible for much of the dynamism, and even the creative destruction (destabilization) defining the contemporary security environment, while at the same time acting as the responsible agent for preserving the world's order and stability*. Given this paradox, the United States is at least as much of a potential creator and perpetuator of any gray zones as its revisionist adversaries.

Less considered, but wildly more relevant to the stability of the international system and the legitimacy of international affairs, is the disaffecting and destabilizing potential of a mismatch between the legal constitution of the international system and the strategic behavior of the arena's players, most especially the conduct of global hegemonies like the United States. Stability of the international order lies in its perceived legitimacy. The said legitimacy is transitory—varying in accordance with and in response to changes in the norms, principles, rules, and decision making processes governing right and just

¹⁶ Ricks, "Army Historian."

¹⁷ Robert Jervis, *System Effects: Complexity in Political and Social Life* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997).

behavior in the international system. In international law, as well as in the behavior of actors (states and nonstates alike) at any given epoch of time and geopolitical context, the legitimacy and stability of an international order can and must be measured.

The regime governing and determining the degree of stability and peace in the international system of nation-states was built upon the principle of nonintervention into the internal affairs of sovereign territorially defined nation-states as well as the inviolability of a state's territorial borders short of self-defense or United Nations Security Council mandate. Particularly since the end of the Cold War in 1991, alternative norms and principles which not only provide rationales for foreign intervention into the internal affairs of a sovereign state but also increasingly mandated and required such intervention *against* states on behalf of national or individual human security concerns have competed with this governing principle. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization's intervention in Libya during the Arab Spring epitomized this tension.

The United States, by leading the Westphalian international system both in word and more importantly in action, has had a significantly *disruptive* impact on the stability of the world system, either directly through the negative externalities caused by military intervention or indirectly by providing the justifications (and precedent) used by gray-zone states to rationalize their own military interventions. Russia routinely uses this logic to defend its role in Crimea and in the ongoing conflict in Syria.

The Pentagon's top gray-zone threat concerns—the 4 + 1 revisionist states of Russia, China, Iran, and North Korea, as well as the nonstate threat of violent global extremist organizations, such as al-Qaeda and the Islamic State—are not simply happenstance. All four of the disruptor states were late bloomers to the modern nation-state international system, hold outs from the preceding era prescribing to strict nationalistic and protectionist rules and norms of behavior and even stricter adherences to territorial-state spheres of influence. With strong primordial fears of, and concerns with, any and all real or perceived threats to their self-declared and ever-expanding spheres of influence, these gray zoners were, and remain, what international relations scholars and historians categorize as statist systems.¹⁸

We can again turn to strategic historians, such as Walter Russell Mead, for a clear and cogent description of the *casus belli* and *modus operandi* of these gray-zone adversaries:

Call the challengers [to the US-led Eurasian community of nation-states] the Central Powers; they hate and fear one another as much as they loathe the current geopolitical order, but they are joined at the hip by the belief that the order favored by the United States and its chief allies is more than an inconvenience.¹⁹

18 Statism and statist describe institutions and political practices in which the executive authority gathers increasing levels and varieties of power into its hands. Total statism can be described as a situation in which the power of government demands and enforces unrestrained sovereignty both with respect to international relations—the relationship to the wider world—and with respect to domestic policy—its relationship to its own subjects. See Alan Kimball, “Statism: The Rise of Total Government in the 19th and 20th Centuries,” University of Oregon, 2016, <http://pages.uoregon.edu/kimball/sttism.htm>.

19 Mead, “End of History Ends.”

Mead's elegant behavioral description defines not merely the actions of gray-zone adversaries, what they do and how they do it, but most importantly provides an explanation of the motivators driving their actions and behaviors—the sources of aggressive gray-zone conduct. Arguably the most notable element of this concept is *gray-zone states actually view not themselves, but rather the United States and the Western community of democracies, as the actual disruptors*. Yes, the 4 + 1 see the United States and the Western international order as revisionists abandoning the traditional regime and promoting the rule of inviolability of nation-state and territorial-state autonomy.

In short, the humanitarian interventions the United States military has had a heavy and leading hand in promoting over the course of the last 25 years—efforts driven largely by motives to promote democracy and protect human rights—have in fact internationalized matters the traditional territorial-state regimes consider and approach as limited internal conflicts, which were previously inviolable and beyond the bounds of justified external interference with very rare exception.

Such interventions have in fact been more about creative destruction through use of force toward establishing new postbellum status quos, than about preserving the *status quo ante*. These, almost by textbook definition, are the activities of a revisionist state.

These thoughts in no way apologize for gray-zone actors such as Russia, China, Iran, or North Korea, but do draw attention to the fuller context of the causes and effects driving gray-zone conflict beyond today's new fascinations.

Conclusions

The meaning of war is not *sui generis*; it is borne of our notion of the peace we seek.²⁰

What are the United States' ultimate aspirations in the wider world? What is the peace America seeks? Any continued considerations of gray-zone conflict, its meaning, its implications, and most importantly its relevancy, need to begin with the preceding admonition and with these questions squarely in mind.

Before, not after, and certainly not absent from, addressing these principle questions, all defense, security, and military planners as well as force designers should *first* incorporate the three missing pieces of the gray-zone puzzle into their analyses and recommendations for new models, methods, and matériel innovations to counter gray-zone activity. Without attributing for these three missing pieces, America's efforts to solve its gray-zone puzzle will be incomplete. In the realm of uses of force as well as war and peace, missing pieces and the resulting incomplete picture all too often result in false starts, faulty efforts, and failed finishes. Therefore, defense planners might gather, learn, and use the following essential lessons from the three missing pieces of the gray-zone puzzle.

First, defense planners and military practitioners need to see the grand, global geopolitical lesson of gray-zone conflict as a descriptive

20 Wilson, *Thinking beyond War*.

term of the idiosyncratic and often indirect applications of a broad spectrum of techniques, tactics, and technologies levied to disrupt the established international system as well as delegitimize the United States as the leading power of the current world order. These attacks target gaps and seams within the establishment just below the threshold to trigger full, resolute use of force reactions and responses.

Gray-zone challengers' employment of these disruptive strategies as well as short-of-war tactics and techniques acknowledge the unmatched power of the combined capacity and capabilities of the United States and the Western community of democracies in any direct force-on-force confrontation, the consequential and logical need to adopt an indirect and ambiguous strategic approach to countering and combating the international establishment, and a reflection of grand tectonic shifts in the character of global geopolitical competition.

Of vital importance, the actions—what, where, and in what manner America, the leading global power, responds to and counters gray-zone conflicts—must be calculated into US strategy and defense force development equations. This step is of a grand consequence because, as the global hegemon, the leading power guarantees security and underwrites the current system. In other words, what America chooses and prepares to do and not do, as well as the steps taken to accomplish these goals, will matter greatly.

Under these geopolitical and geostrategic power-in-flux conditions, gray-zone locales and conditions must be proactively and preventively identified and collectively countered through mission-tailored coalitions that are not only willing but also fully capable. In the new gray world, alliances and coalitions are the center of gravity—the source of power and legitimacy undergirding the order of the system and the legitimacy, prestige, and reputational and instrumental power of the United States as leader—and must be invested in accordingly.²¹

Next, the stability, security, and perceived legitimacy of the liberal world order can no longer sustain America's preferences for brightly separating acts of war from the purposes of peace. War of any kind, or color, is simply war; the US military, and its allies, must prepare accordingly. America's armed services should avoid at least three traditional pitfalls typically revealed during times of geostrategic ambiguity and change, defense budget stringency, and force reductions: (1) becoming infatuated with and overcommitted to the latest trends at the expense of hedging against recurring challenges manifest throughout strategic history; (2) being tempted to rename, oversell, and fetishize the creation of new war concepts, especially in support of single-service parochial interests, that distract from the timeless and enduring nature of conflict; and (3) being guilty of overplaying the "hollow force" card. Instead, readiness needs to be seen, understood, appreciated, and approached in nothing less than terms of comprehensive joint and combined readiness.

21 This important insight was made by the combined forces commander of the counter-ISIL coalition and key members of his staff in early 2014. An acknowledgement of the importance of allies and partners as strategic centers of gravity for the United States continues to gain traction within the defense enterprise. For further comments by the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on this topic, see James Garamone, "Dunford Details Implications of Today's Threats on Tomorrow's Strategy," US Department of Defense, <http://www.defense.gov/News/Article/Article/923685/dunford-details-implications-of-todays-threats-on-tomorrows-strategy>.

Finally, maybe the most consequential lesson to learn is using labels such as gray-zone conflicts and gray-zone adversaries may carry less useful and usable purchase when we consider and examine them in a long-range context. Failing or refusing to acknowledge such realities will likely only set up the United States as a hypocritical global leading power in the courts of international public perception.

Gray-zone conflict is as gray as we choose to make it. And if we turn just some of our defense reprogramming attention to the bureaucratic areas and geographic places where the United States and the Western alliance are not nor tended to be present and aware in adequate ways, and in some instances in adequate numbers, we will be beholden to a process in which our adversaries, not us, are in the dominant position to dictate the terms of international affairs and foreign intervention, including the magnitude and direction of competition and potential conflict. While statist actors such as Russia and China certainly engage in aggression and disruptive tactics for pure power game reasons, they are nevertheless able to conceal their more primordial appetites under the fictive veil of publicly alleged responsible interventions to protect and to reestablish state authority and sovereignty. Russia's justifications for its military presence and intervention in Syria to protect Assad's legal and normative sovereign authority exemplify this kind of "false" justification.

America can ill afford continuing to react to such statist aggressions in ways that allow countries such as Russia and China to pass off themselves and their actions as protective of the *status quo ante*. One strategy might include the United States, its partners, and its allies becoming more transparent and formally declaring the grand strategy, and the associated international system, they have been promoting and leading since World War II.

Shoring up, strongpointing, reaffirming, and redeclaring what America and the Westphalian community of democracies represent and defend must become a fundamentally vital part of all efforts to overcome gray-zone conflict. Failure to take these reform efforts while energetically and expeditiously proceeding forward with operational, tactical, matériel, procedural, and technological innovations will only result in unbalanced national defense reform: contradictions will occur between what the community of nations say is their collective belief and their interventions. Such say-do gaps are ripe ground for gray-zone confrontations. Dealing adequately with gray-zone threats must also include policy, strategy, and operational force development level considerations. Leveling and limiting our focus only on rethinking and redesigning our operational ways and means for combatting gray-zone threats in the absence of at least equal effort at rethinking foreign and security policies could result in the US military moving in certain directions in its change agenda blind to the grander purposes, intent, expectations, and limitations of the American nation. The unintended consequences could prove systems-changing, in tragically negative terms in the long run.

For all these reasons, gray-zone strategic approaches as well as operational and tactical tools and techniques have a renewed and even unique relevance as the United States reconsiders its ways of war and

peace, in both how and under what circumstances America will use force in the future.

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ARE OUR STRATEGIC MODELS FLAWED?

Strategic Uncertainty, the Third Offset, and US Grand Strategy

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ABSTRACT: This article demonstrates the usefulness of rethinking our understanding of uncertainty and how that might affect the course of the Department of Defense's Third Offset Strategy and US grand strategy in general.

In the foreword to the 2015 national military strategy, General Martin E. Dempsey, then-chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff unequivocally states: "Today's global security environment is the most unpredictable I have seen in 40 years of service."¹ This bold statement fits the narrative of strategic discourse in Washington, DC, and other Western capitals during the past 25 years: today's international system is dominated by high uncertainty and unpredictability.² Despite the lip service paid to uncertainty, the Washington policy community and many academic experts have a narrow understanding of the concept. Emily Goldman describes the most common view of uncertainty in the strategic studies community well: "Uncertainty is present when the likelihood of future events is indefinite or incalculable."³

But is this simple definition of uncertainty really useful for guiding foreign policy strategic planning in today's highly unpredictable global environment? This article presents a more nuanced way of defining uncertainty and shows how separating different levels of uncertainty leads to more effective strategic planning.

The world of business strategy consulting offers a more sophisticated understanding of uncertainty than foreign policy and national security scholarship. Borrowing from this management literature, a middle way that avoids the two extreme views dominating national security scholarship on this topic materializes. As the next paragraphs show, foreign policy experts either regard the international security environment as inscrutable and unpredictable as Chairman Dempsey does, or they believe it is much more predictable and benign than the US national security community claims. Conceptualizing different levels of uncertainty, however, offers a more useful way to plan strategically for a range of foreign policy challenges, as detailed in the second section of the article. The article defines four levels of uncertainty, along with the recommended strategy tools associated with each one of them,

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1 Martin E. Dempsey, foreword to *The National Military Strategy of the United States of America 2015*, by the US Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) (Washington, DC: JCS, 2015).

2 Michael Fitzsimmons, "The Problem of Uncertainty in Strategic Planning," *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy* 48, no. 4 (Winter 2006–07): 131–46, doi:10.1080/00396330601062808; and Christopher J. Fettweis, "Threatlessness and US Grand Strategy," *Survival* 56, no. 5 (October–November 2014): 43–68, doi:10.1080/00396338.2014.962793.

3 Emily O. Goldman, *Power in Uncertain Times: Strategy in the Fog of Peace* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011), 13.

and then applies these new concepts to a few examples of uncertainty encountered in national security planning.

To demonstrate how this framework provides the US government with a useful perspective, the article uses examples of policy and strategic uncertainties from the National Intelligence Council's *Global Trends 2030: Alternative Worlds* report, and discusses them through the prism of the four levels of uncertainty.⁴ The *Global Trends* report, the most comprehensive and sophisticated effort of the US government to analyze long-term strategic uncertainty, showcases how some business ideas on uncertainty can improve planning for unknowns in the national security arena. The article applies this framework to the contentious debates on the Department of Defense's Third Offset Strategy and to the debates on America's grand strategic course. Before proceeding to this analysis, the article sketches the contours of the strategic studies community's current debate on uncertainty.

Cult of Complexity: The Binary View of Uncertainty

How do national security experts and academic students of international relations think of uncertainty? Broadly speaking, the academic and policy debates on uncertainty in the international system reveal two schools of thought, one of inscrutable uncertainty and complexity and one of overhyped threats.

Most scholars and practitioners in the national security bureaucracy rely on the distinction that risks can be estimated using probabilities, while uncertainty cannot.⁵ Since today's security environment is seen as increasingly complex and uncertain, it is also considered increasingly less predictable and more dangerous. As the *Quadrennial Defense Review 2014* puts it, the Defense Department is facing "increasing uncertainty in the future" and warns that over the long term, US forces "will have less margin of error to deal with unforeseen shifts in the security environment."⁶ Colin S. Gray expressed a common view in the pages of this journal a few years ago when he wrote, "The future is not foreseeable, at least not in a very useful sense. The challenge is to cope with uncertainty, not try to diminish it. That cannot be done reliably."⁷

In recent Congressional testimony, Henry A. Kissinger similarly stated, "The United States has not faced a more diverse and complex array of crises since the end of the Second World War." In looking around the world to key geopolitical hotspots, such as Europe, East Asia, and the Middle East, he worries "the old order is in flux while the shape of the replacement is uncertain."⁸ Retired Lieutenant General James R. Clapper Jr., Director of National Intelligence (2010–17), similarly made front-page headlines when he told Congress we live in a uniquely "complex and dangerous world" and "looking back over my

4 US National Intelligence Council (NIC), *Global Trends 2030: Alternative Worlds* (Washington, DC: NIC, 2012).

5 *Ibid.*, 12–13.

6 Chuck Hagel, *Quadrennial Defense Review 2014* (Washington, DC: US Department of Defense, 2014), 39, 64.

7 Colin S. Gray, "The 21st Century Security Environment and the Future of War," *Parameters* 38, no. 4 (Winter 2008–09): 15.

8 *Opening Statement by Dr. Henry A. Kissinger Before the US Senate Committee on Armed Services at a Hearing Convened to Discuss "Global Challenges and US National Security Strategy,"* 114th Cong. (January 29, 2015) (opening statement, Henry A. Kissinger, former US Secretary of State).

more than half a century in intelligence I have not experienced a time when we've been beset by more crises and threats around the globe."⁹

Conversely, critics of this dominant narrative on uncertainty argue a "cult of complexity" leads to overhyping threats to US interests. These scholars insist substantial threats are easier to divine and are far less worrisome than "uncertainty hawks" contend.¹⁰ Christopher J. Fettweis argues strategists "assess realistic risks and allocate scarce resources according to the most likely threats of the future." Failure to do so "entails enormous costs, in both resources and opportunity, for the US." In his judgment, the United States lives in a world of "relative safety," only perceived dangerous because of the needless worry about vague uncertain exigencies.¹¹ Michael Fitzsimmons similarly contends policymakers should rely more on prediction and should stop focusing so much on the role of uncertainty in strategic planning. In his view, "While the complexity of the international security environment may make it somewhat resistant to the type of probabilistic thinking associated with risk, a risk-oriented approach seems to be the only viable model for national-security strategic planning."¹² Lastly, other experts worry uncertainty can lead to strategic paralysis in the face of the unknown: "Succumbing to complexity does not tell us how to react; indeed, if anything, it dissuades us from reacting at all, out of fear that we cannot possibly know what to do. . . . The Cult of Complexity demands confusion and even fear in the face of incomprehensible threats."¹³

Both of these approaches to characterizing uncertainty have some truth to them and both go too far in one direction; therefore, they do not provide an adequate framework for policymakers and Department of Defense strategists faced with making real-world decisions in the space between the two extremes. As two prominent academics with experience in the policy arena explain, "Exercising judgment under uncertainty is the essence of foreign policy decision making."¹⁴ This statement captures the importance of improving our understanding of uncertainty by adopting a more nuanced view than the binary distinction between knowable risk and unknowable uncertainty.¹⁵

Contrary to those views, Hugh Courtney introduces a conceptual roadmap based on four different levels of uncertainty indicating that, rather thinking of uncertainty as an "all or nothing phenomena," the level of external uncertainty can be usefully approximated. This

9 Remarks as Delivered by James R. Clapper, Director of National Intelligence, *Worldwide Threat Assessment to the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence*, 113th Cong. (January 29, 2014) (remarks, James R. Clapper, director of National Intelligence).

10 Michael J. Gallagher, Joshua A. Geltzer, and Sebastian L. v. Gorka, "The Complexity Trap," *Parameters* 42, no. 1 (Spring 2012): 5–6. See also Fettweis, "Threatlessness"; and Fitzsimmons, "Problem of Uncertainty."

11 Fettweis, "Threatlessness," 35, 51.

12 Fitzsimmons, "Problem of Uncertainty," 143.

13 Gallagher, Geltzer, and Gorka, "The Complexity Trap," 10.

14 Bruce W. Jentleson and Andrew Bennett, "Policy Planning: Oxymoron or Sine Qua Non for U.S. Foreign Policy?," in *Good Judgment in Foreign Policy: Theory and Application*, ed. Stanley A. Renshon and Deborah Welch Larson (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003).

15 Paul K. Davis, *Lessons from RAND's Work on Planning under Uncertainty for National Security* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2012), 1. Analysts at the RAND Corporation produced some valuable and sophisticated research that conceptually moves away from the binary view by further dividing uncertainty into normal uncertainty and deep uncertainty. But, a more granular discussion of the nature of uncertainty could provide government planners and strategic decision-makers with even more tools to improve their performance.

approximation is crucial in determining what strategic planning style and tools are most useful for achieving success.¹⁶ Each level of uncertainty presents different challenges and opportunities for leaders facing the key strategy question of whether to shape the environment or to *adapt* to it.

Strategic Planning under Different Uncertainty Levels

Level 1: A Mostly Stable, Linear Environment

The lowest level of uncertainty occurs in stable and slow-changing environments where long-term linear projections are generally reliable. In the business world, such examples include utility companies, fast-food restaurants, or big-box retail stores. Firms operating in these areas can rely on predictions of estimated future profits in order to make the right decisions. Uncertainty is not entirely eliminated but can be significantly reduced by careful trend analysis and deliberate, rigorous planning based on the wealth of data available. Traditional strategic planning works well in such situations, and firms can make point predictions, calculate the payoffs associated with different strategies, and choose the most effective option. In Level 1 uncertainty, business leaders more commonly choose adaptive strategies than shaping ones because a stable environment is hard to reshape and concurrently offers enough predictability to choose a profitable position in the market that best matches their competitive advantage. Efforts to shape a stable market are rare but can pay disproportionate rewards to a successfully disruptive firm.¹⁷

In the realm of international politics, trend analysis of Level 1 uncertainty represents the dominant approach to long-term strategic planning. The *Global Trends 2030* report presents four megatrends that will shape the future of the international system: individual empowerment, the diffusion of power, demographic patterns, and the “water, food, energy nexus.” More specifically, the report makes a number of confident predictions in each of these broad categories, urging policymakers to adapt to the expected changes in the strategic environment. Some of the trends falling under these categories represent good examples of Level 1 uncertainty such as the financial impact of an aging population on government social programs, of increasing global migration and urbanization, or of the expected increase in energy consumption driven by the expanding global middle class on the demand side as well as hydraulic fracturing technology on the supply side.¹⁸ When dealing with such areas where the trends are likely to be hard to reverse, the report is correct to call for a strategic approach that adapts to the inevitable changes.

Even though adapting is usually the preferred approach under Level 1 uncertainty, there is nevertheless one important lesson that can be derived from the business literature in planning for fairly stable environments. Unanticipated major changes can still occur even in generally predictable policy areas, and such disruptions present opportunities to reshape the environment favorably. The development of horizontal

¹⁶ Hugh Courtney, *20/20 Foresight: Crafting Strategy in an Uncertain World* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 2001), 3–5.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 21–23, 49.

¹⁸ NIC, *Global Trends 2030*, iv, 21–38.

drilling and hydraulic fracturing, for example, allowed the United States to reshape the oil supply market in a very short period. Notably, the previous version of the *Global Trends* report predicted Russia and Iran were well placed to become “energy kingpins” given their oil and gas reserves, while the United States was seen as continually dependent on energy imports.¹⁹ Such dramatic shocks could happen again on both the supply side and the demand side due to technological advances. To take another example, the increasingly anti-immigrant political sentiment rising in Europe and North America could drastically alter the linear growth in migration anticipated by *Global Trends 2030* and bring about unanticipated and dangerous political, economic, and humanitarian consequences such as those witnessed by the Syrian refugees roiling Western European societies. In addition to adapting to changes, therefore, policymakers must also consider actively reshaping these megatrends as well as reacting to dramatic shifts caused by unexpected shocks to the system.

Level 2: Alternate Futures and Bifurcated Choices

At the next level of uncertainty, strategists face an environment with a few clearly distinguishable possibilities out of which only one will occur. Common examples of such areas in the business world include regulatory choices—which regulations lawmakers will adopt—and industry standards—Windows or Mac and DivX or DVD. Strategists estimate the probabilities of each option and the expected rewards, deciding accordingly. The tools for these kinds of choices include well-known techniques such as decision-trees and game theoretical computations as well as scenario analyses. In such a Level 2 environment, both shaping and adapting strategies can be successful depending on the firm’s internal strengths. Firms can try to shape the environment to bring about the option most favorable for them by adopting a strategy that changes the likelihood of each scenario, or they can hedge their bets initially and focus on adapting and updating their investment choices later based on indicators from the market.²⁰

The idea of using scenarios and game-theory as strategic planning tools is of course familiar to national security experts, and the *Global Trends 2030* report offers possible scenarios to illuminate a number of important questions about the future, referred to as potential game-changers. The major weakness of the report, however, is that it does not distinguish between scenarios characterized by Level 2 uncertainty—a known number of possible options—and more speculative ones—a known range of outcomes—discussed in the following section of the article. The report sometimes implies its scenarios cover all realistic options, while other times it offers best- and worst-case scenarios with some intermediate options. This presentation is of limited use for strategic planners because the tools and strategic approaches best suited for Level 2 are different than the ones for Levels 3 and 4. In the rest of this article, the author will provide a more useful framework for both intelligence analysis and long-term strategic planning by separating three sets of the *Global Trends* scenarios into the levels of uncertainty used in business.

19 NIC, *Global Trends 2025: A Transformed World* (Washington, DC: NIC, 2008), 42.

20 Courtney, *20/20 Foresight*, 25–28, 50.

The future of East Asia, for example, is described in a Level 2 framework with four distinct options collectively exhausting the plausible alternatives:

1. A continuation of the present order mixes rules-based cooperation and quiet competition within a regional framework structured around existing alignments sustained by US leadership.
2. Dynamic shifts in relative power and a reduced US role fuels a balance-of-power order to the unconstrained great power competition.
3. An East Asian community consolidates along the lines of Europe's democratic peace, with China's political liberalization a precondition for such a regional evolution.
4. A Sinocentric order centered on Beijing sustains a different kind of East Asian community on the basis of China's extension of a sphere of influence across the region.²¹

Once the possible futures are outlined, planning for Level 2 uncertainty begins by using a cost-benefit analysis for each of the options and determining whether a shaping or an adapting approach would be more likely to succeed for each outcome. The first option above, continued US leadership in East Asia, presents the most benefits for the United States, and the "Pivot to Asia" strategic shift undertaken by the Obama administration arguably suggests the cost to pursue this option are worth it. The second option, a return to a balance-of-power approach, seems the most likely option based on the history of the region and the dominant pattern of power-balancing in the international system. The third option is the least likely one, but its potential outcome of a secure and politically free East Asia without the need for large American resource commitments would represent the most effective cost-benefit calculus from the US perspective. The fourth option would harm US regional interests, but it is also fairly unlikely given the strong skepticism of China's regional hegemonic ambitions among many of its neighbors, most importantly Japan. The key uncertainty for Washington, therefore, is whether it should aim to shape the environment toward options one or three. Another possibility, strategists might select an adaptive approach, hedging to prepare for all options, with a particular focus on option two, the most likely to occur.²²

Level 3: A Known Range of Possibilities

In Level 3 uncertainty, strategists face a range of possible outcomes within fairly well understood lower and upper boundaries without details on the possible scenarios presented in Level 2. Specific examples from the business world include the uncertainty present in the customer demand for new or improved products or services, such as a new commercial airplane or high-speed broadband. Firms have a good sense of the lowest and highest possible values, but they are uncertain about where the actual outcome of their strategic move will fall within the known range of possibilities. Strategic planning tools, such as scenario-planning exercises under Level 3 uncertainty, serve to show merely

²¹ NIC, *Global Trends 2030*, 80.

²² *Ibid.*, 83. A similar analysis could also be performed regarding Russia's future grand strategy as the report outlines three possibilities for Moscow's approach to the West: reluctant partner, ambivalent relationship, or antagonist.

plausible descriptions of different futures, not exhaustive ones such as those under Level 2 uncertainty. Courtney's study recommends firms develop a limited number of alternative scenarios with unique implications for strategic choices that also focus on the probable range of future outcomes and not the possible range.²³

Similar to Level 2, a shaping strategy under Level 3 focuses on evolving the industry toward the firm's strengths. An adaptive hedging strategy similar to Level 2 is harder to sustain across the range of possible futures, but firms can successfully employ emergent strategies under Level 3 uncertainty when they choose an adaptive style.²⁴ The key to a successful emergent strategy is the ability to continuously *learn* from actions through trial and error and to maintain a flexible leadership approach that can quickly capitalize on shifts in external conditions.

In the world of international affairs, a large number of policy areas fall under Level 3 uncertainty. The *Global Trends* report lists best- and worst-case scenarios for issues such as trade liberalization, climate change, nuclear proliferation, and responsibility to protect, as well as failed states and ungoverned spaces; however, the report's weakness is a mere outline of the best and worst without also fleshing out other scenarios between the two extremes. Thus, employing the strategic planning tools suited for Level 3 uncertainty is difficult.

In the case of nuclear proliferation, for example, the report highlights the following lower and upper boundaries:

Worst case: Iran and North Korea trigger others' active interest in acquiring or developing nuclear weapons. Terrorists or extremist elements also acquire weapons of mass destruction material. The non-proliferation treaty erodes, potentially triggering a total breakdown in the international system.

Best case: Iran and North Korea are dissuaded from further weapons of mass destruction development and terrorist groups do not acquire such weapons. The West may need to extend the nuclear umbrella to those countries feeling threatened by proliferation.

While these two scenarios describe the likely range of possibilities well enough, they are not enough for the challenge of managing uncertainty in a Level 3 environment. Without sketching out intermediate scenarios, policymakers' efforts to shape the policy environment in a more positive direction or to adapt their strategies if external conditions negatively shift the environment will be without guideposts and metrics. In the particular case of nuclear proliferation, some possible scenarios could examine a case where Iran's nuclear program is somewhat contained but other Middle East states aim to achieve limited nuclear capability, a scenario where Iran's nuclear program is temporarily stopped but North Korea sells weapons of mass destruction material to terrorist groups, or a situation where Iran's program develops in secret and tests a nuclear device but other countries in the region rely on other forms of deterrence rather than pursuing nuclear programs of their own.

23 Courtney, *20/20 Foresight*, 29–31, 126–27.

24 *Ibid.*, 51. For more on emergent strategies in the business world, see Henry Mintzberg, *Tracking Strategies: Toward a General Theory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

Once several such scenarios have been developed and rigorously analyzed, Western policymakers could potentially shape the environment more adroitly by manipulating threats and incentives to would-be proliferators. Policymakers might also be better prepared for potential surprises and better able to learn from these developments so they might shift their strategies to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

Global Trends 2030 also shows the limits of a binary view of uncertainty when it applies a trend analysis Level 1 methodology to issues that would be more properly addressed under Level 3. One such area worth mentioning here is the alleged diffusion in power from West to East, and more directly from America to China. Not only would such an approach allow for a richer scholarly discussion about future developments related to these issues, but it would also broaden the spectrum of strategic responses to include shaping options or emergent learning in addition to the planned adaptation usually used for Level 1 megatrends. As the recent dramatic fall in China's stock market showed, Beijing's future economic growth path appears far less certain than commonly predicted.²⁵ Meanwhile, the US economy performed better than anticipated during the same time, and some of its fundamental strengths relative to the emerging economies appear to have been underestimated.²⁶

Level 4: True Ambiguity

The most uncertain environment is characterized by true ambiguity; thus, it is fundamentally unpredictable. This is the realm of the “unknown unknowns” famously described by Donald Rumsfeld and the “black swans” popularized by Nassim Nicholas Taleb.²⁷ In the business world, such Level 4 uncertainty can be found in the aftermath of major politico-economic changes (i.e., entering the Russian market postcommunism), in entering entirely new markets, or in planning for very long-term market conditions.²⁸

In such highly uncertain environments, Courtney recommends strategic planning should proceed backwards: instead of analyzing the environment and choosing the appropriate strategy to reach goals, leaders should start with various possible strategies and reason backwards about the future to support each strategy. Because qualitative judgments ultimately dominate strategy choices under Level 4 uncertainty, a rigorous and systematic examination of the likely assumptions that would need to be true for the strategy to succeed is all the more important. And, as Courtney observes, “working backwards” also provides one with incremental evidence “to determine if a strategy is on track.” Paradoxically, Level 4 uncertainty sometimes favors a shaping strategy because of the opportunity to set the rules and achieve first-mover advantage. Alternatively, an adaptive approach in high uncertainty

25 Keith Bradsher, “China Falters, and the Global Economy Is Forced to Adapt,” *New York Times*, August 26, 2015.

26 Nelson D. Schwartz, “As Economies Gasp Globally, U.S. Growth Quickens,” *New York Times*, August 27, 2015.

27 Donald Rumsfeld, “Known and Unknown: Author's Note,” Rumsfeld Papers, December 2010, <http://papers.rumsfeld.com/about/page/authors-note>; and Nassim Nicholas Taleb, *The Black Swan: The Impact of the Highly Improbable* (New York: Random House, 2007).

28 Courtney, *20/20 Foresight*, 32–33.

requires a firm to constantly take advantage of emerging opportunities before its competitors.²⁹

One example of true ambiguity the United States and its allies repeatedly mishandled in recent decades is the uncertainty in the aftermath of military operations resulting in regime change. The failure to properly plan for the Level 4 uncertainty that characterized Iraq and Libya after the removal of their dictators led to many of the negative strategic consequences of those tactically successful initial military campaigns. The working backwards approach suitable for such truly ambiguous situations would start with several possible desired end states for the military campaign (i.e., strong central government, democratic government, federal system, etc.) and would question what would need to be true for each outcome to occur. Then, civilian and military leaders should work together to design various strategic paths to the desired political objective and set benchmarks and guideposts to indicate whether the strategy is working as intended or it needs to be adapted.

One of the worst problems for the US military in Iraq was the failure to adapt to the rapidly deteriorating situation once the initial assumptions and predictions for the post-Saddam period proved inaccurate. Even though parts of the State Department and the Pentagon conducted some planning that focused on the likely best- and worst-case scenarios, the entire US government did not approach post-Saddam Iraq expecting the true ambiguity of Level 4 uncertainty. Otherwise, the US military arguably would have prioritized short-term goals like maintaining order and stability more than long-term goals such as the establishment of a democratic political system.

Levels of Uncertainty and the Third Offset

Where and how the US Armed Forces will fight a war 20 or 30 years from now arguably represent the most critical questions for the Pentagon's strategic planning, programming, and budgeting process. Moreover, the answers to these questions impact defense investments in weapon systems that need years of research to develop and are scheduled to stay on the battlefield many decades into the future. In light of the conceptual framework discussed above, answering the main questions requires first deciding which level of uncertainty best captures the future operational warfighting environment and consequently deciding whether the Pentagon should predominantly adopt a shaping or an adapting approach.

Indeed, a debate has been raging among defense experts on whether the United States should embark on the Pentagon's current Third Offset Strategy fueled by futuristic high-end technologies that will allow the United States to shape the battlefield over the next decades according to our preferred way of war or if America should focus more

²⁹ Ibid., 52, 129–31.

on adaptable investments, on short-term needs, and on a balanced portfolio across all domains of warfare.³⁰

Pentagon leaders during the Obama era embraced the Third Offset and attempted to institutionalize the strategy throughout the department, essentially regarding future warfare as a Level 1 uncertainty. These leaders argue the winning strategy for the United States is reshaping the battlefield by offsetting the current trends threatening American interests through a leap in technology that would give the United States a first-mover advantage. More specifically, Third Offset proponents contend recent Chinese, and to a lesser extent Russian, advances in anti-access/area denial warfighting equipment (particularly advanced missiles, cyber, and electronic warfare), as well as the efficacy of “ubiquitous precision munitions” on the battlefield against state and nonstate actors, requires the United States to invest in futuristic systems such as unmanned submarines, electromagnetic rail guns, directed-energy weapons—high-energy lasers that could blind enemy sensors, and a range of other new technologies.³¹

On the contrary, former Secretary of the Navy Richard J. Danzig advocated in a report on future defense planning strategies for the Pentagon to shape the type of conflict it will be asked to fight next as a Level 4 uncertainty:

The number and diversity of variables that influence the national security environment confound multi-decade forecasting. Accurate prediction would need to anticipate changes in, among other things, technologies, economies, institutions, domestic and international politics and, of course, the nature of warfare. Each of these alone would be imponderable. Getting them all right at once is wildly improbable. Worse still, the evolution of these variables is complex and nonlinear.³²

The most appropriate resource allocation strategy, therefore, involves keeping options open with multiple “bets” on the future, choosing the most adaptable investments, and relying on emergent learning to make the right choices down the road.³³ Versatility and balance, military strategist Frank Hoffman writes, should guide defense investments rather than a search for the “disruptive breakthroughs” or “silver bullets” currently promoted by what he calls “technology optimists.”³⁴

Conceptualizing uncertainty through the prism of the four different levels presented in this article allows a different way to think about the US defense strategy debate outlined above. If the Third Offset

30 For the Third Offset arguments, see Robert Martinage, *Toward a New Offset Strategy: Exploiting U.S. Long-Term Advantages to Restore U.S. Global Power Projection Capability* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2014); Robert O. Work, “The Third Offset Strategy” (speech, Reagan Defense Forum, Reagan Presidential Library, Simi Valley, CA, November 7, 2015), <http://www.defense.gov/News/Speeches/Speech-View/Article/628246/reagan-defense-forum-the-third-offset-strategy>; and Shawn Brimley and Loren DeJonge Schulman, “Sustaining the Third Offset Strategy in the Next Administration,” *War on the Rocks*, March 15, 2016, <https://warontherocks.com/2016/03/sustaining-the-third-offset-strategy-in-the-next-administration/>. For the adaptive strategy view, see Richard Danzig, *Driving in the Dark: Ten Propositions about Prediction and National Security* (Washington, DC: Center for a New American Security, 2011); and Frank Hoffman, “Black Swans and Pink Flamingos: Five Principles for Force Design,” *War on the Rocks*, August 19, 2015, <https://warontherocks.com/2015/08/black-swans-and-pink-flamingos-five-principles-for-force-design/>.

31 David Ignatius, “America Is No Longer Guaranteed Military Victory. These Weapons Could Change That,” *Washington Post*, August 16, 2016, A15. For more, see Martinage, *New Offset Strategy*.

32 Danzig, *Driving in the Dark*, 15.

33 *Ibid.*, 19.

34 Hoffman, “Black Swans.”

school rightly thinks the future shape of warfare could be confidently forecasted based on recent trends in advances in military technology, then their recommendation for engaging in efforts to reshape future warfare according to areas of US competitive advantage are potentially very rewarding, but also very hard to accomplish given the difficulty of shaping an environment characterized by Level 1 uncertainty.

Conversely, if the analysts calling for a balanced and versatile force correctly understand the future of warfare as a Level 4 true uncertainty, then their emphasis on adaption is the right way to go only if the US military and Department of Defense leadership will be able to outperform their adversaries in terms of learning from the emerging characteristics of the future operational environment. This incremental and reactive approach does not offer the potential first-mover advantage of a more ambitious shaping approach, but it may nevertheless be the one that also has a higher expected value given it is arguably easier to implement and relies less on tenuous long-range forecasts.

Levels of Uncertainty and American Grand Strategy

Separating uncertainty into levels also provides a different way to think about the vigorous debates on the future of American grand strategy under the new Trump administration. Micah Zenko and Rebecca Friedman Lissner recently warned that Trump would “regret not having a grand strategy,” echoing a sentiment expressed by other Washington observers who perceive an improvisational style in the president’s foreign policy decisions.³⁵ Other scholars claim that Trump has a consistent grand strategy, albeit a misguided one.³⁶ Both of these schools of thought implicitly believe that the administration should pursue a grand strategy, but according to business theorists whether the focus should be on long-term plans versus short-term emergent adaptation depends on the level of uncertainty.

Business theorist Richard P. Rumelt argues that, rather than focusing on long-term goals, in conditions of high uncertainty short-term goals should be prioritized: “The proximate objective is guided by forecasts of the future, but the more uncertain the future, the more its essential logic is that of ‘taking a strong position and creating options,’ not looking far ahead.”³⁷ If at lower levels of uncertainty a traditional focus on long-term deliberate strategic planning might work at higher levels, as Henry Mintzberg puts it, the strategist would be more of “a pattern recognizer” and “a learner,” as opposed to a “designer.”³⁸ Similarly, the Boston Consulting Group, a leading management consulting firm, advances a concept of “adaptive strategy” as the key to strategic success.

In today’s world, which is often characterized by Level 3 and Level 4 uncertainties in many markets, the emergent adaptive approach “largely

35 Micah Zenko and Rebecca Friedman Lissner, “Trump Is Going to Regret Not Having a Grand Strategy,” *Foreign Policy*, January 13, 2017; and Karen DeYoung, “Do Campaign Statements and Tweets Add Up to a Trump Foreign Policy Strategy?,” *Washington Post*, January 10, 2017.

36 Hal Brands and Colin Kahl, “Trump’s Grand Strategic Train Wreck,” *Foreign Policy*, January 31, 2017.

37 Richard P. Rumelt, *Good Strategy, Bad Strategy: The Difference and Why It Matters* (New York: Crown Business, 2011), 111.

38 Mintzberg, *Tracking Strategies*.

erases the distinction between planning and implementation, since successful strategies emerge from practice rather than from analysis and design.”³⁹

Therefore, before even debating the substantive merits of one long-term grand strategic framework versus another, policymakers and government planners should focus their attention on analyzing the type of uncertainty characterizing the environment surrounding their most pressing national security threats.

This article presented four levels of uncertainty, as they have been developed in the business world, and discussed some of the strategic tools and styles best suited for each level. The uncertainty surrounding many national security challenges could be similarly divided to categorize specific policy problems in one of the four levels and subsequently choose whether to adopt shaping or adapting strategies to address them.

³⁹ Martin Reeves et al., “Adaptive Advantage,” *bcg.perspectives*, January 20, 2010, para. 11, https://www.bcgperspectives.com/content/articles/future_strategy_business_unit_strategy_adaptive_advantage/.

ARE OUR STRATEGIC MODELS FLAWED?

Ends + Ways + Means = (Bad) Strategy

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ABSTRACT: Within the US defense community, strategy making has become a narrow-minded exercise rooted in the concepts of ends, ways, and means and the whole-of-government approach. Strategic thinking can be improved by defining strategy as a theory of success and understanding that the purpose of strategy is to create advantage, generate new sources of power, and exploit weaknesses in the opponent. This analysis of the 2009 Afghanistan policy review and strategy-making process illustrates an approach to overcoming dysfunctional strategic practices.

Over the past two years, American military leaders have repeatedly highlighted the need to develop leaders with strong critical and creative thinking skills who will enable the United States to field a superior joint force over the next decade. These efforts imply the US defense community has failed to develop and utilize these skills over the past 15 years. General Martin E. Dempsey, the recently retired chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, called for “agile and adaptive leaders with the requisite values, strategic vision, and critical thinking skills to keep pace with the changing strategic environment.”¹ General Joseph Dunford, the current chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, recently told National Defense University graduates: “There is no substitute for leadership that recognizes the implications of new ideas, new technologies and new approaches and actually anticipates and effects those adaptations.”²

These are praiseworthy goals; however, the challenge of achieving them is profound. The military leaders quoted above generally focus on the need to educate up-and-coming officers to be better strategic thinkers. They do not seem to grasp the reality of fundamental flaws in the dominant way of conceptualizing strategy in the US defense community. Far too often strategy is an exercise in means-based planning; it is inherently uncreative, noncritical, and limits new and adaptive thinking.

Our strategic problems have two main causes: a formulaic understanding of strategy and a simplistic understanding of means or

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1 Martin E. Dempsey, “Desired Leader Attributes for Joint Force 2020” (memorandum, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, June 28, 2013), 1. See also Martin E. Dempsey, “Joint Education” (white paper, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, July 16, 2012), 4–5.

2 Jim Garamone, “Dunford to NDU Grads: Embrace Change and Innovation,” US Joint Chiefs of Staff, June 9, 2016, <http://www.jcs.mil/Media/News/News-Display/Article/796366/dunford-to-ndu-grads-embrace-change-and-innovation/>.

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resources. First, the US defense community has a literal formula for strategy: ends + ways + means = strategy. There is some value to conceptualizing strategy in this manner; however, this model has become a crutch undermining creative and effective strategic thinking. Like any crutch, the supportive structure of the formula originally served an important purpose of avoiding an ends-means mismatch. This approach has become counterproductive because it has the effect of neutering the ways.

Second, the concept of a comprehensive or whole-of-government approach to solving strategic problems fosters an overemphasis on simplistically applying resources—the means. By this logic, whatever the problem is, simply apply all the elements of national power—diplomatic, information, military, economic, financial, intelligence, and law enforcement (DIMEFIL)—and the problem is solved. Under this approach, the strategist simply fills in each box or, better yet, creates a diagram showing each element of national power as a line of effort directed at an enemy center of gravity or critical vulnerability. This is the stuff of “PowerPoint nirvana” but encourages strategists to avoid thinking creatively and precisely about resources and power.

In sum, the ends + ways + means formula interacts with a simplistic notion of means to create a situation where strategy is reduced to a perfunctory exercise in allocating resources. This approach is an excellent way to foster policy stability, but it is not a recipe for critical and creative thinking. The remainder of this article elaborates on the main failings of the American way of strategy, suggests how a new definition of strategy can overcome those failings, and discusses US strategy in Afghanistan to illustrate these points.

The Lykke Model

In the decades following its publication in *Military Review*, the so-called Lykke model of military strategy has become widely influential among members of the US defense community, particularly those in the US Army. Colonel Arthur F. Lykke Jr. provides this description of his formula: “Strategy equals *ends* (objectives toward which one strives) plus *ways* (courses of action) plus *means* (instruments by which some end can be achieved).”³ This formula is deeply ingrained in the thinking of US military officers and analysts. One author notes, “It is no exaggeration to say that the simple elegance of his model . . . influenced generations of strategic thinkers.

The importance of the Lykke model became legendary among graduates in senior positions in the US armed forces, as well as with the AWC’s [US Army War College] distinguished International Fellows, many of whom went on to lead their nation’s military establishments.”⁴ Another commentator pithily remarks, “This formula is as recognizable to modern strategists as Einstein’s equation $E=mc^2$ is to physicists.”⁵ While it is difficult to determine exactly how influential the Lykke

3 Arthur F. Lykke Jr., “Defining Military Strategy,” *Military Review* 69, no. 5 (May 1989): 3.

4 Joseph R. Cerami, “Introduction,” in *US Army War College Guide to National Security Issues*, ed. Joseph R. Cerami and James F. Holcomb Jr. (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute [SSI], 2001), 7.

5 Antulio J. Echevarria II, “Op-Ed: Is Strategy Really a Lost Art?,” SSI, September 13, 2013, <http://strategicstudiesinstitute.Army.mil/index.cfm/articles//Is-Strategy-Really-A-Lost-Art/2013/09/13>.

model is, many similar formulations of strategy permeate the broader intellectual milieu of American strategic thinking.⁶

In theory, the equation seems to be a simple, logical, and practical way to conceptualize strategy; however, there are several problems in practice. First, the ways part of the equation tends to be relegated to a supporting role as the undefined thing linking ends and means. Lykke's model purposely highlights the connection between ends and means because his approach to strategy was highly influenced by the perception that Vietnam-era strategists overextended the United States by not aligning goals with resources.⁷

As he explains, we should imagine a three-legged stool with ends, ways, and means each represented by one of the legs. Legs with different sizes cause the stool to tilt: "If military resources are not compatible with strategic concepts, or commitments are not matched by military capabilities, we may be in trouble. The angle of tilt represents risk, further defined as the possibility of loss, or damage, or of not achieving an objective."⁸ Thus, risk is generated primarily by a deficiency in military resources. From this perspective, Lykke's model is useful and sensible; it keeps us from ignoring the constraint of resources, which in theory, should prevent us from implementing unrealistic strategies.

There are significant costs, however, to highlighting the means and the ends while sidelining the ways. Viewing strategy as a problem of ends-means congruence is a seductive simplification. This kind of thinking leads to infinitely repeating the question of how many boots should be on the ground. A casual observer of American strategic discourse over the past decade and a half could be excused for thinking strategy is simply a debate about how many troops should be deployed for combat operations. This approach misses the core function of strategy, which is to figure out what to do with those boots on the ground, or even better, what are the alternatives to boots on the ground. The result of this analysis is what Lykke calls ways.

In practice, the ways element of the formula is much more difficult to conceptualize than goals (the ends) and resources (the means). Most discussions of ways treat it as a synonym for plan of action. In this manner of thinking, ways are simply the actions to be taken using the resources available to achieve a goal. For military strategists, falling back on tactics and operational art is all too easy; if given an easy way out, we will take it. If we can turn strategy into planning, we will.

The second problem is the overinclusiveness of Lykke's suggested definition of strategy—ends, ways, and means. In practice, a specific strategy will have a goal and it will use resources, but aligning resources with goals is part of the strategic planning process, not the strategy itself. Strategy is strategy, goals are goals, and resources are resources. Ends and means do not belong in a definition of strategy. By conflating ends, ways, and means with strategy, Lykke's approach makes it more difficult to identify and understand the distinctive meaning of strategy. In terms of the Lykke model, ways comes closest to capturing the true meaning of

⁶ Simply typing the words "ends, ways, means, strategy" into an Internet search engine returns thousands of hits.

⁷ Lykke, "Defining Military Strategy," 2.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 6.

strategy; however, defining it as a course of action minimizes the intellectual burden of strategy and puts strategists in the position of applying doctrine rather than the creative and critical thinking mind-set required for effective strategic thinking.

In sum, under Lykke's formulation, strategy becomes simply a planning exercise whereby goals and means are aligned. Military strategists receive the political goal and are tasked to align the relevant existing resources, and combatant commanders use the resources according to established doctrine.⁹ One element of our current strategy in Iraq and Syria, for example, uses airstrikes to destroy command and control targets, supply depots, and troop concentrations in order to degrade the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). At the same time, US troops are training and supporting various Sunni Arab and Kurdish factions, hoping to get weapons in the hands of groups willing to fight ISIL.

The ways simply designates where the means should be allocated. Approaches other than directing fires at ISIL targets do not seem to receive much attention from Department of Defense strategists or policymakers. Alternatively, the United States could use a political approach to undermine the governing ability of ISIL in the territory it controls.¹⁰ But instead of debating strategy, we debate the number of sorties, the types of targets, and who to give weapons to. These are important issues, but they miss the more fundamental issues of strategy.

The Whole-of-Government Approach

The concept of a comprehensive or whole-of-government approach further encourages the transformation of strategy into means-based planning. The whole-of-government concept is defined as using all the elements or instruments of national power, typically expressed as DIMEFIL for diplomatic, information, military, economic, financial, intelligence, and law enforcement, to respond to a strategic challenge.¹¹ The reason for introducing the whole-of-government concept was to reflect the reality that military power alone cannot solve our national security problems. In essence, the Department of Defense is asking other government agencies for help handling complex problems like postconflict stabilization and development. The types of missions given to the US Armed Forces since 2001 have shown convincingly that military power alone is not enough to meet contemporary national security challenges.

Unfortunately, the whole-of-government approach fosters bad strategy. In practice, applying the instruments of national power works as a replacement for strategic thinking. A strategist does not have to think about what should be done to solve a national security problem, the answer is already there, no matter what the problem. The comprehensive approach is a solution waiting to be applied to every problem. Far too

9 The US Army designated an official functional area for strategists: FA59. The other services are not quite so bold.

10 Maciej Bartkowski, "Can Political Struggle Against ISIL Succeed Where Violence Cannot?" *War on the Rocks*, December 20, 2014, <http://warontherocks.com/2014/12/can-political-struggle-against-isil-succeed-where-violence-cannot/>.

11 For reporting on the introduction of the term into the national security lexicon see, Walter Pincus, "Pentagon Recommends 'Whole-of-Government' National Security Plans," *Washington Post*, February 2, 2009.

often strategists using the whole-of-government approach simply fill in the seven boxes corresponding to each element of national power to demonstrate their strategy is comprehensive. In truth, not every problem actually requires all elements of national power. By trying to do too much, we can end up unfocused and confused, a great recipe for bad strategy.¹²

Ironically, specifying exactly seven types of power works against the initial justification of a whole-of-government approach, which is to broaden our understanding of the resources that can be applied to strategic problems. As part of the process of analyzing strengths and weaknesses, surveying how different elements of national power can be utilized, indeed, thinking carefully about DIMEFIL makes sense and can certainly generate insights into the types of solutions available to solve national security problems. But, starting with the notion of seven and only seven forms of national power and all of them should always be utilized to implement a whole-of-government solution is infantile. In fact, General Dempsey recently seems to have added another element of national power to the list: energy.¹³ So now we have DIMEFILE? The point is there is no set number of tools a government can use to solve a problem, to think otherwise is foolhardy.

Rethinking Strategy

How can we do better? The first step is defining strategy in a manner that captures its distinctiveness as a concept. There are a number of possible definitions to choose from, but most of them suffer from significant weaknesses. First, several prominent strategic thinkers define strategy too narrowly in military terms. Colin Gray, for example, defines strategy as “the use that is made of force and the threat of force for the ends of policy.”¹⁴ This definition is insufficient even in the realm of pure military strategy. In warfighting, a broad range of tools should be considered beyond military force. Irregular conflicts, in particular, highlight the need for a broader definition of strategy. Furthermore, Gray’s definition does not give us any idea of what strategy actually is: what does it mean to say that strategy is the use that is made of force for the ends of policy?

A second common mistake is to be overly inclusive, and in so doing, lose a clear sense of what is distinctive about strategy. As noted above, this is the core problem with Lykke’s definition of strategy. Others also make this mistake. Business school professor Richard P. Rumelt defines strategy as “a coherent set of analyses, concepts, policies, arguments, and actions that respond to a high-stakes challenge.”¹⁵ Analyses, concepts, policies, arguments, and actions are all potentially important parts of

12 See Charles Dunlap, “A Whole Lot of Substance or a Whole Lot of Rhetoric? A Perspective on a Whole of Government Approach to Security Challenges,” in *Conflict Management and Whole of Government: Useful Tools for US National Security Strategy*, ed. Volker C. Franke and Robert H. Dorff (Carlisle, PA: SSI, 2012), 185–216, <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.Army.mil/pdf/files/pub1102.pdf>.

13 Jim Garamone, “Dempsey Talks Caution, Whole-of-Government Approach,” US Department of Defense, September 22, 2015, <http://www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/618120/dempsey-talks-caution-whole-of-government-approach>.

14 Colin S. Gray, *Modern Strategy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 17.

15 Richard P. Rumelt, *Good Strategy, Bad Strategy: The Difference and Why It Matters* (New York: Crown Business, 2011), 6.

formulating, communicating, and implementing strategy, but they are not strategy. By including too many elements in a definition of strategy, we risk obfuscating the meaning so much that the concept loses any coherent meaning.

A third major problem with definitions of strategy is the propensity to describe good strategy or to list the things that strategy should do rather than to actually define what strategy is. Lawrence Freedman defines strategy as “the art of creating power.”¹⁶ This is an excellent definition of what strategy should do, but again does not help us understand what a strategy actually is beyond telling us it is an art. Another description of strategy by prominent defense community intellectuals suffers from a similar problem: “Strategy is fundamentally about identifying or creating asymmetric advantages that can be exploited to help achieve one’s ultimate objectives despite resource and other constraints, most importantly the opposing efforts of adversaries or competitors and the inherent unpredictability of strategic outcomes.”¹⁷ Krepinevich and Watts tell us what strategy should do, but not what it is.

The two definitions that come closest to articulating a distinctive meaning for strategy are offered by Barry Posen and Eliot Cohen. Posen defines grand strategy as “a state’s theory about how it can best ‘cause’ security for itself.”¹⁸ Cohen defines strategy as a “theory of victory.”¹⁹ The key insight by Posen and Cohen is the inclusion of the term theory. If we define theories as “statements predicting which actions will lead to what results—and why,” we can move toward a better definition of strategy that is general, but not too inclusive, and captures the essence of the concept.²⁰

If we use the Posen-Cohen approach with a more general definition of purpose, we arrive at a sufficient working definition: strategy is a theory of success. This creates the expectation that anything called a strategy will be a causal explanation of how a given action or set of actions will cause success. Most strategies will include multiple intervening variables and conditions.²¹ Defining strategy as a theory of success encourages creative thinking while keeping the strategist rooted in the process of causal analysis; it brings assumptions to light and forces strategists to clarify exactly how they plan to cause the desired end state to occur.

Does the new definition of strategy improve upon the Lykke model? Does it take us away from means-based planning? Yes, in two main ways. First, defining strategy as a theory of success requires us to make a claim about how our proposed actions will actually cause success to happen. If the emphasis switches from applying means to an end, to figuring out how to cause our preferred outcome, then the conversation

16 Lawrence Freedman, *Strategy: A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), xii.

17 Andrew F. Krepinevich and Barry D. Watts, *Regaining Strategic Competence* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2009), 19.

18 Barry Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine: France, Britain, and Germany between the World Wars* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986), 13.

19 Eliot A. Cohen, *Supreme Command: Soldiers, Statesmen, and Leadership in Wartime* (New York: Free Press, 2002), 33.

20 Clayton M. Christensen and Michael E. Raynor, “Why Hard-Nosed Executives Should Care about Management Theory,” *Harvard Business Review* 81, no. 9 (September 2003): 3.

21 For examples, see Stephen Van Evera, *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997), 9–12.

is less about what resources we have available and more about what actions will lead to success and how. This shift will inevitably lead to the development of several rival theories of success, which is a crucial part of the strategy-making process. This approach may seem overly scientific or intellectual, but military commanders already have experience in the area of developing and choosing from multiple proposals. The campaign planning method is based on developing and evaluating alternative courses of action.²² This is also the basic logic behind the scientific method and a form of intelligence analysis called “hypothesis generation and testing.”²³ The process can be applied at the levels of military strategy and national strategy to clearly articulate and evaluate alternative theories of success.

The second benefit of defining strategy as a theory of success encourages us to think more effectively about power. A key principle of the Lykke model is to work with the resources or power that you currently have; however, more nuanced thinking about power suggests power is not a set value and instead is determined by the strategy. Freedman makes this point rather emphatically: strategy “is about getting more out of a situation than the starting balance of power would suggest. It is the art of creating power.”²⁴ Like Freedman, Rumelt argues part of the purpose of strategy is the discovery of power. The broader principle is that good strategy is “an insight that, when acted upon, provide[s] a much more effective way to compete—the discovery of hidden power in the situation.”²⁵ To think of means only as existing resources dramatically underplays the actual sources of power. Since one of the purposes of strategy is to generate power, it does not make much sense to define sources of power before developing a strategy.

Implications

Judging an abstract argument without an empirical example is difficult; therefore, this section applies the Posen-Cohen model to the Obama administration’s strategy-making process for Afghanistan in 2009. The process was deficient in three ways: it was almost entirely means based, there was only one real option presented, and the result was bad strategy. This brief example suggests there are high costs to our present approach and potentially significant benefits to a new approach to strategy.

What emerges from journalistic accounts of the 2009 Obama administration strategy-making process is the observation that the entire discussion by civilian officials and military officers was about the number of troops, not strategy. In August 2009, International Security and Assistance Force Commander General Stanley McChrystal presented President Barack Obama with two strategies and three levels of troop deployment: 10,000 troops for a ramped up training mission or 40,000 or 85,000 troops for counterinsurgency (COIN) operations. The appearance of choice was a facade; there was “only one genuine

22 See Jack D. Kem, *Planning for Action: Campaign Concepts and Tools* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: US Command and General Staff College / Army Combined Arms Center, 2012), 129–52.

23 Richards J. Heuer Jr. and Randolph H. Pherson, *Structured Analytic Techniques for Intelligence Analysis* (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2011), 147–76.

24 Freedman, *Strategy*, xii.

25 Rumelt, *Good Strategy, Bad Strategy*, 31.

option,” the middle one—40,000 troops for comprehensive COIN.²⁶ Obama quickly understood the reality and was not happy; he wanted more options. After months of discussion and debate, his refined options were: 20,000 more troops for counterterrorism plus other initiatives; 30,000–35,000 more troops for COIN; 40,000 more troops for COIN; or 85,000 more troops for COIN.²⁷ After repeated presidential requests for at least three distinct options, all Obama ever got was slight variations of the original ones. All options were based on the amount of resources being thrown at the problem.

The only possibility of a truly distinct option arose when former Vice President Joe Biden attempted to challenge the proposed counterinsurgency approach with what he called “counterterrorism plus.”²⁸ This approach was pitched to Obama as the 20,000-troop option, but when Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Mike Mullen, Central Command Commander General David Petraeus, and McChrystal insisted it was unrealistic, Obama dismissed the option without question.²⁹ Thus, in reality Obama was presented two realistic options, both included COIN and at least a 30,000 troop increase. All of the leaders agreed increasing troop strength by 85,000 was unrealistic. Even if the counterterrorism plus option was considered viable, it was just as means-based as the counterinsurgency options. Biden did not start with a concept and then figure out it would require less troops, he decided less troops would be better and then developed a possible concept.

How can you determine what is the best option when you have only one option? How can you judge the strengths and weaknesses of an approach when you have nothing to compare it to? All strategies have tradeoffs; different strategies have different tradeoffs. Comparing tradeoffs is impossible with only one option. Political science research suggests people will not discard a policy idea unless there is a plausible alternative.³⁰ The point of the strategy-making process is to choose the best alternative, which means insisting on multiple plausible options that are presented equally and without bias.

What about the merits of the strategy proposed by McChrystal and vigorously supported by Mullen, Petraeus, and Gates as well as Secretary of State Hillary Clinton? From the perspective of the Posen-Cohen model, McChrystal’s strategy is deficient due to its lack of clear causal thinking.³¹ Instead of a clearly stated theory of success, there are pillars, principles, and priorities including “protect the people,” “understand the people’s choices and needs,” improve governance, improve the Afghan National Security Forces, change the operational culture of the International Security and Assistance Force, “improve unity of effort

26 Jack Fairweather, *The Good War: Why We Couldn't Win the War or the Peace in Afghanistan* (New York: Basic Books, 2014), 287.

27 Bob Woodward, *Obama's Wars* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2011), 273. The other initiatives or actions to be added to the basic counterterrorism approach were never exactly clear.

28 *Ibid.*, 159, 232–36, 273.

29 *Ibid.*, 275.

30 Jeffrey Legro, *Rethinking the World: Great Power Strategies and International Order* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005), 24–48.

31 This analysis is based on McChrystal’s official assessment. See Stanley A. McChrystal, *Commander's Initial Assessment* (Kabul, Afghanistan: Headquarters International Security Assistance Force, 2009).

and command,” “gain the initiative,” “signal unwavering commitment,” address grievances, and gain the support of the Afghan people.³² The elements identify many difficult objectives but no sense of the crucial factors or likely causes and effects. These objectives are fine as ways, defined as lines of effort, but they do not provide causal linkages between actions and results.

Perhaps the most important flaw of McChrystal’s strategy is the unspecified relationship between providing security, gaining support of the population, and establishing governance good enough to earn the trust of the people. If security could be established separate from governance, as Petraeus later argued, then the capabilities of the government of Afghanistan did not matter and the surge was a sensible option.³³ If security was in any way contingent on governance, however, then the surge would be a waste of time without steep improvement in the capacity of national and local governance in Afghanistan.

Perhaps if McChrystal would have spent more time elaborating the causal linkages in his strategy, the principal decision-makers would have understood the United States cannot gain the support of the Afghan people without good governance nor provide security without the support of the population—this is COIN 101. As Stephen Biddle observes, “combat and security alone will have difficulty sustaining control if all they do is allow a predatory government to exploit the population for the benefit of unrepresentative elites.”³⁴ This problem materialized in the early days of McChrystal’s counterinsurgency effort in Afghanistan. McChrystal found that when his “government in a box” did not show up in Marjah after Operation Moshtarak (2010), security rapidly deteriorated.³⁵

The above analysis raises the question, “Was the McChrystal strategy successful?” A comprehensive analysis requires more than the allotted space, but the state of Afghanistan today bears a striking resemblance to presurge Afghanistan; so one must ask, “What was gained from the additional blood and treasure?” The Taliban is again resurgent, controlling significant portions of almost every province in Afghanistan.³⁶ Taliban attacks continue to take a large toll on Afghan National Security Forces, local police, and Afghan civilians. ISIL is now active in eastern Afghanistan. While the government of Afghanistan seems somewhat stable, Afghan National Security Forces have barely been able to stem the tide even with ever-increasing American assistance. At the very least, the surge did not result in the durable disruption to the Taliban that it was supposed to cause.³⁷ If the effort opened up space for good governance to develop, we are still waiting for it to arrive.

32 Ibid.

33 Woodward, *Obama’s Wars*, 220.

34 Stephen Biddle, “Afghanistan’s Legacy: Emerging Lessons of an Ongoing War,” *Washington Quarterly* 37, no. 2 (Summer 2014): 75, doi:10.1080/0163660X.2014.926210.

35 Ben Anderson, *The Battle for Marjah*, directed by Anthony Wonke (New York: HBO Documentary Films, 2011).

36 Caitlin Forrest, “Afghanistan Partial Threat Assessment: June 30, 2016,” Institute for the Study of War, July 14, 2016, <http://www.understandingwar.org/background/afghanistan-partial-threat-assessment-june-30-2016>.

37 Woodward, *Obama’s Wars*, 270–71, 300, 312–14.

There is no direct evidence that any of the players in the 2009 debate acted or spoke in terms of ends, ways, and means, although there was mention of a whole-of-governments approach and McChrystal later coined the term government in a box. The obsession with means to the detriment of strategy of all participants in the strategy-making process is, however, abundantly clear. There was no debate about rival theories of success. The uniformed military and Gates pushed one option and Obama failed to compel anyone to provide multiple distinct options. McChrystal provided lines of effort but not a theory of success. Biden pushed a counterterrorism plus option, but never made a convincing argument about how it would be implemented or how the goal of durably disrupting the Taliban would be achieved. This outcome can only be considered a massive failure of the strategy-making process.

Conclusion

The American way of strategy is the practice of means-based planning: avoid critical and creative thinking and instead focus on aligning resources with goals. Common definitions of strategy, including the ever-present Lykke model, foster this way of thinking because they do not clearly describe what makes strategy a distinct concept. Too often definitions are overly inclusive and smuggle in concepts unrelated to strategy. Other definitions tell us what good strategy should do rather than telling us what it is. These weaknesses make strategy hard to define and complicate the strategy-making process.

The problems with our current understanding of strategy are exacerbated by the whole-of-government approach encouraging us to define national power as a discrete set of instruments that form a convenient acronym. In practice, the whole-of-government approach is often used as a substitute for, rather than an enabler of, strategy. The elements of national power are presented as lines of effort directed toward a goal without any clear sense of how exactly these efforts are related or how exactly they will cause the goals to be achieved.

The US defense community needs a new definition of strategy. Strategy is a theory of success, a solution to a problem, an explanation of how obstacles can be overcome. A good strategy creates opportunities, magnifies existing resources, or creates new resources. A good strategy must have a clear goal and must be mindful of constraints, but must not allow creativity to be crushed by overemphasizing available resources and existing doctrine. True creative thinking is profoundly difficult but worth the trouble because it wins wars, saves lives, and preserves nations.

Defining strategy as a theory of success gives a clear sense of how strategy is distinct from means-based planning and facilitates a superior strategy-making process. Without a clearly stated theory of success, assumptions remain hidden and logic fuzzy. A strategy must describe how and why proposed actions will cause the achievement of a goal. The strategy-making process must be driven by the evaluation of rival theories of success.

It is impossible to know how good a strategy is unless it is compared to other strategies. The costs and benefits of one strategy will be different than the costs and benefits of other strategies. The tradeoffs, level of risk, and probability of success will be different. Rival

strategies should be evaluated based on current knowledge of the specific situation, historical evidence of similar cases, well-supported theory, and relevant experience. Comparative analysis has long been a part of the military campaign planning process and is fundamental to intelligence analysis and the scientific method.

A nation-state with a significant power advantage over all competitors can do without strategy and can perhaps even afford bad strategy. To a certain extent this position describes the United States in the 1990s and early 2000s. During this period of time, “problems could be solved with massive funding or expensive solutions.” We no longer can assume such an envious position. Our resources are overstretched and our economic base precarious. Our problems are complex and multifarious. Now, and in the future, we “will have to seek creative and relevant solutions with fewer resources.”³⁸ In other words, we need good strategy.

38 F. G. Hoffman, “Grand Strategy: The Fundamental Considerations,” *Orbis* 58, no. 4 (September 2014): 476–7, doi:10.1016/j.orbis.2014.08.002.

Turning It Up to Eleven: Belligerent Rhetoric in North Korea's Propaganda

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ABSTRACT: After contextualizing North Korea's capacity for belligerent rhetoric directed toward the United States and its north-east Asian allies, the author examines the contention that rhetoric from Pyongyang represents a conflict escalation risk or even a *casus belli*. The results of statistical tests indicate a negative correlation between Pyongyang's rhetoric and international diplomatic initiatives, but no correlation between North Korea's verbal hostility and its provocations.

Advances in North Korea's nuclear weapon and missile programs mark a qualitative change in the threat to the United States, South Korea, and Japan. Pyongyang's ability to fit a miniaturized nuclear warhead on a missile or rocket and deliver the payload is unproven, but many analysts argue that the capability is highly likely.¹ This capability alone represents a risk to geopolitical stability in northeast Asia as the region's powers, including the United States, will struggle to calibrate their responses to North Korea's provocations. Additionally, before, during, and after missile and nuclear tests in 2016, North Korea employed belligerent rhetoric—in English for international influence—that increased tension on the Korean peninsula particularly and in northeast Asia generally.

These locutions—threats to annihilate American bases overseas, turn Seoul into a sea of fire, and execute preemptive nuclear attacks against perceived adversaries—are well-known. Bellicose rhetoric has long been part of North Korea's international communication, but the combination of menacing words and capabilities to actuate the corresponding threats is new for long-range or nuclear attacks. In this vein, Russian foreign minister Sergei Lavrov remarked after the first set of nuclear and missile tests in 2016 that Pyongyang's bellicose rhetoric

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1 David Albright, "North Korean Miniaturization," 38 North, February 13, 2013, <http://38north.org/2013/02/albright021313/>; David Albright, *Future Directions in the DPRK's Nuclear Weapons Program: Three Scenarios for 2020*, North Korea's Nuclear Futures, (Washington, DC: US-Korea Institute at SAIS, 2015); Dan Lamothe, "U.S. General: North Korea Likely Can Build Miniaturized Nuclear Weapons," *Washington Post*, October 24, 2014; Jeremy Bender, "Top Norad General: North Korea Has a Nuclear-Capable Missile That Can Hit the US," *Business Insider*, April 10, 2015, <http://www.businessinsider.com/us-general-north-korea-has-nuclear-capable-missile-that-can-hit-us-2015-4>; Choe Sang-Hun, "South Korea Says North Has Capacity to Put Nuclear Warhead on a Missile," *New York Times*, April 5, 2016; Jeffery Lewis, "Five Things You Need to Know about Kim Jong Un's Photo Op with the Bomb," 38 North, March 11, 2016, <http://38north.org/2016/03/jeffrey031116/>; and Lolita C. Baldor, "US Official Warns of North Korean Nuclear Capabilities," Associated Press, December 8, 2016.

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creates a legitimate *casus belli* for threatened states.² The same week, American intelligence agencies issued an assessment: “Threatening rhetoric from Pyongyang . . . suggests North Korea is preparing for a surprise military strike.”³ This statement acknowledges a connection between North Korea’s hostile rhetoric and the country’s actions. These interpretations of North Korean statements may appear alarmist, but they are simply variations of analyses that Pyongyang’s rhetoric could lead to miscalculation by actors on and around the Korean peninsula and consequently escalation to war. Such claims appear frequently in media reports, government declarations, and messages from the international community, especially during and after periods of North Korean provocation.

These statements assume North Korea’s inflammatory rhetoric means something; however, if the rhetoric fits no behavioral pattern, then other countries’ populations, media, and governments should discount the insults, threats, and crisis-mongering emanating from Pyongyang. Consequently, these aggressive locutions would not function as sources for miscalculation and even less as a *casus belli*. In short, is North Korea’s belligerent rhetoric cheap talk or a meaningful signal of tangible events affecting tension on the Korean peninsula and in northeast Asia? After examining the background of North Korea’s recent progress toward capabilities threatening the United States, South Korea, and Japan, this article describes the mixed results of a study comparing Pyongyang’s belligerent rhetoric to events involving North Korea and major actors in northeast Asia and discusses the policy implications of these findings.⁴

North Korea’s Nuclear Weapons and Missile Programs

North Korea’s conventional arms are inferior to those of its adversaries—the United States, South Korea, and Japan. The consensus is North Korea would rapidly lose a conventional war against any combination of these alliance partners, and consequently, the Pyongyang regime would fall quickly. Traditionally, North Korea has relied on two strategic asymmetries to reduce this gap: a garrison-state sociopolitical organization, with an armed force disproportionately large in comparison to the state population and constructed to endure major attrition and therefore dissuade attack and artillery deployed along the demilitarized zone allowing for quick, widespread, economically devastating destruction of Seoul and environs. Recently, North Korea developed programs for cyberwarfare and nuclear weapons to compensate for conventional arms inferiority. The nuclear weapons program is both a direct threat to the security of the aforementioned alliance partners and a means for Pyongyang’s leaders to engage in provocative, destabilizing behavior ranging from attack to proliferation on the Korean peninsula, the northeast Asian region, and beyond. Indeed, tension in northeast Asia increased significantly following the nuclear and missile tests in 2016.

2 Chad O’Carroll, “Russia: N. Korean Threats Becoming Legal Grounds for Military Force,” *NK News*, March 8, 2016.

3 Bill Gertz, “U.S. Says North Korea Rhetoric a Prelude to Attack,” *Washington (DC) Free Beacon*, March 14, 2016, <http://freebeacon.com/national-security/u-s-says-north-korea-rhetoric-a-prelude-to-attack/>.

4 Request statistical output, including descriptive statistics and data files, from the author at the following e-mail address: mrichey@hufs.ac.kr.

Under Kim Jong Il during the late 1990s and early to mid-2000s, North Korea's nuclear and missile programs succeeded in developing a nuclear warhead and a fissile material production process based on plutonium removed from the country's Yŏngbyŏn facility. Additionally, North Korean scientists pursued, and apparently achieved, weapons-grade uranium enrichment. The Pyongyang regime also built strategic and tactical missile and rocket programs. Recently, other improvements to research and testing facilities, launch capabilities, and nuclear command-and-control have also been observed.

Current consensus on North Korea's atomic arsenal estimates six to eight plutonium-based weapons and four to eight uranium-based bombs.⁵ Thus the nuclear arsenal is likely 10–16 working devices, with a retained capacity to produce an unknown number of nuclear weapon equivalents through plutonium reprocessing and uranium enrichment. Pyongyang recently advanced the quality of its nuclear arsenal, focusing on both yield and size. North Korea claims it detonated a thermonuclear weapon in the first 2016 test, although most assessments dispute this assertion, finding a boosted fission bomb more likely. North Korea also claims to have miniaturized nuclear warheads to fit on short-range, medium-range, intermediate-range, and long-range intercontinental ballistic missiles—an accomplishment considered realistic according to independent analysts, US Army General Curtis M. Scaparroti, and the South Korean government.⁶

Parallel to its nuclear program, the Pyongyang regime developed functional missiles and rockets ranging from the reliable Nodong-series to more unreliable long-range and intercontinental ballistic missiles. North Korea is also developing road-mobile KN-08 and KN-14 intercontinental ballistic missiles and submarine-launched ballistic missiles. The country's thousand-strong missile arsenal is capable of striking counterforce and countervalue targets on the Korean peninsula, in Japan, and in the western Pacific. More speculatively, North Korea's small number of intercontinental ballistic missiles could likely strike much of the United States mainland, although experts are skeptical about the missiles' reliability and accuracy.⁷

A functional, miniaturized nuclear warhead combined with delivery systems gives North Korea a crude nuclear deterrent. Current scenarios for 2020 predict a low-end estimate of 20 weapons and marginally improved delivery systems; a medium estimate of 50 weapons, with emergency operational KN-08s and KN-14s for strategic objectives, and a variety of missiles (including possibly Musudan intermediate-range ballistic missiles) for theater objectives; and a high-end estimate of 100 weapons and normally operational KN-08s, KN-14s, and Musudans.⁸

5 Albright, *Future Directions*; and Joel S. Wit and Sun Young Ahn, *North Korea's Nuclear Futures: Technology and Strategy*, North Korea's Nuclear Futures (Washington, DC: US-Korea Institute at SAIS, 2015).

6 Albright, "North Korean Miniaturization"; Lamothe, "U.S. General"; Choe, "South Korea"; and Lewis, "Five Things."

7 Bender, "Nuclear-Capable Missile"; "North Korea," Nuclear Threat Initiative (NTI), <http://www.nti.org/learn/countries/north-korea/> (accessed June 10, 2016); and John Schilling, "North Korea's Large Rocket Engine Test: A Significant Step Forward for Pyongyang's ICBM Program," 38 North, April 11, 2016, <http://38north.org/2016/04/schilling041116/>.

8 Wit and Sun, "Nuclear Futures."

That is, over the last decade Pyongyang has made incremental, ongoing improvements to its nuclear arsenal, substantially changing the strategic situation in northeast Asia. Indeed, following the 2016 nuclear and missile tests, the international community's response reflected the significance of the developments with the stiffest sanctions ever targeting key industries, institutions, and individuals.

The threat of North Korea's nuclear capability is exacerbated by confusion about Pyongyang's nuclear strategy and doctrine. Regime diplomats confidentially say North Korean leadership regards the nation's nuclear deterrent as modeled on mutually assured destruction, which is a multifariously problematic strategy in the North Korean context. First, the strike-counterstrike dynamic underlying mutually assured destruction is absent in the North Korea–United States nuclear dyad, as Pyongyang lacks credible retaliatory capability. With such a primitively developed nuclear arsenal, the incentive would be for the regime to use its weapons before losing them to a putative strike. Second, the regime has articulated a “no first use” policy and a “defensive use only” policy while also claiming the right to launch a preemptive nuclear attack if its deterrent capability or regime survival were threatened.

Uncertainty regarding this doctrine and strategy complicates attempts to answer even the basic question of why North Korea has developed a nuclear arsenal at all considering the tremendous cost of economic and diplomatic isolation. Strategically, the emphasis seems to be a mixture of political, diplomatic, and military objectives that include leveraging coercive diplomacy and international negotiations; framing potential North Korea–South Korea unification favorably; provoking international tensions on the Korean peninsula to divide the United States, Japan, South Korea, and China; possessing a deterrent against conventional attack; and securing the ability to escalate to limited nuclear conflict in the case of imminent regime collapse to counter loss in conventional conflict (an “escalate to de-escalate” strategy).⁹

The latter objective—entailing the use of short-, medium-, and intermediate-range ballistic missiles, rather than strategic missiles—implies a distinction in the Pyongyang regime's thinking about strategic, theater, and operational nuclear missiles and therefore the heightened possibility of making first use of the weapons for tactical (warfighting efficiency) or “escalation to de-escalate” reasons.¹⁰

It is important to recall that the weapons developments outlined above were accompanied at every step by both conciliatory and coercive diplomatic engagement by all parties: from North Korea's accession to the Nonproliferation Treaty (1985), to the Agreed Framework (1994), the Four-Party Talks (1997), the Sunshine Policy (1998–2008), withdrawal from the Nonproliferation Treaty (2003), and the Six-Party Talks

9 Nikolai N. Sokov, “Why Russia Calls a Limited Nuclear Strike ‘De-escalation,’” *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, March 13, 2014, <http://thebulletin.org/why-russia-calls-limited-nuclear-strike-de-escalation>; and Shane Smith, *North Korea's Evolving Nuclear Strategy*, North Korea's Nuclear Futures (Washington, DC: US-Korea Institute at SAIS, 2015).

10 Van Jackson, “Nukes They Can Use: The Danger of North Korea Going Tactical,” *38 North*, March 15, 2016, <http://38north.org/2016/03/vjackson031516/>; and Van Jackson, *Rival Reputations: Coercion and Credibility in US-North Korea Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

(2003–9).¹¹ Of course, North Korea claims its weapons programs are a response to security threats from the United States and its allies. This stance is certainly reflected in the regime's domestic and internationally directed political rhetoric, which, regardless of the level of belligerence, consistently draws attention to the overall context of hostility in relations between North Korea and the United States, South Korea, and Japan.

North Korea's Political Rhetoric

One overarching thread has remained true over the long period of North Korean nuclear weapons development and the various iterations of carrot-and-stick diplomacy that have accompanied it: for both the public at large and the leaderships of the United States, South Korea, and Japan, threat perceptions of a potentially nuclear-armed North Korea have been heightened by Pyongyang's belligerent rhetoric. The regime's Korea Central News Agency (KCNA) is infamous for English-language propaganda ranging from insulting to bellicose to ludicrous.

A few examples include Kim Young-Sam, former South Korean president, referred to as a "thrice-cursed shabby US toady"; Japan's government officials "are epileptic mentally deranged wretches"; George W. Bush, former US president, was a "cowboy buffoon"; South Korean President Park Geun-Hye "was a venomous swish of skirt"; North Korea will "turn Seoul into a sea of flame"; the North Korean military will "mercilessly annihilate the US"; and "Japan is planning nuclear attacks on the DPRK."¹²

Over the study period (1997–2006), North Korea uttered 790 insults against the United States, South Korea, and Japan; issued 302 threats against them; and made 130 claims of being under imminent attack by the alliance partners. The United States was the referent for 788 of these instances; South Korea, 550; Japan, 96.¹³

Although the insults and crisis-mongering are problematic because they raise tensions on the Korean peninsula and undermine diplomacy, the threats are worse as they foment miscalculation and escalation such as Lavrov's aforementioned *casus belli*. Denny Roy starkly outlines this as well: "Pyongyang's nuclear weapons program likely increases the danger that Pyongyang's brinkmanship could lead to war. . . . With what they believe is a nuclear deterrent against US or South Korean attack, North Korea's leaders may feel emboldened to make more bellicose threats or to continue carrying out lethal provocations against

11 The Sunshine Policy began in earnest in June 2000 and was comprised of inter-Korean leadership summits, interministerial meetings, North-South aid, and improved trade and investment. The policy improved relations between the two Korean states led by Kim Dae-Jung (Republic of Korea) and Kim Jong Il (North Korea). It remained in effect, despite behavioral evolution by the two Koreas, until the presidency of Lee Myung-Bak (Republic of Korea) beginning in 2008. The latter half of the policy period was accompanied by the Six-Party Talks, which focused on halting and later reversing North Korea's acquisition of nuclear weapons.

12 "Shabby Toadyism," KCNA, June 27, 1997; "Japan's Bid to Internationalize 'Abduction Issues' under Fire," KCNA, April 27, 2005; "Bush Administration's Korea Policy Accused," KCNA, April 6, 2003; "Army and People of DPRK Pledge Revenge on Enemies: CPRK Secretariat," KCNA, March 29, 2013; "Indignation Meetings of Youth and Students," KCNA, December 11, 1998; "Anti-U.S. Sentiment Running High," KCNA, March 27, 2002; and "Japanese Militarists Criminal Acts under Fire," KCNA, December 25, 2006.

13 The author analyzed hyperbolically insulting, threatening, crisis-mongering rhetoric disseminated in English by the Korean Central News Agency from 1997 to 2006. Articles targeting multiple countries create inequality between the total instances by rhetoric type (1,222) and target country (1,334).

South Korea. This in itself could easily escalate to general war.”¹⁴ This analysis reflects conventional wisdom regarding the North Korean threat and thus merits examination. In particular, the analysis relies on the foundational points that intentions matter for threat perception and that the Pyongyang regime’s intentions can be extrapolated from its bellicose rhetoric. Can the intentions be extrapolated, however, or might North Korea’s belligerent international propaganda be a noisy red herring? Put differently, instead of assuming that this incendiary messaging is significant, investigate the patterns of English-language rhetoric produced by the KCNA for international consumption to determine if it is a meaningful signal.

North Korea’s frequent use of internationally directed belligerent rhetoric is atypical. There is good reason for this uniqueness: a state’s regular use of insulting, threatening, bombastic international messaging has high costs and functions poorly. First, inflammatory rhetoric carries high audience costs.¹⁵ Second, interlocutors increasingly discount their counterparts’ messages unless diplomatic belligerence and hyperbole are acted upon. Consequently, making such statements translates into lost credibility and poor reputations for regimes.

Despite dissuasive reasons, three standard answers purport to explain why North Korea persists with intemperate rhetoric: the Pyongyang regime—particularly the Kim leadership circle—is crazy and acts irrationally; the North Korean leadership does not face audience costs because it is a dictatorship; and the regime does not care about the loss of international credibility and the degraded reputation arising from its rhetorical disposition. These responses are mistaken.

First, North Korean leadership is not crazy: it is idiosyncratic—and predatory—but it is not insane, at least not concerning international strategy. The proof is in the survival of North Korea’s governing institutions despite many shocks: the end of the Cold War and loss of Soviet patronage, the transformation of Chinese economic ideology (accompanied by Beijing’s calls for North Korea to initiate reforms), two domestic dynastic transitions, the significant loss of its population due to famine, the deleterious effects of globalization on the state’s information monopoly, as well as the consequences of international sanctions. Throughout it all, the leadership in Pyongyang has consistently managed to wrangle aid from negotiation partners (including the United States, South Korea, and Japan) in exchange for dubious agreements to halt its nuclear weapons programs. Indeed, American and South Korean negotiators speak of the acumen of their North Korean counterparts, especially given North Korea’s weak bargaining position.

Second, the top Pyongyang leadership does not face audience costs like those of democratic governments, as totalitarianism undeniably means even lower audience costs than those of other authoritarian regime

14 Denny Roy, “Strategic Ramifications of the North Korea Nuclear Crisis,” in *The North Korea Crisis and Regional Responses*, ed. Utpal Vyas, Ching-Chang Chen, and Denny Roy (Honolulu, HI: East West Center, 2015), 66.

15 James D. Fearon, “Domestic Political Audiences and the Escalation of International Disputes,” *American Political Science Review* 88, no. 3 (September 1994): 577–92, doi:10.2307/2944796; and Jessica L. Weeks, “Autocratic Audience Costs: Regime Type and Signaling Resolve,” *International Organization* 62, no. 1 (Winter 2008): 35–64, doi:10.1017/S0020818308080028.

types.¹⁶ Nonetheless, even totalitarian regimes have factional fighting, and the North Korean inner circle potentially does face audience costs (e.g., the military has both the means to effect change via a coup and an organizational/cultural disposition biased toward strategically sound kinetic action) for unrealized belligerent rhetoric. Moreover, invoking audience costs involves merely a permissive reason for belligerent rhetoric, not an obligation. In the case of North Korea, the fact of its low audience costs cannot positively explain why it engages in such rhetoric (but rather only that it lacks a political factor that would incentivize it not to engage in such rhetoric).

Third, North Korean leadership is concerned about its international reputation. Indeed, North Korea maintains a significant, constructive presence in numerous international organizations such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Regional Forum; the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization; the World Health Organization; and the International Maritime Organization. High-ranking defectors report that North Korea's leadership is sensitive to its international image, and the country's nuclear, missile, and rocket development projects partially aim at securing internal regime legitimacy by gaining external respect for deterrence capabilities.¹⁷ In fact, there are several possible reasons why North Korea diffuses insulting, bellicose, hyperbolically crisis-mongering English-language propaganda internationally. The author tested three particularly relevant possibilities for understanding Pyongyang's rhetorical hostility as well as informing policies and positions regarding North Korea.

First, such rhetoric may be a strategy for negotiations occurring during such meetings as the Six-Party Talks, inter-Korean ministerial meetings (such as the Sunshine Policy), and Japan-North Korea normalization talks. Hypothesis 1 (H1) represented increased belligerent rhetoric from North Korea corresponding with negotiation sessions of major diplomatic efforts as a tactic for extracting better terms of a potential deal. Hypothesis 1A (H1A) represented decreased belligerent rhetoric from North Korea corresponding with major diplomatic negotiation sessions as a sign of genuine *détente*.

The second possibility considered North Korea's rhetoric to be a functional response to perceived threats from adversaries, particularly the United States and South Korea. Hypothesis 2 (H2) posited increased belligerent rhetoric from North Korea corresponding to major US-led military exercises involving South Korea or Japan as well as US overseas military operations Pyongyang perceived as threatening. This response would indicate escalation tolerance. Hypothesis 2A (H2A) posited decreased belligerent rhetoric from North Korea corresponding to the aforementioned threatening US military activity as an indication of genuine fear of or irritation with counterparty aggression.

Third, the belligerent rhetoric may be a coordinated complement to North Korea's provocations, such as nuclear and missile tests or attacks on South Korea. Hypothesis 3 (H3) postulated increased belligerent

¹⁶ Weeks, "Audience Costs."

¹⁷ Jang Jin-sung, *Dear Leader: My Escape from North Korea* (New York: First 37 Ink / Atria Books, 2015); and Eric Ballbach, "Producing Boundaries: Identity and North Korean Foreign Policy" (dissertation, Universität Trier, Germany, 2016).

rhetoric from North Korea corresponding to its provocations as a strategic signal of escalation tolerance and an associated deterrent effect with respect to the United States, South Korea, or Japan. Hypothesis 3A (H3A) postulated decreased belligerent rhetoric from North Korea corresponding to its provocations as a strategic signal that the provocation-rhetoric cycle is an overture to diplomacy.

An analysis of insulting, threatening, hyperbolic rhetoric in English-language news articles disseminated over the period 1997–2006 via the Korea Central News Agency and targeting the United States, South Korea, and Japan is instructive with respect to these hypotheses. During this period, belligerent rhetorical statements in the articles trended downwards overall. Insults and threats diminished marginally, while statements claiming North Korea was imminently under attack by the United States, South Korea, or Japan, which compose a small number of total observations, clearly increased. The decline in rhetoric directed against South Korea roughly coincided with an increase against the United States and the initiation of the Sunshine Policy. Curiously, despite efforts at multilateral diplomacy, North Korean rhetoric claiming imminent attack by the United States, South Korea, and Japan increased by 170 percent after 2000.

An ordinary least squares regression shows that the two major diplomatic efforts initiated by the international community—the Sunshine Policy and the Six-Party Talks—have a statistically significant, negative correlation with North Korea’s inflammatory rhetoric. In other words, diplomatic efforts are associated with a lower probability of inflammatory rhetoric by the Pyongyang regime (see table 1). The reverse occurs—bellicose rhetoric increases—when Pyongyang’s leaders consider American and South Korean actions aggressive.

Two classes of events are important: US overseas military operations, or expressions of hawkishness potentially leading to operations, that might indicate Washington’s appetite for strikes against rogue states like North Korea and US-led military exercises in the Asia-Pacific, particularly exercises involving the United States and South Korea. These two “US hawkishness” variables explain 20 percent of the variation in North Korea’s bellicose rhetoric. This is less than the independent variables indexing conciliation, but the coefficients are larger, which indicates greater effect intensity.

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	R2	Coefficient (p-value)	Corresponding Hypothesis
Six-Party Talks	Aggregate Rhetoric	0.490	-0.211 (<0.01)	H1A
Sunshine Policy	Aggregate Rhetoric	0.094	-0.148 (<0.01)	H1A
US Military Operations	Aggregate Rhetoric	0.130	0.370 (<0.01)	H2
US-led Exercises	Aggregate Rhetoric	0.070	0.142 (<0.05)	H2
North Korean Provocations	Aggregate Rhetoric	0.030	0.090 (>0.10)	H3/H3A
North Korean Provocations	Threat Rhetoric	0.030	0.030 (>0.10)	H3/H3A
North Korean Provocations	North Korea as Attack Target Rhetoric	0.004	0.008 (>0.10)	H3/H3A

Table 1. North Korea's belligerent rhetoric and independent variables

Most people only notice North Korea during episodes in which Pyongyang executes some form of provocation, such as nuclear bomb or ballistic missile tests, artillery bombardments of South Korean islands, attacks on South Korean navy vessels, and violent incursions on the southern side of the military demarcation line. Media reports about and government reactions to such actions are overwhelmingly accompanied by references to North Korea's inflammatory rhetoric, particularly the threats. But is the incendiary rhetoric meaningfully associated with provocations, or does Pyongyang's intemperate rhetoric merely appear correlated because popular attention focuses on the Korean peninsula only during such incidents?

The data presented in table 1 suggest the latter is the case, as indeed there is no statistically significant relationship between North Korea's provocations and belligerent rhetoric. This perceived correlation, as opposed to actual correlation, is true of all types of belligerent rhetoric taken together as well as threats and claims of imminent attack against North Korea taken individually.

Conclusion

The least surprising and least policy-relevant result of this study is the correlation between American-led military exercises and North Korean bellicose rhetoric. There was already a strong presumption of this phenomenon, although the effect is small, and American decision-makers are disinclined to cancel or alter military exercises in northeast Asia due to Pyongyang's predictable rhetorical response. More significant is the result relating North Korea's inflammatory rhetoric to US operations overseas and their related activities. One might expect North Korea to employ more sober rhetoric vis-à-vis

events such as the beginning of the Iraq War or axis-of-evil speeches, a risk-averse approach counting on status quo inertia to prevail. Yet the opposite is the case, as the Pyongyang leadership is relatively tolerant of escalating risk, increasing its bellicose rhetoric when the United States shows aggressiveness. North Korean leaders appear genuinely afraid of possible US attacks and send signals internationally that they are prepared to fight. One speculates that North Korea counts on US and global media to disseminate its messages in the hopes of deterring American leaders from seriously considering an attack that much of the US population would not support because it would be afraid of an “aggressive,” “crazy” adversary.

The results concerning North Korea’s provocations are interesting, even counterintuitive, as Pyongyang’s aggression and weapons testing seemingly coincide with heightened bellicose rhetoric that forms a multidimensional crescendo of saber rattling. The intemperate rhetorical aspect of the artful saber rattling, however, is a noisy red herring. North Korea’s indulgence in belligerent rhetoric, as much during provocative episodes as during other times, fails to support the ideas of the remaining hypotheses: namely, the messages serve as a coordinated complement, either positively or negatively correlated, to other North Korean provocations. The scholars and foreign policy practitioners who posit North Korean rhetoric during provocation periods is an escalation risk, an invitation for misperception, and a possible *casus belli* are correct. But the lesson of this study is that, absent other corroborating signs of belligerence, we can and should prevent misperception and miscalculation by discounting such rhetoric.

Why does the Pyongyang regime use belligerent rhetoric so frequently? It may be that employing such messaging is a strategic choice to create a pervasive sense of an irrational and thus uniquely unpredictable and dangerous regime in the consciousness of other states and the international community. Another possibility is that North Korea’s intemperate rhetoric is misinformation clouding perceptions of its domestic and international activities: it is a form of psychological warfare obscuring Pyongyang’s objectives.

This interpretation has some support from high-ranking North Korean defectors who report the nation’s diplomacy is inextricably linked to psychological warfare.¹⁸ Finally, perhaps the consistent use of inflammatory rhetoric is part of a strategy to have a cheap bargaining chip to play in relations with the United States, South Korea, Japan, and the international community in general. Pyongyang’s leaders can, for example, agree to calm the rhetoric when necessary to promote goodwill with interlocutors.

Recommendations

Considering all of the above, several policy recommendations emerge. First, US civilian and military decision-makers should greatly discount North Korea’s threat rhetoric unless it is accompanied by other signs of bellicosity that would lend credibility to the hostile statements. The importance of this judiciousness is particularly true when assessing

18 Jang, *Dear Leader*.

Pyongyang's threat rhetoric surrounding its provocations, as there is no statistical evidence connecting the threats to actual kinetic attacks.

Second, US civilian and military decision-makers should make sustained efforts—both during North Korean crises and otherwise—to communicate with US journalists, especially those specializing in security affairs, to clarify the nature of the regime in Pyongyang and how it uses hostile rhetoric. This media influence would lessen alarmist coverage about North Korean rhetoric. Public diplomacy should also include efforts to place civilian and military interviewees on media outlets not only to diffuse fear but to attach names and faces to the messages. Both cases would ideally facilitate a calmer debate about various policy advantages and disadvantages of different approaches to North Korean threats.

Third, negotiators in the international community can assume, absent contrary evidence, diplomatic negotiations in which Pyongyang diminishes its hostile rhetoric are negotiations that the regime takes seriously. The converse is also true: if Pyongyang does not make that sign of good faith, then it is not likely to treat the negotiations seriously. Moreover, negotiators should not accept the North Korean offer to diminish hostile rhetoric as a meaningful first step in any diplomatic process. As the statistical evidence shows, this is a step North Korea is likely to take anyway, so there is no reason to grant them the virtue of a necessity.

Fourth, Pyongyang's threat rhetoric mostly has the character of "redlines," such as when the "US encroaches even [by] .001 millimeter" North Korea "will mercilessly destroy the aggressors."¹⁹ Often redlines are intended to be dissuasive or fix limits to a putative future commitment to counter action should the redline be violated, but they can indirectly and unintentionally encourage an adversary's behavior below the threshold.²⁰ That is, redlines can send a message that action below the threshold is *not unacceptable*. It is a way of articulating some action is unacceptable, and although a similar action is also disliked, allowing it serves as a token of good faith that the unacceptable action will not occur, which would, in fact, result in unfavorable consequences.

In the case of North Korea and its adversaries, particularly the United States and South Korea, this scenario fits North Korea's discourse and actions with respect to US-led military exercises. No one doubts that Pyongyang hates the drills (as they oblige North Korea to mobilize its own troops to combat readiness status, which is inconvenient and expensive), but paradoxically, North Korea's hypothetical, hyperbolic threats against the US-led exercises may function to send a message that the Kim regime is willing to accept the practice, as long as there is reassurance of the action's limit: the military exercise will not immediately threaten North Korea's sovereign territory or leadership survival.

19 The Korea Central News Agency published several articles illustrating Korea's redlines on December 4, 1998; July 28, 2001; May 2, 2002; September 29, 2003; April 8, 2006; November 28, 2008; March 14, 2010; and May 21, 2014.

20 Bruno Tertrais, "Drawing Red Lines Right," *Washington Quarterly* 37, no. 3 (Fall 2014): 7–24, doi:10.1080/0163660X.2014.978433.

Finally, the fact that declines in North Korea's belligerent rhetoric correlate with negotiation periods, such as the Sunshine Policy and Six-Party Talks, presents a policy conundrum. Call it the Sunshine Paradox: on the one hand, lower levels of North Korean belligerent rhetoric are desirable, as they translate into lower escalation risk; on the other hand, the lower levels of belligerent rhetoric from Pyongyang during the study period (1997–2006) coincided with the regime's seminal success developing a nuclear arsenal.

Perhaps North Korea's rhetorical strategy during this period was, consistent with buying time through Sunshine Policy-era negotiations, a disguise on its true objectives. This prospect casts a pall over the value of détente, both rhetorical and otherwise. There is a possibility of a trade-off: lower North Korean rhetoric, and thus lower escalation risk with the burgeoning nuclear power, could be achieved through resuming negotiations, but the cost would be that the United States and its northeast Asian allies would face the possibility that Pyongyang's leaders would use the opportunity to advance their nuclear weapons arsenal. Weighing costs and benefits of the two courses would be challenging.

Foreign Military Education as PLA Soft Power

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ABSTRACT: This article argues Chinese foreign military education programs, modeled on similar US efforts, promote a positive international image of China while simultaneously advancing military-to-military relations. To ensure American soft power remains strong, US policymakers should prioritize international military education as a method of supporting long-term partnerships even in constrained fiscal environments.

On a midsummer evening at the People's Liberation Army National Defense University (PLA NDU) in Beijing, Chinese and foreign military officers in full dress uniform, accompanied by their spouses in traditional garb, assemble. Aided by crisply dressed PLA singers, everyone belts out a rendition of the Beijing 2008 Olympics anthem, "You and Me" (我和你), under a long red banner emblazoned with Chinese characters that translate as "Commemorating the 70th Anniversary of Victory in the Global Struggle against Fascism and College of Defense Studies 2015 Graduation." As the banner indicates, the event marks the graduation of 136 senior foreign military officers from 82 countries from the College of Defense Studies (CDS), while simultaneously commemorating the 70th anniversary of China and its allies' victory in the "War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression" in 1945.¹

The 70th anniversary of the end of World War II was enthusiastically celebrated globally and in China. Nevertheless, the significance of linking China's struggle against Japanese imperialism with a graduation ceremony for officers primarily from African, Asian, Middle Eastern, and Latin American countries was undoubtedly not lost on the event's organizers who understood many College of Defense Studies graduates are from countries with histories of Western colonialism. Similarly, the period from 1839 to 1949 is embedded in Chinese historical memory as a "century of humiliation" (百年国耻), when the European powers, Russia, and Japan imposed a series of unequal treaties, which coerced territorial, economic, and juridical concessions

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1 All references to the 2015 CDS graduation ceremony are from *Russia-Dragon News*, a Russian newspaper published in Chinese, which partners with Chinese state media outlets including China Central Television (CCTV). See "136 high-level foreign officers from 82 countries graduate from Chinese National Defense University," [82国136名外国高级军官从中国国防大学毕业], *Russia-Dragon News* [俄罗斯龙报] (St. Petersburg), July 22, 2015, http://www.dragonnewsru.com/news/ch_news/20150722/17192.html.

that reduced China to semicolonial status.² In domestic media, the ruling Communist Party portrays itself as executing a post-1949 revival of Chinese civilization from this nadir. Comparable historical grievances provide a basis for camaraderie between China and other countries with postcolonial legacies.

The function of the CDS memorial-cum-graduation ceremony testifies to the multiple purposes of the PLA's foreign military education programs. As in other war colleges, students examine and analyze key issues in the contemporary security environment while learning about the host nation's domestic and international politics, military, culture, and history, as well as general aspects of strategic studies.³ The educational exchanges also strengthen military-to-military relations by building person-to-person relationships with foreign officers. Finally, the public diplomacy aspect seeks to improve international perceptions of China by winning the hearts and minds of foreign officers, a key segment of governing elites in many countries particularly in the developing world.⁴

Educating foreign military officers at PLA military academies such as the CDS constitute just one line of effort in the Chinese party-state and PLA's conduct of public diplomacy and military-to-military relations. Nonetheless, an examination of the College of Defense Studies, the PLA's flagship academy for educating foreign officers, elucidates several key developments, particularly with regard to the role that military diplomacy plays in China's overall foreign policy efforts:

- The PLA is assuming a growing, although still secondary, role in the conduct of Chinese public diplomacy and foreign policy.
- China is using public diplomacy to compensate for its limited soft power and to cultivate international influence.
- China is safeguarding its expanding global interests through diversified foreign policy strategies that utilize all instruments of national power, not merely economic leverage.
- A growing number of African, Asian, Middle Eastern, and Latin American countries are starting to see China as a viable security partner.

Military Diplomacy as an Instrument of Statecraft

The current trend of the PLA toward a more active military diplomacy occurs in the broader context of expanding Chinese involvement in nearly all facets of international affairs. History will remember the early twenty-first century as the moment China became a truly global actor. Since the 1990s, Beijing has become far more active in international organizations, massively expanded its overseas economic footprint, and intensified bilateral relationships from South Korea to

2. Zheng Wang, "National Humiliation, History Education, and the Politics of Historical Memory: Patriotic Education Campaign in China," *International Studies Quarterly* 52, no. 4 (2008): 783, doi:10.1111/j.1468-2478.2008.00526.x.

3. For a course of study outline see "Courses," College of Defense Studies, NDU, PLA, China, http://www.cdsndu.org/html_en/to_columnContent_orderNo=2402&superOrderNo=2400.html (accessed April 19, 2016).

4. David Shambaugh, "China's Soft Power Push: The Search for Respect," *Foreign Affairs* 94, no. 4 (July/August 2015): 104.

Brazil.⁵ To be clear, China is not yet a peer competitor to the United States; however, due to China's economic heft and latent power, many countries perceive it as an emerging pole that, along with Russia, can reduce or offset American preeminence.

As China's international influence and interests have increased, its foreign relations have become more extensive and complex. Correspondingly, the number of governmental actors involved in foreign policy has proliferated. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs remains the primary conduit for diplomatic relations, but other ministries, provincial governments, state-owned enterprises, intelligence agencies, and the People's Liberation Army all now also factor in foreign relations.⁶ The diffusion of foreign policy implementation has been overlaid by President Xi Jinping's recent centralization of foreign policy decision-making power. In a February 2016 *Council on Foreign Relations* report, Robert D. Blackwill and Kurt M. Campbell note Xi exercises greater control over foreign policy than any leader since Deng Xiaoping, and has demonstrated a "willingness to use every instrument of statecraft," including military resources, in pursuit of foreign policy objectives.⁷ While China's primary sources of foreign policy leverage remain economic, security factors have grown as a secondary lever of influence, particularly in Asia and Africa.⁸

In January 2015, Xi called for China to "place a greater emphasis on military diplomacy as part of its overall foreign policy strategy."⁹ The May 2015 white paper on *Chinese Military Strategy* also sketched out an expansive role for military diplomacy, stating the People's Liberation Army will "develop all-round military-to-military relations" by broadening military exchanges with Russia, promoting a "new model of military relationship with the US armed forces," deepening military relations with Europe, and preserving "traditional friendly military ties with their African, Latin American, and Southern Pacific counterparts."¹⁰

Military diplomacy supports developing the Chinese military into an effective joint force by providing opportunities to improve operational readiness. Because the PLA has not conducted major combat operations since 1979, bilateral and multilateral exercises help compensate for a lack of experience and thus contribute to operational preparedness.¹¹ Joint exercises also provide opportunities to learn from more advanced

5 For an overview of China's post-Cold War foreign policy see Robert G. Sutter, *Chinese Foreign Relations: Power and Policy since the Cold War*, 3rd ed. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2012).

6 David L. Shambaugh, *China Goes Global: The Partial Power* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 61–72.

7 Robert D. Blackwill and Kurt M. Campbell, *Xi Jinping on the Global Stage: Chinese Foreign Policy under a Powerful but Exposed Leader*, Council Special Report No. 74 (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, February 2016), 3–7, 16.

8 See Mathieu Duchâtel, Richard Gowan, and Manuel Lafont Rapnouil, *Into Africa: China's Global Security Shift*, Policy Brief 179 (London: European Council on Foreign Relations, June 2016); and Niklas Swanström, "The Security Dimension of the China-Central Asia Relationship: China's Military Engagement with Central Asian Countries" (testimony, hearing on Looking West: China and Central Asia, Before the United States Congressional Commission on U.S.-China Economic and Security Review, March 18, 2015).

9 Shannan Tiezzi, "3 Goals of China's Military Diplomacy," *Diplomat*, January 30, 2015.

10 Chinese Ministry of National Defense, "China's Military Strategy," US Naval Institute News, May 26, 2015, <https://news.usni.org/2015/05/26/document-chinas-military-strategy#MSC>.

11 Eric Hagt, "The Rise of PLA Diplomacy," in *PLA Influence on China's National Security Policymaking*, ed. Phillip C. Saunders and Andrew Scobell (Stanford, CA: Stanford Security Studies of Stanford University Press, 2015), 227–28.

forces such as the Russian and American militaries. Chinese forces have also gained useful operational experience staging new types of missions while participating in multinational humanitarian assistance and disaster relief activities and military operations other than war.¹² Most notably, since late 2008, the PLA Navy has participated in antipiracy patrols in the Gulf of Aden in coordination with North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Japanese, and other naval forces.¹³

Relations with Sub-Saharan Africa exemplify China's increasing willingness to assume security roles where its interests are concerned. Since the Maoist period, China has supplied African countries with affordable Soviet-designed land equipment and small arms; however, Chinese arms manufacturers have only recently begun selling African buyers more advanced, indigenously developed technologies. In 2015, for example, Nigeria purchased the CH-3 unmanned aerial vehicle for operations against Boko Haram.¹⁴ While China has long been a major African arms supplier, it just recently started making significant troop contributions to United Nations peacekeeping operations, deploying combat troops in a peacekeeping capacity for the first time to South Sudan in 2012.¹⁵ In early 2016, China established its first overseas military facility in Djibouti to facilitate logistical support for peacekeeping missions in Africa and antipiracy patrols in the Gulf of Aden.¹⁶

Unsurprisingly, major peacekeeping contributions have occurred where China has significant economic interests. As of mid-2016, more than one thousand Chinese peacekeepers were in South Sudan, where the state-run China National Petroleum Corporation operates extensive energy projects.¹⁷ Increased security involvement in Africa has not come without risks; for example, two Chinese peacekeepers were killed in July when violence erupted in South Sudan.¹⁸ Nonetheless, China looks to continue security involvement in Africa for the foreseeable future.

PLA Public Diplomacy

China has historically been a source of “good enough” weapons and military assistance for many middle- and low-income countries, particularly in Asia and Africa. As a result, many of China's military-to-military relationships hitherto have been based primarily on transactional drivers such as security aid in the form of arms, matériel, and arms sales, as well as ensuring the security of Chinese investments and nationals overseas.¹⁹

12 Roy Kamphausen, “China's Military Operations Other Than War: The Military Legacy of Hu Jintao,” (paper presented at the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute conference, Stockholm, April 18–19, 2013, 2).

13 Kenneth Allen, “The Top Trends in China's Military Diplomacy,” Jamestown Foundation, May 1, 2015, http://www.jamestown.org/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=43866&no_cache=1#NxECZPnR-Uk.

14 “Sub-Saharan Africa,” in *The Military Balance: The Annual Assessment of Global Military Capabilities and Defence Economics 2016* (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2016), 425.

15 Before this, China had mostly deployed medics and engineers. See Duchâtel, Gowan, and Rapnouil, *Into Africa*, 6.

16 Katrina Manson, “China Military to Set Up First Overseas Base in Horn of Africa,” *Financial Times*, March 31, 2016.

17 Karen Allen, “What China Hopes to Achieve with First Peacekeeping Mission,” BBC News, December 2, 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-34976580>.

18 Okech Francis and William Davidson, “China Peacekeepers Killed in South Sudan as Civil War Looms,” *BloombergTechnology*, July 11, 2016.

19 Duchâtel, Gowan, and Rapnouil, *Into Africa*, 2; and Hagt, “The Rise of PLA Diplomacy,” 233.

Nevertheless, Beijing increasingly recognizes that robust military-to-military relationships rest on more than transactional considerations.

Consequently, the PLA is working to develop relationships with foreign military forces based on “personal and institutional affiliations.”²⁰ As a part of this effort, China’s international military education programs aim to cultivate influence among foreign military officers, many of whom will rise to leadership positions in their respective countries. This investment demonstrates recognition that international power is not based solely on economic and military strength but also on the ability to influence other nations through soft power assets such as cultural attraction and interpersonal relationships.

The People’s Liberation Army has recently attached greater importance to public diplomacy and seeks to promote a positive image of Chinese military power as a force for stability that contributes to international security.²¹ In doing so, PLA public diplomacy confronts many of the same challenges complicating China’s overall public diplomacy efforts. Since the early 1990s, Beijing has assiduously sought to counteract what Chinese sources term the “China threat theory” (中国威胁论)—the widespread post-Cold War perception that the rise of China challenges the US-led international order and imperils the stability of the Asia-Pacific region.²² Beijing has responded by promulgating a “peaceful rise” (和平崛起) counternarrative wherein a strong China is portrayed as a contributor to international peace and stability.²³

Another obstacle for Chinese public diplomacy is overcoming an inward-facing culture and authoritarian, Leninist political system to appeal to a global audience. Naturally, the need to control dissent and limit individual expression stifles some key sources of soft power, namely individual innovation and cultural expression.²⁴ Leading China experts such as David Shambaugh observe that China’s growing military and economic hard powers have not translated into international cultural and political influence, or soft power.²⁵ Thus, in order to compensate for China’s limited organic soft power, Beijing places greater emphases on official public diplomacy efforts, including PLA-led public diplomacy.

Foreign Military Education in China

The PLA operates nearly 70 military academies in China; approximately half offer training to foreign military personnel.²⁶ Although little interest has been demonstrated in emulating the normative aspects of US programs, China’s military educators have been eager to appropriate best practices and other key elements of US programs—for example, Chinese international military education programs at the university-level

20 Hagt, “The Rise of PLA Diplomacy,” 233.

21 Heidi Holz and Kenneth Allen, “Military Exchanges with Chinese Characteristics: The People’s Liberation Army Experience with Military Relations,” in *The PLA at Home and Abroad: Assessing the Operational Capabilities of China’s Military* ed. Roy Kamphausen, David Lai, and Andrew Scobell (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute [SSI], US Army War College [USAWC], 2010), 430–33; and Shannon Tiezzi, “3 Goals.”

22 Shannon Tiezzi, “Beijing’s ‘China Threat’ Theory,” *Diplomat*, June 3, 2014; and Tiezzi, “3 Goals.”

23 “Peaceful Rise,” *Economist*, June 24, 2004.

24 Shambaugh, “China’s Soft Power Push,” 99.

25 Ibid.

26 Shambaugh, *China Goes Global*, 301.

were modeled on the US National Defense University International Fellows Program after several high-level PLA officers visited the US National Defense University during the early 1980s.²⁷ This application fits a larger pattern of selective borrowing from US military education programs. The People's Liberation Army's brief, but fruitful engagement (1999–2002) with the Asia Pacific Center for Strategic Studies (APCSS), a Department of Defense-funded regional center intended to build “capacities and communities of interest by educating, connecting, and empowering security practitioners to advance Asia-Pacific security” in support of US Pacific Command (USPACOM) education and outreach efforts, offers another case in point.²⁸

As part of its mission, the Asia Pacific Center for Strategic Studies regularly hosts educational seminars and workshops for security practitioners from throughout the Asia-Pacific region. People's Liberation Army officers began attending ACPSS seminars in 1999 and PLA NDU faculty regularly participated in these programs through 2002, which roughly parallels the timeframe that the PLA NDU implemented, developed, and revised its own International Symposium Course.²⁹ This sustained effort to apply lessons from ACPSS fora to PLA courses for foreign officers exemplifies a proclivity to selectively borrow and adapt US models and practices to suit the Chinese military's purposes.

The efficacy of China's foreign military education programs matters because education is an important yet underexamined aspect of the PLA's international engagement strategy. According to Shambaugh, courses for “officials, diplomats and military officers from developing countries . . . do teach students tangible skills, but they also try to win hearts and minds along the way.”³⁰ Such programs help China cultivate influence among foreign military elites and foster amicable military-to-military relations particularly with states in North and Sub-Saharan Africa, South and Central Asia, Latin America, Eastern Europe, and the Middle East.

As a tool of diplomacy, military education is likely most effective with countries outside of East Asia, particularly with authoritarian states in the developing world, who share China's suspicion of what are often perceived as Western-imposed values, such as human rights and democratization, that infringe on national sovereignty.³¹ By contrast, sources of tension, such as unresolved territorial disputes with nearby East and Southeast Asian countries, negatively impact China's security

27 Paul H. B. Godwin, “The Cradle of Generals: Strategists, Commanders, and the PLA-National Defense University,” in *The “People” in the PLA: Recruitment, Training, and Education in China's Military*, ed. Roy Kamphausen, Andrew Scobell, and Travis Tanner (Carlisle, PA: SSI, USAWC, 2008), 322.

28 Frank Miller, “The People's Liberation Army Lessons Learned from Recent Pacific Command Operations and Contingencies,” in *Chinese Lessons from Other Peoples' Wars*, ed. Andrew Scobell, David Lai, and Roy Kamphausen (Carlisle, PA: SSI, USAWC, 2011), 217–18; and “Mission and Vision”, Daniel K. Inouye Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies, <http://apcss.org/about-2/mission/> (accessed September 23, 2016).

29 Miller, “Lessons Learned,” 217–18.

30 Shambaugh, “China's Soft Power Push,” 104.

31 Cynthia Watson, “China's use of the Military Instrument in Latin America: Not Yet the Biggest Stick,” *Journal of International Affairs* 66, no. 2 (Spring/Summer 2013): 106–7.

relations with Asian neighbors and are not easily overcome.³² Finally, several countries that send officers to study in China, such as Venezuela, generally have poor relations with the United States and therefore either do not attend American professional military education institutions or are not invited to participate in US-funded courses.³³

College of Defense Studies

The College of Defense Studies, the primary institution for graduate-level international military education in China, is a component of the PLA NDU offering short-term and extended courses for foreign officers. The CDS has trained foreign military personnel under different monikers since the early 1960s.³⁴ Estimates on the total number of students educated vary but universally number in the thousands. Composed primarily of commissioned foreign military officers ranging from lieutenant (O-2) to brigadier general (O-7), the student body also includes civilian defense officials. The year-long Defense and Strategic Studies course is taught in English and French to colonels (O-6) and brigadier generals (O-7).³⁵ In 2012, the PLA designated CDS as its pilot program for granting war college master's degrees to foreign military officers and had awarded 61 such degrees by September 2014.³⁶

According to a 2010 Xinhua News Agency article, more than 4,000 foreign officers from 150 countries had received some form of training at the College of Defense Studies.³⁷ Due to this international orientation, the college is relatively transparent compared to other Chinese military academies. In contrast to other Chinese military academies and the PLA NDU, which largely do not have publicly-accessible websites, the College of Defense Studies has hosted a public website since 2012 that shares information in Chinese, English, French, Russian, and Spanish.³⁸ The multilingual website demonstrates that international outreach is a core function of the college as stated in its mission to undertake “unswerving efforts to promote friendly relations and pragmatic cooperation between countries and armed forces.”³⁹

32 For example, despite strong economic relations, China's defense relations with Malaysia have been circumscribed because of Kuala Lumpur's suspicion of Chinese assertiveness in the South China Sea region. See Ngeow Chow Bing, “Comprehensive Strategic Partners but Prosaic Military Ties: The Development of Malaysia-China Defence Relations 1991–2015,” *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 37, no. 2 (August 2015): 269–304. Nonetheless, recent indicators suggest China's influence in Southeast Asia is increasing relative to the United States. In November 2016, Malaysia signed its first significant defense agreement with China, which included the purchase of four littoral combat ships. See Sue-Lin Wong, “China and Malaysia Sign Deals on Navy Vessels,” Reuters, November 1, 2016. Furthermore, under President Rodrigo Duterte, the Philippines, a longtime US ally, has bolstered economic ties with China and indicated greater willingness to compromise on maritime territorial disputes.

33 Watson, “China's Military Instrument,” 106.

34 “Courses,” College of Defense Studies.

35 Ibid.

36 “National Defense University of PLA Awards Master Degree to Foreign Senior Officers,” China Military Online, September 9, 2014, http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/news-channels/china-military-news/2014-09/09/content_6129447.htm.

37 国防大学防务学院首次揭秘：已培训4千多名外国军官 [College of Defense Studies' top secret: 4,000 foreign military officers trained already], 新华网 [Xinhua Net], September 5, 2010, http://news.xinhuanet.com/school/2010-09/05/c_12519388.htm.

38 Zhao Shengnan, “College of Defense Studies Launches Website,” *China Daily*, September 14, 2012, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2012-09/14/content_15759701.htm.

39 “Function and Mission,” College of Defense Studies, NDU, PLA, China, http://www.cdsndu.org/html_en/to_xygk_orderNo=2251&superOrderNo=2250.html (accessed April 21, 2016).

On the one-year anniversary of the College of Defense Studies website launch, an article was published in the official newspaper of the People's Liberation Army, the *PLA Daily* (解放军报), praising the “international influence of the College of Defense Studies’ website.”⁴⁰ This recognition is notable because the *PLA Daily* serves as a mouthpiece for top-level military and civilian Communist Party leaders, advancing policy prerogatives and promoting the official party line. The article describes the website as “an online bridge of Chinese-foreign military friendship” and quotes a Brazilian Air Force colonel and alumnus: “Congratulations to CDS on the opening of the website, this is great news, this is a great platform to keep up with my alma mater and to understand China’s military buildup, hope the site does better and better!”⁴¹

Like other Chinese colleges and universities in the business of educating foreigners, CDS leverages China’s illustrious civilizational legacy by exposing students to Chinese history and culture—for example, CDS has organized trips for students and their families to the Great Wall and visits to a Beijing Shaolin kung fu school as well as held classes in calligraphy, dumpling making, and Chinese character paper-cutting for students’ spouses and children.⁴²

Although CDS students are exposed to historical attractions and Chinese culture, they are not integrated with their Chinese counterparts at the PLA National Defense University. Foreign students are taught at a separate satellite campus in northern Beijing, which according to alumni from Southeast Asia limits opportunities to interface and build relationships with PLA colleagues.⁴³ These alumni also expressed disappointment that instructors limit opportunities for discussion and rarely depart from official positions.⁴⁴ Steep language barriers are likely responsible for segregation of Chinese and foreign officers at the PLA NDU. Most foreign officers lack the language skills necessary to undertake graduate-level coursework in Mandarin, but speak French, Spanish, Arabic, Russian, or other foreign languages. As a result, the College of Defense Studies offers courses in English, French, Russian, Spanish, and Chinese, which reflects this linguistic mix.⁴⁵ Conversely, many Chinese officers would also likely be unable to undertake graduate studies in English or another foreign language.⁴⁶ Putting aside the PLA’s motives for holding separate courses, segregating foreign and Chinese officers at the university attenuates efforts to build stronger person-to-person relationships between PLA and foreign officers.

40 国防大学防务学院网站的国际影响力 [International influence of the College of Defense Studies website], 解放军报 [*PLA Daily*], September 20, 2013, http://news.xinhuanet.com/mil/2013-09/20/c_125416490.htm.

41 Ibid.

42 “Visit to Beijing Shaolin Kung Fu School,” Cultural Life, College of Defense Studies, NDU, PLA, China, June 1, 2015, http://www.cdsndu.org/html_en/to_articleContent_article.id=40288a854cd222b5014dbda32f8103bd.html; and “Pictures,” College of Defense Studies, NDU, PLA, China, http://www.cdsndu.org/html_en/to_picture_language=English&pageSize=9.html (accessed June 23, 2016).

43 Bing, “Strategic Partners,” 286; and Ian Storey, “China’s Bilateral Defense Diplomacy in Southeast Asia,” *Asian Security* 8, no. 3 (2012): 297, doi:10.1080/14799855.2012.723928.

44 Storey, “China’s Bilateral Defense Diplomacy.”

45 “Courses,” College of Defense Studies.

46 Van Oudenaren developed this perception based upon his experience teaching adult English classes in China (2008–9).

“Understanding” China

Coursework at the College of Defense Studies includes general literature on international security studies. Nonetheless, the curriculum adopts a primarily Sinocentric perspective designed to instill understanding and respect for China. The college introduces students to classical Chinese philosophy and strategic culture through classics such as Sun Tzu’s *The Art of War* (孙子兵法).⁴⁷ A China Studies (中国研究) course provides a comprehensive introduction to the contemporary Chinese political system and China’s economy, military, diplomacy, and culture.⁴⁸ The course comprises 18 seminar sessions taught by prominent guest lecturers including retired senior leaders such as former Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing and former Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference Vice Chairman Qi Xuchun. A 2014 *PLA Daily* article entitled “The China Dream through the Eyes of Foreign Officers at CDS” notes the China Studies course strives to promulgate the concept of China’s peaceful development (和平发展) while explaining the China Dream (中国梦) to foreign officers. A Pakistani brigadier general explained China’s peaceful development path is a strategic choice benefiting not only neighboring countries, but also the whole world. Realizing the “China Dream” will bring about a more “fortunate world.”⁴⁹

Student scholarship highlighted on the CDS website also reflects efforts to instill greater sympathy and admiration for China. An early 2013 paper, “Is China a Threat to World?” [sic], written by a Bangladeshi officer claims, for example, “The ‘China Threat’ theory originated in the early 1990s in America and Japan” and stems from a “lingering Cold War mentality.”⁵⁰ He further argues those espousing this theory fail to account for China’s dependence on the international system, increasing global economic interdependence, internal development needs, and the Confucian tradition of emphasizing harmony.⁵¹

Remarkably, a few student papers featured on the CDS website are less sanguine that China’s rise will be frictionless. A 2013 paper by a Malaysian brigadier general notes American forward military deployments serve as a “strategic insurance policy” for smaller Southeast Asian countries against Chinese assertiveness.⁵² Nonetheless, the tone of the paper suggests Southeast Asian states should be wary of American efforts to regain regional primacy, which Beijing might perceive as attempts to encircle China and consequently heighten regional tensions. Student scholarship demonstrates different opinions are tolerated, albeit within the context of the curriculum, which steers scholarship toward viewpoints that are generally sympathetic toward China. This demonstrates a subtle approach to shaping the perspectives of a multinational student body with diverse ideological orientations.

47 “Academic Trends” College of Defense Studies, NDU, PLA, http://www.cdsndu.org/html_en/to_xshd_.html.

48 All information concerning CDS’s China studies course is from 国防大学外国高级军官学员眼中的“中国梦” [The China dream through the eyes of senior foreign officers], *解放军报* [*PLA Daily*], November 20, 2014, http://www.81.cn/jkbc/2014-11/20/content_6233316.htm.

49 Ibid.

50 Group Captain Fazlul Haque, “Is China a Threat to World,” *Defense Forum*, Autumn 2013, 112.

51 Ibid, 113–16.

52 Brigadier General HJ Sanusi Bin HJ Samion, “China-Southeast Asia Relations: The Security Dimensions and the Way Forward,” *Defense Forum*, Spring 2013, 41.

Another means used to develop rapport with students from African, Asian, Middle Eastern, and Latin American countries is to emphasize postcolonial grievances, primarily with the West. A senior African officer who attended both a US professional military education program and CDS recalled the latter's curriculum promulgated a narrative of US neoimperialism in Africa.⁵³ According to this narrative, the West, and in particular the United States, continued to subjugate Africa following the colonial period by controlling means of production and exploiting African labor. This viewpoint dovetails with China's own postcolonial historical narrative that the West and Japan subjected China to a "century of humiliation," which finally ended when the Mao Zedong-led Communist Party threw off the shackles of foreign imperialism.⁵⁴

Made in the USA: China's Foreign Military Education

Although the narrative delivered to foreign students at PLA military academies differs greatly from American international military education programs, China has adopted and adapted some key elements of US models and practices. Most importantly, Chinese programs such as CDS attract high-level military personnel to build and develop mutually beneficial relationships with foreign partners similar to US Defense Security Cooperation Agency programs, such as the International Military Education and Training program and the Combating Terrorism Fellowship Program, for elite military and government leaders.⁵⁵

Multinational programs, particularly those conducted at the US National Defense University, are often underappreciated outside the classroom as demonstrating the value of education, and connecting student learning directly to national security outcomes is difficult. According to scholarship on US national security budgeting, "The initial goals of International Military Education Training were to further regional stability through military-to-military relationships, transfer critical skills to foreign militaries, and train militaries for combined operations with the United States."⁵⁶

After the end of the Cold War, International Military Education and Training evolved beyond training partners for combined operations with the United States to include coursework promoting US ideals such as government accountability, civilian oversight of the military, protection of minority and human rights, and democratic values.⁵⁷ This shift recognized the utility of military-to-military education in advancing

53 Interview in spring 2016.

54 Wang, "National Humiliation," 790–91.

55 Funding for International Military Education and Training is administered by the Department of State through traditional bilateral foreign assistance and implemented by the Department of Defense. Funding for Combating Terrorism Fellowship Program is administered by the Department of Defense and international student billets are allocated by the US Combatant Commands. See also Russell S. Thacker and Paul W. Lambert, "Low Cost High Returns: Getting More from International Partnerships," *Joint Forces Quarterly* 74, (4th Quarter): 70; and "History of the International Counterterrorism Fellows Program," National Defense University International Student Management Office, October 12, 2016, <http://ismo.ndu.edu/Incoming-Students/The-International-Fellows-Programs/International-Counterterrorism-Fellows-CISA/History-of-the-ICTFP/>.

56 Gordon Adams and Cindy Williams, *Buying National Security: How America Plans and Pays for Its Global Role and Safety at Home* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 82.

57 Ibid.

American soft power in a post-Cold War era, thereby consolidating the gains of the Cold War based on the fundamental belief that security emanates from proliferation of democratic ideals and norms.

China does not share these goals or ideals. The ruling Communist Party is suspicious, if not hostile, toward organizations and states seeking greater respect for human rights, protection of minorities, or democratic reform. Thus, the PLA has replicated much of the academic framework of the US model of foreign military education graduate programs while jettisoning the values that American programs promote.

Implications for the United States

China's rise is invariably cited as the most significant geopolitical development of the early twenty-first century. Whether China is actually a near-peer competitor to the United States matters less than the widespread perception that it is. Many observers both inside and outside the PRC perceive China as a standard bearer for an alternative to a Western model of governance and economics. The Communist Party, particularly under Xi, has to some extent encouraged this perception. Due to the gradual discrediting of socialist ideology in Chinese society and increased domestic exposure to Western influences that Beijing views as both pervasive and subversive, the party has stepped up its external propaganda efforts to forge and promote a new Chinese ideology at home and abroad.⁵⁸

Influencing international discourse is a new approach for China, which has previously relied on blocking external influences that the party considers potential threats (e.g., through internet censorship). Public diplomacy, outsized economic investments abroad such as the One Belt, One Road project, and state media have taken on larger roles in Chinese efforts to acquire international influence and shape external discourse because China is not able to draw on the same reservoir of soft power as open societies such as South Korea or the United States. The PLA's cultivation of relationships with foreign officers at programs such as the College of Defense Studies constitutes a targeted component of this larger endeavor.

Outside East Asia, where Sino-US strategic competition is intensifying, China and the United States are not engaged in a bipolar contest for supremacy akin to the US-Soviet contest during the Cold War. By contrast, Chinese and US relations with developing nations beyond East Asia are best envisioned as running on separate tracks, neither complimentary nor adversarial, but rather generally ambivalent toward each other. In peripheral regions, Chinese foreign policy is driven mainly by economic interests and efforts to promote positive diplomatic ties with other nations. By maintaining cordial relations with as many countries as possible, China seeks an improved international image, additional support for positions on international norms and institutions, and diplomatic backing on key issues related to core national security

58 Mareike Ohlberg, "Boosting the Party's Voice: China's Quest for Ideological Dominance," *MERICs China Monitor* 34 (July 21, 2016): 3.

interests such as Taiwan, Tibet, and territorial disputes in the South and East China Seas.⁵⁹

As noted above, Beijing's objectives in promoting alternatives to Western ideology abroad are largely informed by its overriding priority to foster internal and external political contexts that perpetuate and strengthen the Communist Party's domestic grip on power. Nevertheless, the ramifications of China's endeavors in this arena extend far beyond its borders. A major concern is that China, especially if it continues cooperating closely with Russia, is capable of presenting an alternative to the US-led system that attracts and emboldens authoritarian states across the globe. As a result, Chinese involvement in the Middle East, Africa, Central Asia, and Latin America presents complex challenges for the United States.

States that do not share US foreign policy prerogatives such as promoting good governance, democracy, free markets, and human rights can now turn to China's more active international diplomacy for support, and increasingly view—rightly or wrongly—China as an exemplar of an alternative model predicated on authoritarianism and state capitalism.⁶⁰ Over the long term, the perception that there is such an alternative model could erode US influence abroad and limit the ability of Washington to spread and sustain its preferred international institutions. The United States can counteract this outcome by striving to preserve its comparative advantages.

Comparative US Advantage

The United States retains a qualitative advantage over China in international military education based on the reputation of the US military and American educational institutions and extensive American experience in building partner capacity. Attending a US war college remains extremely prestigious for foreign military officers, even for those from allied and partner countries that have strained relationships with the United States. Nonetheless, assuming America's advantage in this area is immutable would be imprudent.

As this article demonstrates, China's international military education efforts are substantial, both in terms of resources allocated and number of students educated. Clearly, China has borrowed key elements from US programs, while infusing its own values and messages. If the United States abandoned its efforts in international military education, China would not take long to fill the void. To avoid this eventuality, policymakers should support steps to sustain and enhance the quality of US foreign military education programs.

Due to China's tendency to appropriate and adapt US military institutions to its own purposes, the United States should be more circumspect in future military-to-military relations with China. By no means should the United States sever military-to-military relations with China entirely as cooperation on overlapping counterterrorism,

59 Andrew J. Nathan and Andrew Scobell, *China's Search for Security* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 170–71.

60 Joshua Kurlantzick, "Why the 'China Model' Isn't Going Away?" *Atlantic*, March 21, 2013. For debates and discussion on the validity of the China Model, see Bell et. al., "Is there a China Model," *ChinaFile*, October 16, 2015, <http://www.chinafile.com/conversation/there-china-model>.

counterpiracy, counterterrorism, and humanitarian and disaster relief objectives has proven mutually beneficial.⁶¹ Nevertheless, US strategic leaders should look for opportunities to maximize these sorts of synergic opportunities in military-to-military relations while curtailing linkages the PLA is likely to exploit.

Fiscally, Congress and other leaders should avoid the regular temptation to see foreign military education as an easy target during times of austerity and recognize that a relatively small investment provides access to global defense leaders and enables international partners to speak the same language of military strategy. Viewing such programs as expendable negates the long-term value of sustained relationships with key partners and leads to an overreliance on train and equip authorities, which often prioritize flashy new tactical gear and rifle ranges over enduring partnerships.⁶² The United States should counter the urge to reduce the number of international officers studying at its war colleges by increasing opportunities for key foreign leaders to build positive and enduring military-to-military relationships.

Although the impact of educating allies and partners is often difficult to measure at the macrolevel due to the multifaceted nature of these programs, the aggregate impact of such programs should not be underestimated or sacrificed for short-term security needs. Graduating officers of the US National Defense University's College of International Security Affairs (CISA) and other similar US programs for international officers, for example, demonstrate how such endeavors shape longer-term strategic partnerships. Success comes in many forms ranging from US war college faculty directly supporting work on national-level strategy and legislation to improving foreign officers' views of the United States, shaping strategic thinking, and building the intellectual capacity of foreign leaders to navigate tough security challenges.⁶³

Moreover, many foreign graduates return home to teach at their respective command and staff colleges thereby infusing US joint doctrine into their own national contexts.⁶⁴ In South Asia, CISA's Nepali graduates regularly teach and update their irregular warfare doctrine at the Nepal Army Staff College based on the latest curriculum at CISA and in collaboration with their former thesis advisors at the US National Defense University. Because Nepal's Army is a key troop contributor to United Nations peacekeeping missions this has a cascading effect that influences strategic thinking in other militaries that also contribute troops to peacekeeping operations.

When Major General Didier Dacko, a 2010 CISA graduate from Mali, was featured in an article in the *Atlantic* entitled "The New

61 Christopher P. Twomey, "The Military-Security Relationship," in *Tangled Titans: The United States and China*, ed. David Shambaugh (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2013), 254.

62 Authority to Build the Capacity of Foreign Security Forces, 10 U.S.C. § 2282, (2014).

63 Specific examples include the chiefs of the Colombian Navy and Senegalese Army, three consecutive commanders of Jordanian special forces battalions in Afghanistan, vice chiefs of the Maldives National Defense Force and the Malian Army, presidential advisers in Tunisia and Senegal, and many other strategic leaders.

64 In a postgraduation interview, Admiral Hernando Wills Vélez, who rose to become the Colombian Navy Commander, attributed his success as a military leader to seeing the interconnected nature of twenty-first-century warfare, which he learned while at CISA. He applied these lessons to his country's unique situation by expanding the Colombian Navy's leadership and participation in joint training exercises with other South American countries, as well as the United States.

Terrorist Training Ground,” he cited his CISA thesis as the basis for his country’s strategic response to the crisis caused by the nexus of al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb and other regional threats.⁶⁵ In conversations with military planners at US Africa Command, Dacko was singled out as an “indispensable partner” who could “speak the same language [in discussing strategy].”⁶⁶

The recent increase in coalition operations, such as American troops fighting alongside a Jordanian Special Forces battalion in Operation Enduring Freedom or with Bulgarian Army officers in Iraq, illustrates that US professional military education is critical to building international partnerships at the strategic level. At the present time, America’s senior service college system, as well as its other war colleges, remain the benchmark for officers around the world, drawing many future leaders of US partner nations to learn in classrooms alongside their US counterparts. This ideological interoperability in which officers and government officials build on the strategic frameworks, leadership competencies, and joint doctrine taught at US war colleges enhances the effectiveness of joint multinational warfighting by allowing commanders to share a common vocabulary as they cooperate to counteract threats in the twenty-first-century security environment. Abandoning this worthy goal just as competitive alternatives to US international military education are emerging in China that share neither America’s values nor goals would be a mistake.

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65 Yochi Dreazen, “The New Terrorist Training Ground,” *Atlantic*, October 2013.

66 Discussion with USAFRICOM colonel at US National Defense University in 2014.

Commentary and Reply

On “Rightsizing the Army in Austere Times”

George M. Schwartz

This commentary responds to Charles Hornick, Daniel Burkhardt, and Dave Shunk’s article “Rightsizing the Army in Austere Times” published in the Autumn 2016 issue of Parameters (vol. 46, no. 3).

It is hard to argue with Hornick, Burkhardt, and Shunk’s proposition that the world is a very dangerous place, and to hedge against strategic risks, the United States needs a larger and more capable army than what is currently planned. But despite ending up with the almost indisputable conclusion that the US Army requires a larger active force, their analysis is deeply flawed in two ways. As a result, they miss other viable options for hedging against strategic risks.

First, the authors fail to address the costs of building a larger active force in austere times. Sustainable military spending is fundamental to our nation’s future prosperity and national security. Increases in our federal spending—whether for military or domestic programs—add to the national debt and the deficit. Increasing debt burden slows economic growth, reduces family income levels, and ultimately harms our national security posture. While the authors point out the joint force is smaller than it was during the Cold War, they do not mention the Department of Defense budget is now larger than it was during that period. Most of current defense spending does go to major weapons systems for the Navy and the Air Force, but an increase in the active duty Army would come at a cost as well.

The second and greater failing of the article is what appears to be a profound lack of understanding of the roles of the Army National Guard and the Army Reserve and their contributions to the total Army. On the first page, the Guard and Reserve are described as “strategic reserves” and then they are essentially left out of the remainder of the article. This omission undermines the authors’ argument in three ways.

First of all, the National Guard and the Reserve are not strategic reserves. The service’s capstone document Army Doctrine Publication 1, *The Army*, recognizes the significant operational contributions of the National Guard and the Reserve over the past 15 years and defines these components as the Army’s operational reserve. While the reserve components certainly provide the Army with strategic depth, they comprise more than half of the total Army; therefore, any discussion of structuring for operations must acknowledge this fact.

The authors proceed to analyze five assumptions they submit to be faulty, one of which is that the Army can rapidly generate required ground forces. This points to the second issue: the authors appear to believe the assumption is faulty because the only method they consider

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for generating required ground forces is expansion—to start from scratch and build a new regular Army unit to meet additional requirements. Twice in the article they make the point that building an armored brigade combat team takes at least 32 months. While undoubtedly true, they make no reference to the five Army National Guard armored brigade combat teams. Would mobilizing one of these teams not be more efficient and effective than building, training, and equipping a new one?

Finally, the authors repeatedly fail to acknowledge reserve components already contribute to Army operations therefore reducing the requirements for the regular Army; for example, references are made to the 5,000 soldiers in Kuwait and Iraq, and the Army's ongoing commitment to North Atlantic Treaty Organization missions without any acknowledgement that many of the troops on these missions are mobilized citizen soldiers. In fact, the US Army mission in Kosovo is conducted almost entirely by reserve component soldiers, and two Guard division headquarters are currently deployed on missions overseas.

Rightsizing is a process for restructuring an organization for business conditions. When done right, it involves a creative mix of outsourcing, partnerships, contractors, and full- and part-time employees to optimize operating costs. While elements of readiness are deferred until mobilization, reserve component forces are estimated to cost about one third of the active equivalent to regularly maintain. Therefore, a better approach to rightsizing the Army's operational force is not simply to find a "sweet spot" number of regular Army personnel but to create a mix of active, mobilized reserve, and reserve units postured appropriately for the contemporary requirements.

In 1940, sensing that the United States might be drawn into World War II, President Roosevelt activated more than 300,000 guardsmen for training, doubling the size of the Army's active force. After the Pearl Harbor attack, the first Army infantry regiment and division to attack the Japanese were from the National Guard. At the same time, Reserve officers and noncommissioned officers helped form the cadre of new "draftee divisions" that would soon join the fight. The Chief of Staff of the Army, General Mark A. Milley, has made it clear that discussions regarding the Army force structure cannot be done without considering the Guard and Reserve. Undoubtedly, he recalls how this precedent of using the total force helped win the war.

The Authors Reply

Charles Hornick, Daniel Burkhart, and Dave Shunk

The authors appreciate the comments provided by BG Schwartz and agree, but reiterate that the roles, missions, and sizing [of the Guard and Reserve] were "beyond the scope and length" of their article, which focused on the "size of the active duty Army" (41).

Book Reviews

STRATEGY

The Future of Strategy

By Colin S. Gray

Reviewed by MAJ Nathan K. Finney, Strategic Planner, US Army Pacific

When addressing the future of strategy, there are few authors more credentialed than strategist Colin S. Gray. Aside from his practical experience addressing nuclear issues in the Reagan administration, he also taught and wrote authoritative texts on the topic for 50 years. For those not familiar with Gray's prior works, *The Future of Strategy* draws significantly from his vast bibliography on strategy, which is evident in the first six chapters. These chapters provide a succinct, cohesive thumbnail of arguments Gray made in previous books, including his trilogy, *The Strategy Bridge*, *Perspectives on Strategy*, and *Strategy and Defence Planning*, which describe his "general theory of strategy," its practice in the creation of particular strategies, the importance of understanding strategic history, and how nuclear weapons are an exception to past strategic history and therefore its place in the development of strategy. While largely redundant with past books, these chapters are concise and easily digested in comparison to the necessarily detailed and expansive explanations in his separate works.

For those more familiar with Gray's previous works, *The Future of Strategy* can act as a quick refresher, as well as solidifying his view that the future of strategy, as it is a human endeavor "will be near identical in its functions and purposes to the strategy of the past and present." Indeed, according to Gray, there is a logical consistency to strategy—both as a theory and in application—that transcends particular time or context. Strategy is fundamentally a mechanism for human societies to solve problems that arise in relation to their needs. Therefore, "we do not need to be taught to consider the world in terms of the ends we desire, and the ways and means for gaining them. It is all but inconceivable to approach problems in any other way" (115).

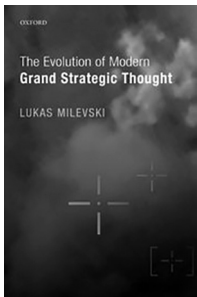
One item that jumps out in *The Future of Strategy*, though it is covered in most of his previous works, is the focus Gray places on geography, and specifically his addition of a new term—"geostrategy"—to describe its importance. I take issue with this new moniker given in previous works and woven throughout this book. Gray cites geography as merely one, though significant, aspect within strategy as a whole and the development of context-driven strategies in particular. I wonder if current events in Europe and Asia that many have titled the "return of geopolitics" drove Gray to focus on geography in a desire for relevance beyond the timeless wisdom that is typically found in his works. One positive by-product of this geographical focus is a tangent on the importance of logistics to the application of strategy. As Gray mentions, "Global strategic history always has been governed in practice by logistics . . . it would be a great mistake to assume potentially significant logistical challenges no longer matter" (89).



Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2015
188 pages
\$14.95

The most value to be found for those familiar with Gray's previous works is the addendum following his conclusion, in which he lays out a veritable master-class reading list all aspiring or practicing strategists should attempt to understand. It is no spoiler to say that Clausewitz's *On War* tops the list, though I was surprised to see Svechin's *Strategy* closing out the list, as well as Gray's comparison of it to *On War* (as well as his comparison of Svechin to Clausewitz in his dedication).

Overall, *The Future of Strategy* is a solid, concise version of many of Gray's previous works. I recommend military and civilian leaders unfamiliar with Gray, or those who are generally interested in—or likely to conduct—the development of strategy, read this book. *The Future of Strategy* should also be used by all professional military and civilian academic institutions attempting to teach both the theory and the practice of strategy, given its cheap cost and short length but deep level of intellectual material.



New York: Oxford University Press, 2016
175 pages
\$80.00

The Evolution of Modern Grand Strategic Thought

By Lukas Milevski

Reviewed by Tom Moriarty, Professorial Lecturer, School of International Service, American University

War, whether or not we like to acknowledge it, has left a transcendent imprint on our lives. Many of our most important and cherished institutions, processes, and inventions have been influenced or modified by war, just as war has been decisively altered by them. Because of the nature of that interaction—of the constant push and pull of those forces—society's interest in armed conflict has forever persisted. Yet, not all elements of the study of war have been treated with the equivalence they deserve. Historically, the study, appreciation, and understanding of strategy and strategic thought have often failed to keep stride with the torrid pace of the evolution of war itself. Indeed, the study of strategy has often been exiled to the lecture halls of military academies, war colleges, and a precious handful of civilian universities. Fortunately, that trend has slowly begun to swing upward, as has the number of scholarly works devoted to those neglected subjects. One such work is *The Evolution of Modern Grand Strategic Thought* by Lukas Milevski.

While primarily targeted toward advanced, serious-minded strategy scholars, Milevski's book nevertheless remains accessible to any readers interested in grand strategy, tracing the development of grand strategic thought, mostly in the English-speaking world, during the last 200 years. Whereas the first half of the book examines strategic thinking from the Napoleonic Wars until the latter part of World War II, the second half explores the decline of grand strategic thinking during the initial stages of the Cold War before charting its reemergence toward the end of the conflict. A closing chapter assesses the continued interest in strategic thought after the Cold War.

In addition to providing its intellectual history, Milevski offers a clear, compelling critique of grand strategic thinking. He argues that grand-strategy theorists, driven by a pressing desire to solve immediate problems, have become so consumed in their present circumstances

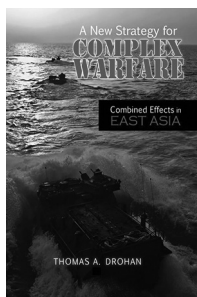
they have seldom looked to history and theory for guidance. Although this oversight might not initially seem like a cause for concern, Milevski makes the case that such emphasis on solving today's problems has prompted scholars to be predominantly ahistorical in their search for solutions. If Milevski is correct, then truly understanding today's grand strategies does not require us to understand the history and theoretical underpinnings of the past; on the contrary, it requires an appreciation of current geopolitical realities. As such, grand strategic thinking has not so much evolved as much as it has simply changed.

As a student, scholar, and teacher of strategic thinking, I share most of Milevski's frustrations. Doubtlessly, the strength of his book is the demonstration of the partial incoherence and fragmentation of grand strategic thinking. Serious gaps riddle our knowledge; little agreement exists on even some of the most basic elements of grand strategy, including a unified definition, and even our attention to the need of grand strategy has been inconsistent. Milevski's case that grand strategy needs more theoretical robustness, greater emphasis on logic and empirics, and a renewed focus on historical trends that can provide today's thinkers guidance from the past hit home with me, as I am sure it will for other readers as well.

Although I am entirely sympathetic to Milevski's arguments, I remain unconvinced of the consequences of his conclusions. As an educator, it would make my life much easier if we achieved greater conceptual clarity and unity on many of the issues Milevski raises. Yet, I do not believe it would make the lives of political leaders, military officers, and practitioners of grand strategy any easier, nor would it be particularly helpful to them, either, because strategy is better conceived as an art instead of as a science.

The same rigidness that serves hard sciences such as physics and chemistry so well can have the opposite effect on many disciplines, including strategic thinking. Of course, this argument does not mean history and theory play no role. Grand strategy, however, means different things to different people at different times because context is important. Changes in the international system, the emergence of new technologies, the power of norms and international laws, and the intensity of domestic political debate all affect a state's conceptual understandings of what is the best grand strategy to use. And that is okay.

Nonetheless, *The Evolution of Modern Grand Strategic Thought* is an extremely timely, efficient work on grand strategy that I believe will greatly improve the quality of debate about—and appreciation for—the subject.



New York: Cambria Press,
2016
326 pages
\$29.95

A New Strategy for Complex Warfare: Combined Effects in East Asia

By Thomas A. Drohan

Reviewed by J. Andres Gannon, Researcher, Center for Peace and Security Studies (cPASS), University of California, San Diego

US military strategy in recent years has approached the increased complexity of East Asian threats through narrow changes to combined-arms warfare. According to Thomas A. Drohan in *A New Strategy for Complex Warfare*, US strategists first need a historical analysis of the region to foster a multicultural understanding of security that no longer assumes common values among Asian nations or projects American cultural expectations onto other societies. In placing weapons-centric strategic changes front and center, policymakers are putting the cart before the horse. Thankfully Drohan, a scholar with a doctorate from Princeton who now heads the Department of Military and Strategic Studies at the US Air Force Academy after years of his own military service, is in a unique position to bridge this gap between academic theorists and policy practitioners, a task he successfully accomplishes.

Drohan's main argument assumes culture affects decisions made about security strategy. What nations consider right and just differs, and their perception shapes their definition of the national interest and how they pursue relative security. Thus, effective foreign policy requires an understanding of the diverse views different cultures have on security. Security culture explains how nations determine what constitutes a threat and how to counter them, reflects preferences affecting strategic performance, and outlines operational concepts that may be unique to each nation. What nations consider rational varies in accordance with values and interests.

While intuitive, the resulting task initially seems daunting. It is understandable why policy practitioners have focused doctrinal changes on new understandings of technological evolution, force integration, and US-centered threat assessment. Fortunately, *A New Strategy for Complex Warfare* does much of the heavy lifting required for acquiring a proper understanding of Asian security cultures. Few works have succeeded as much as this one at succinctly explaining centuries of Asian cultural history and contextualizing that history to current security issues in the region. Members of the security community will greatly benefit from this unique perspective.

Drohan's book aims at improving US strategic choices toward China, Korea, and Japan. For each country, he provides a chapter on past dominant security culture to help readers understand the underlying motivations behind the unique values and interests driving the country's actions. This historical analysis, based on impressive primary material in numerous Asian languages, is complemented by a chapter contextualizing the role culture plays in explaining each country's approaches to contemporary security crises. Chinese security culture, one of asserting sovereignty and harmonizing physical and psychological tools to reinforce asymmetric operations, assumes threats are permanent and solutions to those threats are temporary. Korea's history (here

referring to both Korean nations) of accommodating a main power and seeking autonomy pragmatically has resulted in external powers being confronted with diplomatic balancing and only limited force. Lastly, Japanese security culture, characterized by uniqueness and ambivalence in foreign relations, explains the slow pace of change that favors only reactive isolation and engagement.

True to his original motivation, Drohan does not simply provide policymakers with pages of historical detail and no guidelines for determining its relevance. He excels in explaining the implications cultural histories have for US security strategy and prescribes both philosophical and pragmatic changes practitioners should make. Philosophically, Drohan develops a combined-effects model that categorizes actions by regional actors and aids in the examination of the interactions between the concepts. Deterrence versus compellence and dissuasion versus persuasion are examples of how policymakers should think about combined effects and how strategic choices interact with one another from a military and diplomatic standpoint. Each chapter concludes with a table that neatly summarizes approaches to security crises based on the cultural influences identified.

Drohan effectively argues his approach should foster an awareness of combined effects beyond the narrow combined-arms approach currently dominating strategic thinking. Pragmatically, he offers concrete suggestions like changes to the *Quadrennial Defense Review* and revised mission priorities that encourage practitioners to incorporate security culture into strategy making. By doing so, Drohan hopes US policy for the region can transform from a “one-size-fits-all,” weapons-centric approach to a multicultural understanding of the strategic interactions of the combined effects of different nations’ policies. By considering values and beliefs, policymakers can better judge and anticipate intentions and capabilities as well as select the proper tools to address effectively US goals in East Asia.

US MILITARY

The Future of Land Warfare

By Michael E. O'Hanlon

Reviewed by Steven K. Metz, Director of Research, Strategic Studies Institute,
US Army War CollegeWashington, DC: Brookings
Institution Press, 2015

254 pages

\$32.00

For several years, proposals to cut America's land forces have been making the rounds in Washington, driven by the belief the United States is unlikely to undertake large-scale ground combat in the coming years. As Brookings Institution scholar Michael O'Hanlon explains in *The Future of Land Warfare*, "Fatigued by Iraq and Afghanistan, rightly impressed by the capabilities of U.S. special forces, transfixed by the arrival of new technologies such as drones, and increasingly preoccupied with a rising China and its military progress in domains ranging from space to missile forces to maritime operations, the American strategic community has largely turned away from thinking about ground combat."

It is not hard to understand the context of the idea that the strategic utility of American landpower is in decline: for eight years the Obama national security strategy recognized the utility of military force in the demanding conflict with transnational Islamic extremism but based on the assumption ground combat should be avoided whenever possible. Given this assumption, it is logical to conclude that as the US military shrinks, the services should not be cut proportionately but land rather than air, naval, or space forces should be slashed the most. As a February 2013 discussion paper from the Brookings Institution Hamilton Project, *National Defense in a Time of Change* by Gary Roughead and Kori Schake, argued, "the military's current strategy sustains an Army that is far larger than necessary."

O'Hanlon's book is a sober, well-documented attack on that idea, making the case that American landpower has enduring value far beyond the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. After a sweep of the security landscape to identify "strategic fault lines" and plausible conflict, O'Hanlon concludes there is "a strong case for keeping an Army, and a Marine Corps, with a broad range of capabilities." He bases his assessment on a range of potential missions the US military might perform: deterring Russia and China; securing the South China Sea; helping South Asia after a security crisis; deterring Iran; restoring order in places like Saudi Arabia, Syria, or Nigeria; and handling a further meltdown in law and order in Central America. From this assessment, he believes US military planning should be based on a "1 + 2 posture" that he defines as the ability to wage one major all-out regional battle while contributing to two smaller, multiyear, multilateral operations of different possible character.

Ultimately, O'Hanlon advocates continuity, sustaining landpower capabilities about the same size and configuration of American ground forces as today. "Much of this American ground capability," he writes, "should remain in the active duty forces, the implication is that not only the aggregate size but also the individual components of the U.S. Army should remain roughly as they are today as well . . . The Army of the

future should not be radically different from the Army of today.” He concludes by arguing, “America’s grand strategy is working. The Army and Marine Corps are crucial elements in that strategy, for deterring conflict, partnering with allies and others abroad, resolving conflicts when necessary, and helping keep the peace in general. But their work, and that of the nation, is far from done. We would be tempting fate and playing with danger if we were to remove or significantly weaken some of the key linchpins in the successful strategy of the last 70 years out of a conviction that warfare, or the world, or the nature of man had dramatically changed.”

While this is sage and carefully constructed advice, there are two problems with *The Future of Land Warfare*, one modest and one more significant. The modest problem arises from O’Hanlon’s approach to force sizing, particularly in terms of stabilization operations or counterinsurgency. He repeatedly uses a force-sizing rule of thumb from the 2007 version of Army and Marine Corps counterinsurgency doctrine which has since been superseded by a newer version that does not stress this guideline. The rule was dropped because it is not applicable to all counterinsurgency operations but only to large-scale US involvement in pacification and stabilization. The rule was developed for nation and security-force creation rather than nation and security-force assistance. A different form of counterinsurgency—think El Salvador rather than Iraq and Afghanistan—would not require as many US forces.

More important, O’Hanlon’s analysis was based on the assumption that the grand strategies of the George W. Bush and Barack Obama administrations—which were more alike than different—would continue into the future. This assumption might have been true had Hillary Clinton won the 2016 presidential election as expected. But, Donald Trump won the presidency while claiming American grand strategy is not working. The most fundamental premise of US strategy since the beginning of the Cold War—that the United States should be the guarantor of a liberal world order—is being challenged. The problem with Trump questioning existing American grand strategy is that he has not yet proposed an alternative.

If Trump does not transform American grand strategy, then O’Hanlon’s analysis and recommendations will remain germane to anyone interested in US security. If, however, there is a Trump revolution in US grand strategy, the analysis of American landpower must begin anew.



Ithaca, NY: Cambria Press,
2016

281 pages
\$39.95

Reassuring the Reluctant Warriors: U.S. Civil-Military Relations and Multilateral Intervention

By Stefano Recchia

Reviewed by Marybeth P. Ulrich, Professor of Government, Department of National Security and Strategy, US Army War College

In *Reassuring the Reluctant Warriors*, Stefano Recchia, a lecturer in international relations at Cambridge University, investigates the role civil-military relations played in US efforts to gain the support of international organizations for the use of force. His central hypothesis is “when there is no clear threat to US national security and policymakers consequently disagree about the merits of intervention, a determined military leadership can veto the use of American force” (51). In short, Recchia argues senior military leaders at the apex of political-military decision-making can effectively veto policy when civilian policymakers are divided and the national interest is less than vital. In such scenarios, the military may demand the government obtain the support of international organizations as a condition of the military’s backing of the intervention.

Recchia argues further the military’s demand for an international organization mandate is also linked to the military’s preference for such resolutions to state explicitly that US intervention forces will hand over control to multinational follow-on forces. The existence of such a provision in the planning phase of the operation will not only facilitate the planning process itself with the inclusion of the assumption of the presence of multinational stabilization forces, but will also fulfill the military’s post Weinberger-Powell Doctrine desire for a clear exit strategy before giving its assent to the use of force. The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) would usually be the first choice to endorse the intervention given its unique status as the organization the Charter of the United Nations authorizes to approve the use of force, but the approval of other regional organizations, such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) or the Organization of American States (OAS) may also suffice.

Reassuring the Reluctant Warriors is remarkable on many levels. First, its four case studies: Haiti (1993–94), Bosnia (1992–95), Kosovo (1998–99), and Iraq (2002–03) are extraordinarily well researched. Recchia conducted over 100 interviews with primary participants in the cases to include US secretaries of state and defense, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, national security advisers, US ambassadors to the UN, NATO, and the European Union, and many more with individuals holding positions a tier or two below the principals. The breadth and depth of the interviews enabled Recchia to include many insights from these key participants’ in the deeply sourced text, some of which directly supported his hypothesis. The case studies alone, which include many of these comments, merit acquiring the book.

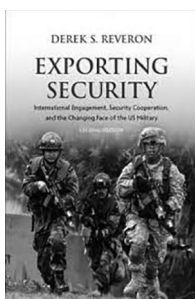
Second, Recchia illustrates (literally—with useful figures) the factors influencing the military’s viewpoint, their methods for exerting policy influence, and specific conditions that will make the military’s “insistence” to acquire international organization approval more or less likely. Third, through the development of his primary and

alternative hypotheses, he provides readers a rich review of the various factors, conditions, and theory that explains why international organization approval is or is not sought as well as methods employed to acquire approval.

If the book falls short in any area, it is in Recchia's neglect to consider whether the behaviors he documents on the part of senior military leaders fall outside the bounds of civil-military norms. First, there is the discussion of the military's "veto" power. While Recchia painstakingly completes the "process tracing" of the impact of the civilian and military actors in each case, he does not note the military is in what Eliot Cohen deemed an "unequal dialogue" with civilian policymakers, meaning a military veto is inconsistent with the principle of civilian control. Consequently, the table detailing "How the generals can influence military intervention decision-making" with its inclusion of "present some options as unfeasible," "selectively leak reservations to the press," and "hint at possible resignation," along with provide "professional expertise" and "alert civilian policymakers to risks and likely operational costs," are included side by side despite the issue the former suggestions include behaviors that effectively undermine civilian control.

The case development at times also includes the political opinions of the military along with the professional expertise civilians expect regarding the operational limits of various options under consideration. In the Haiti case, for example, Recchia wrote, "The top-level generals and admirals disputed that important US national interests were at stake in Haiti. They were skeptical about using force to restore democracy and protect human rights and worried about getting bogged down in an open-ended stabilization mission that the Congress might not support" (81). It is not the role of senior military leaders to determine national interest or to set policy. Manipulating the provision of professional expertise in order to get the institution's way on policy is a serious violation of professional norms related to civilian control. Some recognition of this issue in the text would have strengthened the presentation of the cases.

Overall, *Reassuring the Reluctant Warriors* is a welcome addition to civil-military relations literature in political science. Recchia wrote his purpose was to build theory in such a way that it acknowledges the direct and underappreciated role senior military leaders at the apex of political-military dialogue play in policy development. The text accomplishes this goal with its outstanding case studies. Future and present military leaders, however, should be careful to approach the book not so much as a "user's manual" for greater influence in the policy process, but as a well-written and well-researched vehicle to analyze the actions of former military leaders, who at times, may have exceeded their designated roles in the "unequal dialogue."



Washington, DC:
Georgetown University
Press, 2016
247 pages
\$32.95

Exporting Security: International Engagement, Security Cooperation, and the Changing Face of the US Military – Second Edition

By Derek S. Reveron

Reviewed by Benjamin Jensen, Associate Professor, Marine Corps University, Scholar-in-Residence, American University School of International Service, and author of *Forging the Sword: Doctrinal Change in the US Army* (Stanford University Press, 2016)

Exporting Security: International Engagement, Security Cooperation, and the Changing Face of the US Military – Second Edition provides an excellent overview of the concept of theater shaping: how military forces conduct cooperative engagements to advance the interests of the United States. These activities, traditionally associated with Phase 0, provide options for addressing what author Derek Reveron calls security deficits, areas of instability that create persistent challenges for US national security. The book provides the historical background and policy context including PPD-23 and the 2015 National Military Strategy behind the expanding definition of security to include practices traditionally associated with development and diplomacy. According to Reveron: “Presidents of all political persuasions continue to use the military as a preferred tool of national power in noncoercive ways” (48). From this perspective, the military is an engagement as much as it is a coercive instrument, and the United States is “more concerned that Pakistan will fail than it is that Russia will attack Western Europe” (4).

Because of the continued importance of theater shaping and Phase 0 activities, future researchers will need to enter the dialogue and ask important questions based on Reveron’s work. First, a persistent theme in the book is that the US military has undergone dramatic change over the last three decades. There is also an implicit assumption that “security cooperation programs have broadened the mission set for the military beyond major combat” (4). If so, this change should be apparent in major shifts in operational concepts and doctrine in each service and, to a lesser extent, due to political influences, path dependencies, force structure, and resource allocation. But, are they? Does the US military, as measured by the individual service doctrines and Program Objective Memorandum submissions, reflect a prioritization of military engagement?

Second, do Phase 0 activities actually reduce security deficits? Reveron contends that military engagement can “reduce other states’ security deficits created when subnational, transnational, or regional challenges overwhelm a partner’s national security institutions” (43). Yet, research by Dafna Rand and Stephen Tankel presented in *Security Cooperation & Assistance: Rethinking the Return on Investment* (August 2015) suggests the contrary. They found security cooperation and building partner capacity initiatives often fail due to a misalignment of ends, ways, and means as well as the underlying difficulty of measuring progress. For Rand and Tankel “the failure to adequately assess efficacy contributes to the potential overreliance on security assistance and cooperation as a tool of statecraft.” For scholars Gordon Adams

and Shoon Murray, who edited *Mission Creep: The Militarization of US Foreign Policy?* (2014) and whom Reveron addresses in the book, military engagement and Phase 0 reflect the creeping militarization of US foreign policy. The incoming administration needs a comprehensive, empirical study on the correlates of reducing security deficits that measure whether or not Phase 0 activities associated with military engagement are working as intended.

Third, what other historical periods provide insights into the use of military forces outside of battle? While the book offers maritime examples over the land domain, the history of the US Army in Europe also provides numerous cases of the importance of building interoperability as a means of enabling a conventional deterrent. Although not human security challenges or linked to terrorism or piracy, these examples will help military leaders frame the ways decision-makers apply military forces to achieve national security objectives.

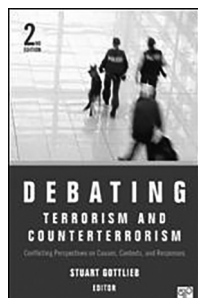
Reveron's work in both editions of *Exporting Security* makes important contributions to the framework academics and military professionals should use to conceptualize plans for employing military forces. Future research and staff estimates should concentrate on additional questions about the efficacy of these military engagements and reflect on the broader range of military and diplomatic historical practice.

SECURITY STUDIES

Debating Terrorism and Counterterrorism: Conflicting Perspectives on Causes, Contexts, and Responses – Second Edition

By Stuart Gottlieb, Editor

Reviewed by William E. Kelly, Associate Professor of Political Science, Auburn University



Los Angeles, CA: CQ Press,
2014
407 pages
\$60.00

The international threat of dealing with terrorism raises interesting questions and is a controversial topic. This controversy is reflected in the revised second edition of *Debating Terrorism and Counterterrorism: Conflicting Perspectives on Causes, Contexts, and Responses* which provides a more expansive discussion than the first edition of how the international community and organizations can cope with increasing threats.

Editor Stuart Gottlieb has an excellent professional background, serving as a senior foreign policy adviser in the US Congress and specializing in foreign policy, counterterrorism, and international security research and coursework. He is optimistic about how the United States is reacting to current dangers and believes the nation is safer, the intelligence community better coordinated, and defenses against terrorism stronger. Yet, he admits the threat from al-Qaeda has not disappeared, and he divides the book into two sections with 12 chapters focusing on important issues related to the different types of emerging threats.

The first section, “Debating Terrorism,” raises important questions: Is the “new terrorism” really new? Does poverty serve as a root cause of terrorism? Can terrorism ever be justified? Does Islam play a unique role in modern religious terrorism? Is suicide terrorism an effective tactic? Is nuclear terrorism a real threat?

The second section, “Debating Counterterrorism,” provides further thoughts to consider as they relate to counterterrorism strategies and the US Constitution: Do we need bombs over bridges? Can spreading democracy help defeat terrorism? Can international organizations make a difference in fighting terrorism? Is an outright ban the best way to eliminate or constrain torture? Does providing security require a trade-off with civil liberties? Is the threat of terrorism being overstated?

What makes this book so appealing is that it presents important questions related to terrorism and provides answers from experts with opposing views—an excellent way for readers to gain invaluable insights into current threats. Gottlieb should be commended for both his excellent choice of questions and his selection of expert contributors who logically and understandably present their viewpoints. *Debating Terrorism and Counterterrorism: Conflicting Perspectives on Causes, Contexts, and Responses – Second Edition* will be of interest and benefit to anyone planning for, and reacting to, the threats of modern-day terrorism.

Drug Trafficking and International Security

By Paul Rexton Kan

Reviewed by José de Arimatéia da Cruz, Adjunct Research Professor, US Army War College, and Professor, International Relations and Comparative Politics, Armstrong State University

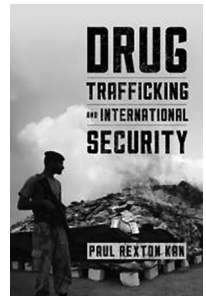
To say drug trafficking is destroying societies and undermining the legitimacy of states would be an understatement. Yet, despite tremendous social, economic, and political ramifications, traditional theories of international relations, with the primary unit of analysis as the state, have downplayed this fact. Not so, for author Paul Kan. In *Drug Trafficking and International Security*, he shows how “drug trafficking has evolved to become enmeshed in the most serious issues affecting international security,” and how these “activities are significant stressors on individuals, economies, societies, states, and the international system” (184).

Following the implosion of the Soviet Union and the “end of history,” global leaders thought the new international order would create a more peaceful world; however, previous problems were replaced with the emergence of new issues ranging from war, terrorism, migration, human security, and global health to transnational organized crime. Kan believes these issues, traditionally kept under control by authoritarian regimes worldwide, have become integral parts of the new international system, and “the fragmentation of power, rather than centralization of power, will create new and unexpected security challenges based on the convergence of many issues and actors that were once considered separate and distinct from one another” (190).

Kan argues drug trafficking in the post-Cold War international system should be treated as a unique security issue having detrimental implications on the future of the nation-state and the consolidation of democracy worldwide, especially among nascent democracies in developing countries. Drug trafficking, now an integral part of the “deviant globalization” and “durable disorder” of the new international system (12), is chipping away at the framework of society and intersects with all other Cold War security issues as well as rogue nations, failing states, intrastate conflicts, crime, public health, and cyberattacks (14).

As drug trafficking becomes another unit of analysis for international relations practitioners, it is also giving rise to a new player in the international system, narco-states. Narco-states, which can be categorized as incipient, developing, serious, critical, and advanced, according to Kan, exist “where the institutions of government direct drug trafficking activities or actively collude with drug traffickers, creating conditions where the illicit narcotics trade eclipses portions of the country’s legitimate economy and where segments of society begin to accrue benefits from drug trafficking. A narco-state thrives due to its ability to exploit qualities of the state’s link to the legitimate global economy” (51).

One important topic discussed by Kan, but often forgotten by international relations practitioners, is how transnational organized



Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016
223 pages
\$32.00

criminal groups and drug traffickers have embraced the world's third revolution—the development of the Internet. These criminal groups use the Internet to promote illicit activities (such as recruitment, money laundering, extortion, and other nefarious interests) conducted on the Deep Web, the Dark Web, or the Dark Net, an area of the Internet encrypted from end-to-end and accessible only with special privileges since communications within the Deep Web use programs such as The Onion Router (TOR).

Deep Web societies can become fragile or failed states, further contributing to the escalation of violence and suffering within the countries while organized criminal groups enhance their power vis-à-vis the government. In societies around the world where the legitimacy of states is being questioned, drug trafficking creates a political vacuum. Organized criminal groups willingly assume the traditional functions of the state and see “a natural fit for drug trafficking activities because they have geographic proximity to demand countries, trade networks that extend to markets in developed countries, pliable policy forces and customs agencies, viable airports or seaports, territory beyond governmental control, arable land, or accessibility to state assets” (74).

We do know that drugs corrupt and chip away the social fabric of society. But, what are the national security implications and how does drug trafficking affect international security? Kan points out several national security implications political leaders should consider—or ignore at their peril. First, government institutions become hallowed, economies become predatory, and civil societies become criminalized (95). Furthermore, the criminalization of society and its political and judicial institutions undermines the rule of law in many countries. The process of democratization, which in many parts of the world is still being consolidated, also suffers in narco-states. As Kan argues, “in a narco-state with democratic institutions, the hallmark of accountability and transparency is replaced with corruption” (95).

Drug Trafficking and International Security clearly shows every important aspect of the international security landscape has been permeated and transformed by this problem (2). I highly recommend this book to readers interested in political science and peace and security studies. Given that many US Army War College students will serve in the countries discussed by Kan, this book will aid in developing a practical understanding of how drug trafficking interconnects with multiple issues in today's globalized world.



The Outrage Industry: Political Opinion Media and the New Incivility

By Jeffrey M. Berry and Sarah Sobieraj

Reviewed by James P. Farwell, National Security Expert; Associate Fellow, Department of War Studies, Kings College, London; and author of *Persuasion & Power* (Georgetown University Press, 2012)

Georgetown law student Sandra Fluke testified before Congress, arguing that religiously affiliated universities and hospitals should provide insurance coverage for contraception. Radio talk show host Rush

Limbaugh denounced her as a “slut” and a “prostitute.” His outburst illustrated the media outrage that is perverting political discourse in America today and which Jeffrey Berry and Sarah Sobieraj highlight in their insightful book, *The Outrage Industry: Political Opinion Media and the New Incivility*. More hosts are conservative, but no-holds-barred outrage affects liberal hosts as well.

Some worry about Vladimir Putin’s propaganda campaigns. But compared to American talk show hosts, the Russians are pikers. Violent imagery, name-calling, personal attacks, homophobia, and dire warnings are stock in trade. Glenn Beck carried a baseball bat onto his TV set. Alan Colmes told listeners, “It’s going to be moron night, isn’t it?” Keith Olbermann declared, “Sean Hannity doesn’t understand that because Sean is very dim.” Mike Gallagher wanted the world to know that “Anderson Cooper . . . he’s the last guy who should go on television and make oral sex references.” Mark Levin invoked a clarion call, “Nancy Pelosi’s politics come as close to a form of modern-day fascism as I’ve ever seen.”

Berry and Sobieraj strongly prefer the older American news media model on the grounds it better promotes fair play, objectivity, and moderation and through these attributes makes the political system function more smoothly. Their perspective is shaped by the impact and role talk shows play in the political system.

The book identifies 13 variables that define talk show tactics: insulting language, name-calling, emotional display, emotional language, verbal fighting/sparring, character assassination, misrepresentation, mockery, conflagration, ideologically extremizing language, slippery slope argument, belittling, and obscenity. Mockery and misrepresentation top the list.

Talk shows have emerged at a time in which trust in traditional news media has dropped. Talk show audiences are generally age 50 and above. Economics drives their success. Talk shows can target advertising to specific audiences. The old joke in advertising was, “I waste half my money advertising. I just don’t know what half.” That is moot. Today’s advertisers can identify niches that produce efficiency.

The top three talk show hosts reach a weekly audience of nearly 40 million. They appeal not *despite* being offensive but because they are. Fox’s conservative Bill O’Reilly and liberal Ed Schultz entertain and bond with their views. O’Reilly generates controversy. But the implications in national security may be far reaching. Along with iconic interviewer Larry King, Schultz recently signed onto Putin’s US propaganda flagship, *RT America*. Their action encodes an important Russian propaganda channel with an aura of legitimacy. It is startling. Can one imagine American broadcast journalist Edward R. Murrow or American journalist and war correspondent William L. Shirer copping to Reich Minister of Propaganda Josef Goebbels’ information machine?

The most successful radio talk shows reach a highly engaged audience. These audiences retain what they hear far better than music show listeners, and they create strong bonds of trust in the personality hosting the program with 72 percent of listeners talking to friends about favorite radio personalities and another 70 percent following hosts on social media. The best talk show hosts present themselves as regular

folks. Hannity earns over \$20 million and Limbaugh over \$50 million, but they are self-deprecating and refer to themselves as ordinary, “just like listeners, evoking empathy and commonality.”

Outrage-based programming uses exaggeration, conspiracy theory, and caricature. Talk shows are more about the experiences audiences desire, not the information they provide. Audiences gain reassurance that they are right. As one Limbaugh fan put it, “Rush is breaking it down and saying, ‘this is why things are happening this way.’ That’s what I think makes a good show because he’s got everybody going, ‘ah, I understand that, that’s much better.’” The discourse helps audiences to feel confident, celebrated for strong character and victorious in political discussions.

Berry and Sobieraj incisively deconstruct the most popular talk shows and explain why their popularity persists and grows. They enlighten readers about American politics as well as the dynamics of talk shows and how they affect attitudes and opinions, reaffirm beliefs, and create distortions that polarize publics against themselves by engaging emotions. In politics, reason persuades but emotion motivates. This outstanding book offers a fine contribution to our understanding of how and why this form of communication achieves both goals.

BIOGRAPHY

Bush

By Jean Edward Smith

Reviewed by W. Andrew Terrill, Professor Emeritus, US Army War College

In the last decade or so, numerous useful and controversial books have been published on President George W. Bush and his administration. To these works can now be added, *Bush*, a detailed and sometimes searing study by Toronto University Professor Emeritus Jean Edward Smith, a historian and biographer of American presidents and leaders, including Ulysses S. Grant, Dwight D. Eisenhower, John Marshall, and Franklin D. Roosevelt.

Smith displays a strong understanding of US history and provides insightful, often harsh, assessments about Bush's actions in office. Smith declines to name Bush the worst president in American history, but he strongly maintains Bush's decision to invade Iraq was the most tragic foreign policy error any US president has ever committed. He considers the invasion to be a more serious blunder than the US intervention in Vietnam because the collapse of friendly regimes in Southeast Asia did not have the global repercussions of the Iraq War's aftermath. He also states the initial mistake of invading Iraq was further compounded by the long-term occupation of the country with the goal of turning it into a functioning democracy.

Although Smith's most important observations relate to Bush's time as president, *Bush* is a full biography covering his entire life. In discussing Bush's early life, Smith presents his subject as an unserious young man, with a distaste for academic learning and a strong streak of "cultivated anti-intellectualism" he developed as a student and which was especially strong before he married (14). Despite these views, Bush could never have gotten as far as he did without important positive attributes beyond a distinguished family and presidential father.

Bush often displayed remarkably good skills with people, which served him well throughout his life. He appears to have been a competent officer in the Texas Air National Guard and did well at the portions of his business career that involved public relations and working with others. He was also an extremely effective and enthusiastic politician. Unlike his father, he loved campaigning and possessed tremendous energy for doing so. Moreover, throughout his career, Bush never showed the slightest signs of racism and was deeply sympathetic to the plight of immigrants, at one time stating, "Family values do not stop at the Rio Grande" (104). According to Smith, Bush was a humane, productive, and effective governor in a state where the governor has very little formal power.

Unfortunately, the ability to serve effectively as a governor does not, by itself, set one up for success as president. Bush knew almost nothing about foreign policy but liked making decisions, even without knowing all the important facts. Often, he treated his intuition as more important than any effort to examine the costs and benefits of a particular policy. In general, he did not want to be bothered with long discussions and efforts

BUSH

Jean Edward Smith



New York: Simon & Schuster, 2016

808 pages

\$35.00

to explore all sides of an issue. In a world he often saw in black-and-white, rigorous debate seemed unnecessary. Smith states Bush maintained throughout his presidency “an unnerving level of certitude and a habit of hiring support staff based on personal loyalty” rather than expertise or experience (155). Once, while complaining about the extensive level of detail in his briefing books, he said, “I don’t do nuance” (182). At another point, he asserted, “If you know what you believe, decisions come pretty easy” (213).

According to Smith’s analysis, the flaws in Bush’s governing style and personality subsequently played out with tragic consequences when he led the United States into the invasion of Iraq. Bush made no clear effort to consider what might go wrong in the undertaking and later could not understand Iraq’s sectarian problems or why they had become a major impediment on the road to democracy. He had trouble accepting the possibility Western-style democracy might not work in Iraq due to the widespread lack of democratic values.

Smith, emphasizing the undeniable point that Bush wore his religion on his sleeve, correspondingly makes a strong effort to understand the role Christianity played in Bush’s foreign policy decisions. This is an excruciatingly difficult task to undertake since most American politicians, and almost all Republican leaders, find it useful to claim some level of religious belief and devotion. While an argument can be made that Bush’s frequent expressions of piety were mostly good politics, Smith is not having any of this. Rather, he maintains Bush was not exaggerating his strong belief that he was the instrument of God’s will to destroy hostile dictatorships and spread democracy throughout the Middle East.

Smith supports this thesis with quotes from Bush explaining the Godly nature of the task at hand in Iraq. The intensity of these beliefs also came through at more private moments, sometimes with foreign leaders such as when Bush told French President Jacques Chirac, “Biblical prophecies are being fulfilled. This confrontation is willed by God” (339). The French leader was stunned by this and other comments and later became unwilling to enter a war he feared was at least partially based on Bush’s interpretation of the Bible. Additionally, Donald Rumsfeld, Bush’s first secretary of defense, said, “Bush often expressed his belief that freedom was a gift of the Almighty. He seemed to feel almost duty bound to help expand the frontiers of freedom in the Middle East” (357).

In summary, Smith maintains difficulties in Bush’s personality and approach to problem-solving set the administration up for a series of disastrous mistakes in Iraq. He suggests Bush never quite outgrew the anti-intellectualism of his youth and the belief experts tended to over-complicate simple matters of right and wrong. Moreover, Smith states while Bush’s brand of moral certitude gave him an inner strength and conviction, it also made it easier for him to dismiss the views of people with whom he disagreed.

This sort of evaluation is strong stuff and is at odds with other interpretations of the Bush administration, including those stressing Bush was manipulated by ideologues within his administration. Smith does not concede an inch to this interpretation. Rather, he sees Bush

as a strong leader steering his presidency with an unwavering hand and making key decisions he saw as the only moral alternative. With this level of disagreement, neither Smith nor anyone else is going to resolve these differences, even among Bush's critics, but he has clearly presented a powerful case that will be important for scholars and students to consider for years to come.

Admiral Bill Halsey: A Naval Life

By Thomas Alexander Hughes

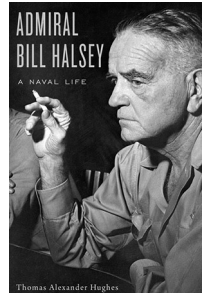
Reviewed by Albert F. Lord Jr., Director, Joint Warfighting Advanced Studies Program, US Army War College

William F. Halsey Jr., a truly iconic figure in American military and naval history whose outsize public persona was created and fueled by a wartime press looking for a hero early in World War II, was known for his fighting words "Hit hard, hit fast, hit often!" Thomas Alexander Hughes delivers a remarkable biography on Halsey that cuts through the mythology to show a man whose entire life was shaped by the shadow of his father (a gifted naval officer in his own right), the navy, and his personal struggle with the changes in naval warfare over the 47 years he served in uniform.

Halsey's birth into a navy family preordained his path into the service. Graduating from the US Naval Academy in 1904, Halsey was often the beneficiary of his father's legacy as senior officers took an interest in the son of a friend and messmate. He began his long association with fast, smaller ships during an early assignment to torpedo boat duty, and he formed his leadership style while working with these intimate crews on the leading edge of new technology, doctrine, and tactics. Another early influence was visionary reformer William Sims, commodore of the Atlantic Fleet Destroyer Flotilla, who served as Halsey's superior both before and during World War I. Sims's influence no doubt played a role in Halsey's decision later in his career, at the age of 52, to apply for flight training and to thereafter push new ideas for naval aviation as a strike force with a mission beyond just scouting for battleships.

The attack on Pearl Harbor found Halsey commander of the Aircraft Battle Force—the senior aviator afloat in charge of all aircraft carriers in the Pacific Fleet. From January to May 1942, he was continually at sea, attacking Japanese outposts and delivering Jimmy Doolittle's bombers on their epic, morale-raising raid of the Japanese homeland. In October 1942, Halsey was called upon to take command of the South Pacific Area and to hold Guadalcanal. His reputation and dogged determination invigorated the tired and dispirited troops. Unafraid to commit his precious carriers, aircraft, and surface forces, Halsey rushed ground reinforcements into battle and saved the campaign. His relentless fighting wore down the Japanese air, naval, and ground forces through a war of attrition from which they never recovered.

In June 1944, Halsey departed the South Pacific Area for command of the Third Fleet. The Japanese response to the invasion of the Philippines in October 1944 led to the Battle of Leyte Gulf and



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483 pages
\$35.00

the most controversial episode of Halsey's life. In the midst of four separate engagements, and suffering from a divided command structure, Halsey, ever the aggressive leader, raced after the last surviving Japanese carriers, leaving a crucial strait open to a powerful Japanese surface force. Only valiant combat by American light escort carriers and destroyers prevented a disaster to the invasion fleet. Legitimately criticized thereafter for "taking the bait" and not hedging his action by leaving a covering force behind, Halsey defended his actions and in his autobiography criticized others for his failure.

After Leyte Gulf, Halsey led the Third Fleet on a rampage to Formosa and the home islands of Japan and dealt a devastating blow to the remaining Japanese armed forces and war machine. In two more controversial events, Halsey's fleet was caught in deadly typhoons in December 1944 and June 1945. The ensuing damage to his reputation left fleet sailors doubting for the first time Halsey's capability to lead. Remaining in command to the end of the war, Halsey submitted his request for retirement shortly after the surrender and left active duty following his elevation to the five-star rank of Fleet Admiral.

Throughout the book, Hughes humanizes Halsey, describing a career naval officer who rose to the highest level of the profession by mastering technology and leading change, but who at other times failed to grasp the size and complexity of the US Fleet of late 1944 and 1945. Halsey's leadership style also comes through loud and clear—in most cases he was firm but fair, sensitive to individuals; however, several instances show he came up short in dealing with immediate subordinates and in taking responsibility for shortcomings. A notable and unique strength of the book is the backstory Hughes tells of Halsey's medical conditions, including a bout with depression, as well as his difficulties handling his wife's developing mental illness.

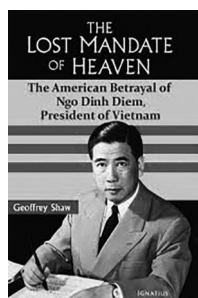
Admiral Bill Halsey: A Naval Life is a superb biography of a man who became larger-than-life in wartime service and who at critical times and places tipped the scales with the force of his personality. Astute students of history can easily draw parallels between Halsey's leadership style and the qualities required to lead today's joint forces as well as the forces of the future. Even readers familiar with Bill Halsey and the war in the Pacific will develop a new appreciation for the challenges he faced in wartime command and decision-making.

The Lost Mandate of Heaven: The American Betrayal of Ngo Dinh Diem, President of Vietnam

By Geoffrey Shaw

Reviewed by William Thomas Allison, Professor of History, Georgia Southern University

The brutal assassination of South Vietnamese President Ngô Đình Diem during the coup that overthrew his government on November 2, 1963, remains one of the most pivotal moments of American involvement in what was becoming the *American* war in Vietnam. Diem's critics believed the Catholic mandarin was doing more harm than good to his country. With an intensifying Viet Cong insurgency threatening provincial



San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2015

314 pages
\$24.95

regions across South Vietnam and internal strife taking the form of the self-immolation of Buddhist monk Quang Pac, South Vietnam teetered on the brink of collapse, so it seemed.

Diem had failed to implement social and political reforms demanded by the Kennedy administration. With the political and military situations worsening, President Kennedy reluctantly agreed with his more hawkish advisers that Diem had to go. Never supportive of Diem, Kennedy's new ambassador to the Republic of Vietnam, Henry Cabot Lodge Jr., gave the green light for a group of politically ambitious South Vietnamese army generals to overthrow Diem and his corrupt government. In the confusion of the coup, Diem and his brother Ngo Dinh Nhu met a bloody end at the hands of their South Vietnamese army captors. Horrified at Diem's death, Kennedy subsequently distanced himself from approving the coup, the results of which arguably sank the United States deeper, terminally so, into the quagmire of Vietnam.

This is largely the story reported at the time and repeated most often by historians. Well-supported arguments by Fredrik Logevall in *Choosing War: The Lost Chance for Peace and the Escalation of War in Vietnam* (1999) and Howard Jones in the compelling *Death of a Generation: How the Assassinations of Diem and JFK Prolonged the Vietnam War* (2003) conclude that although Diem may have had to go, his "going" undermined Kennedy's plans for a gradual withdrawal of American military support and led to direct involvement in the conflict in Vietnam. Just over two weeks after Diem's death, Kennedy was assassinated, leaving the Vietnam morass to Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson. The rest, as they say, is history—a tragic and needless history.

Welcome to this historiographic discussion Geoffrey Shaw, a former assistant professor for American Military University and current president of the Alexandrian Defense Group, a counterinsurgency warfare think tank. In *The Lost Mandate of Heaven*, Shaw provocatively argues Diem *did not* have to go. Shaw's Diem is a pious Catholic, dedicated to preserving South Vietnamese independence against the Sino-Soviet sponsored insurgency to unify Vietnam under a Communist regime based in Hanoi. Throughout his career as a government official, from district chief to president of the Republic of Vietnam, Diem effectively served a nation fighting for its survival. He led through a delicate balancing act that pitted his deep desire to resolve the social and economic issues affecting his country against the demands of the United States, which made his country an American proxy against monolithic Communist expansion.

The Kennedy administration, Shaw notes, betrayed Diem first by undermining his legitimacy as president through heavy-handed American interference in South Vietnam's domestic affairs, then ultimately by supporting the coup that ended Diem's government and his life. Shaw places responsibility for Diem's brutal killing indirectly on President Kennedy, but more eloquently blames a cabal of anti-Diem officials in the State Department, led by Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs W. Averell Harriman, for setting the stage for Diem's overthrow. Unlike former Ambassador to South Vietnam Frederick Nolting Jr., CIA Chief of Station in Saigon William Colby, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, and Johnson, who all believed Diem to be the best option the United States had to save South Vietnam, Harriman,

Senator Mike Mansfield, and others conspired to end the corrupt, increasingly despotic (as they saw it) regime of Diem and his brother. The Saigon press corps eagerly, if not unwittingly, played a supporting role in Diem's overthrow. Shaw portrays these reporters as hostile toward Diem, unyielding in their criticism of his nepotism and what they perceived as dictatorial tactics against the people of South Vietnam. The Viet Cong needed no propaganda; the Saigon press corps spread it for them.

Shaw presents a well-researched, thoroughly documented, and provocative, if not compelling, case. Surprising is Harriman's influence on Kennedy at the expense of Diem's supporters in the administration. Shaw also explores the pressure of the upcoming 1964 presidential election on Kennedy, in which the last thing Kennedy needed was for Southeast Asia to become the key negative issue. The press, Shaw most convincingly argues, was already headed down that path.

The Lost Mandate of Heaven is a strong and thoughtful reconsideration of Diem. While some readers may not find all of the book convincing, it deserves attention. Ultimately, all readers should agree, Diem's "Mandate from Heaven" was not enough to prevent his overthrow and save his life. Even Ho Chi Minh thought removing Diem from power a fatal mistake for the imperialist Americans.

MILITARY HISTORY

Drawdown: The American Way of Postwar

Edited by Jason W. Warren

Reviewed by Brian McAllister Linn, Professor of History, Texas A&M University, and author of *Elvis's Army: Cold War GIs and the Atomic Battlefield* (Harvard University Press, 2016)

It is always difficult for a historian to review a book on a topic that has, or should have, much to contribute to a contemporary military issue. Should the reviewer focus on the book's historical importance or speculate on its current relevance? The problem is compounded in an edited volume of articles, each of which has to be assessed both for academic worth and as guidance for the present. Unfortunately, *Drawdown: The American Way of Postwar* is likely to frustrate both historians and those interested in the debates over current defense reductions. Despite some excellent individual essays, the book is inadequately organized and edited, providing neither a coherent interpretation of "the American way of postwar" nor guidance for today's military realities.

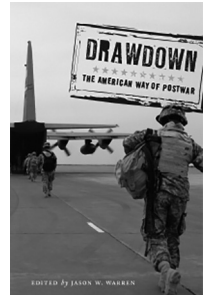
The forward by Peter Mansoor and the introduction by Michael E. Lynch make a commendable effort to impose intellectual consistency. Lynch, referencing one of the chapter titles, postulates a "liberty dilemma" in which the requirement for military forces to defend national security is countered by the public's fear of military influence and socioeconomic costs. It is a valiant attempt, but Lynch struggles to locate an American way of postwar in a book that is less a collective effort than a diverse collection of essays reflecting a variety of research interests.

Three essays on the post-Vietnam drawdown offer a model that might well have served for the rest of the book, and certainly would have made Lynch's task easier. Individually they provide both historical narrative and provocative interpretation. Together, they form a coherent, integrated analysis of the drawdown experience since Vietnam.

In a tight, well-researched essay, Conrad C. Crane explores what he terms the "myth of the Abrams doctrine." His admirers have credited the general with so intertwining the active and reserve components of the military that no president could go to war without both—thus somehow insuring political and popular commitment to future conflicts. Crane questions whether this was ever Abrams' purpose and concludes, "if he actually did have that goal . . . he failed miserably" (249).

Antulio J. Echevarria II offers an insightful critique of what others have mythologized as the "good drawdown" in which "prodigal soldiers" restored the US Army's pride and competence. The service's focus on one mission for nearly two decades—detering or defeating the USSR in western Europe—inspired reforms in doctrine, equipment, concepts, force structure, training, and so on—all of which appeared to be justified in the quick triumph of Desert Storm, and increasingly irrelevant thereafter.

Richard A. Lacquement Jr. provides a significant investigation of the post-Cold War drawdown, concluding that a combination of inertia,



New York: New York University Press, 2016

336 pages

\$30.00

emerging if relatively low-level threats, and global ambitions left the armed forces comparatively untouched. Comfortably fixated on waging war against a peer competitor, they had a difficult time adapting to the unconventional challenges of the twenty-first century.

All three essays complement each other, raising common themes and ideas and taking them forward from the end of the Vietnam War to the Iraq-Afghanistan conflicts. Studied together, these chapters will benefit both historians and students of the current drawdown.

Other chapters are also worth reading as individual essays, but of less relevance to the subject of drawdown. Samuel Watson's chapter, spanning roughly the end of the American Revolution to the Mexican War, argues that the reduction of the Army's officer corps in 1820 increased corporate professionalism by purging wartime veterans unfit for garrison duty. The implications for today are important, if disturbing. Edward A. Gutiérrez and Michael S. Neiberg summarize the four decades between the Spanish-American War and World War II. They see a slow but steady improvement in professional skill and institutional competence, some of it due to the Army having so little to do. Michael R. Matheny examines education at Fort Leavenworth and the War College between the World Wars. Lacking both resources and personnel to train for war, the Army wisely devoted itself to intellectual preparation, educating its best and brightest in the complexities of national mobilization. Raymond Millen's overview of the post-Korea reduction in forces is a well-researched, cogent defense of Eisenhower's strategic priorities, though readers might wish he had devoted more attention to the New Look's effects on the field forces.

If the majority of the essays are good to superior, why is *Drawdown* unsatisfactory as a book? In my view, an edited volume should be more than a collection of individual chapters: the sum should be better than the parts. And, a work that appears marketed to readers interested in current military reductions should have essays that draw clear parallels with today's events. By these standards, *Drawdown* is a disappointment. Whether from an author's caprice or a lack of editorial oversight, too many essays meander into wartime operations or colonial militia at the expense of a discussion of how this nation has demobilized its wartime forces. Readers will find some excellent solo chapters, but barring the three integrated essays on the post-Vietnam era they will not find an explanation of the American way of postwar.



Bushwhackers: Guerilla Warfare, Manhood, and the Household in Civil War Missouri

By Joseph M. Beilein Jr.

Reviewed by CPT David Krueger, Scholar of American History, Harvard University, with Dr. Walter Johnson, Winthrop Professor of History, Professor of African and African American Studies, and Director, Charles Warren Center for Studies in American History, Harvard University

The vast collection of work on the American Civil War can make it difficult to identify meaningful gaps in the historiography or to find novel methods, approaches, or arguments to further our understanding

of the conflict's history. In *Bushwhackers: Guerilla Warfare, Manhood, and the Household in Civil War Missouri*, Joseph M. Beilein Jr. embraces these challenges and succeeds in providing a new thematic study of guerilla warfare in Union-occupied Missouri that productively links elements of social and military history. He argues the guerillas of Civil War Missouri waged a "household war" in which men were connected, motivated, and sustained by networks of family and kin. This viewpoint challenges caricatures of guerillas as predatory outcasts, instead depicting their war effort as a system of community defense that mobilized the entire spectrum of Southern social hierarchy, within which roles and allegiances were shaped by age, gender, class, and race.

The book is arranged around specific arguments and themes rather than a chronological narrative, so readers unfamiliar with the characters and events discussed may struggle to place the evidence in historical context or to form clear lines of causation. The first three chapters lay the framework of the argument, outlining the contention that the strategy, tactics, and logistics of guerilla warfare were products of the gendered roles, relationships, and identities of the antebellum household. The strength of Beilein's research is evident in this section, which uses census data, provost marshal records, and guerilla memoirs to piece together 122 separate rebel households, and then divides them into two distinct groups organized around bonds of kinship in resistance to Union occupation. Describing these groups as the "Fristoe" and "Holtzclaw" systems of warfare, Beilein persuasively demonstrates how these distributed networks of autonomous households were effectively connected by family bonds and shared notions of deference and hospitality and fulfilled reciprocal needs of protection, logistics, and intelligence gathering across a guerilla band's area of operations, satisfying both military and social necessities.

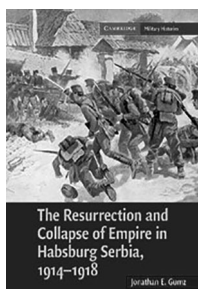
The remainder of the book addresses the material culture of guerilla society, analyzing both the practical uses and social meanings of food, clothing, horses, armaments, and rituals of remembrance. Beilein demonstrates how the domestic production and agricultural labor of women were sufficient to keep the guerillas adequately fed and clothed, negating the necessity for pillaging beyond retribution against anti-Southern households and communities. More important, by providing for the logistical needs of the fighters, women became active participants in the guerilla system and reinforced mutual social bonds and obligations. In addition, Beilein argues the guerillas' choices to be mounted and to adopt the Colt revolver were due not only to military advantages of mobility and firepower but were also products of a "horse culture" and notions of martial masculinity that valued individual skill and courage as markers of manhood.

Perhaps Beilein's greatest contribution in *Bushwhackers* is his attempt to analyze guerilla warfare through a gendered lens, which challenges conventions within military history and shows clearly in his endnotes and bibliography. His secondary sources center on a constellation of social and gender history scholars like Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, Amy S. Greenberg, Nancy F. Cott, Kathleen M. Brown, Stephanie McCurry, John Mack Faragher, and his mentor LeeAnn Whites. These sources give him excellent scaffolding for theorizing about a system of family- and community-based warfare, one that both contrasts with

and complements social histories of conventional forces like Edward Coffman's. For scholars of counterinsurgency, this book may prove a useful case study on how irregular forces can subsist and succeed outside conventional logistical networks and a cautionary note on developing strategies to combat insurgencies at the household or community level.

While Beilein's research is thorough and convincing, and his thematic chapters will have topical interest to scholars beyond the field of military history, his characterizations of both Union and Confederate regulars in the broader conflict are likely to draw criticism. In an effort to emphasize the culture of masculine individuality that guerillas embraced, he casts the regular soldier broadly as its antithesis, where the relationship between soldier and firearm "corroded his identity as a man" (152). He crafts an elaborate contrast between the yeoman farmer of the South, who mastered the land and his weapon as signs of his manhood and independence, against factory workers and regular soldiers, who existed as unskilled and timid cogs in the hierarchical machinery of industrial warfare.

If military discipline and distance from family are what distinguish the regular soldier from the guerilla, it must be considered a difference of degree rather than one of type. Soldiers in the Union and Confederate armies remained individuals and maintained reciprocal bonds with their families and communities that profoundly shaped their experiences, a reality broadly reflected in the literature of the conflict. Simplifications of the regular military experience like this occasionally betray Beilein's shallow dive into conventional military history beyond Missouri, but within his field of expertise and the scope of his primary argument, *Bushwhackers* is a welcome addition to the historiography of the American Civil War.



The Resurrection and Collapse of Empire in Habsburg Serbia, 1914–1918

By Jonathan E. Gumz

Reviewed by James D. Scudieri, Senior Historian, US Army Heritage and Education Center

This eye-opening book cuts a path into unfamiliar territory—the Austro-Hungarian invasions of Serbia and the subsequent occupation of Serbia to the end of the Great War. In current joint terminology, the book focuses on an extended Phase IV (to stabilize), with a particular twist on Phase V (to enable civil authority).

The Resurrection and Collapse of Empire in Habsburg Serbia, 1914–1918 is well written, researched, and organized, but it is a difficult book to read. The subject is unfamiliar, as Austrian institutions and mindsets are unlike German or Prussian, of which American readers are familiar. The text cites, for example, Austria-Hungary's three regular armies. The Common Army, however, with central funding was the only one entitled to the categorization of k.u.k. (*Kaiserlich und Königlich*, Imperial and Royal). The other two were the Austrian *Landwehr* and the Hungarian *Honved*, again, neither reserve nor militia.

New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009
288 pages
\$29.00

The detailed introduction lays out the thesis and major elements of evidence while subsequent chapters are thematic. The conclusion summarizes points of emphasis made throughout the book. Gumz organizes and integrates these components effectively as he investigates how Austrian authorities structured and implemented the occupation of a conquered Serbia, provides an analysis of civil-military relations, and discusses historiography. He highlights, for example, how evidence is at variance with much post-war Serbian narrative of the Habsburg revenge.

Senior Austrian officers possessed hardened, peacetime beliefs. They assumed a short war as did many, if not most, of their friends and foes. More significantly, Austrian military culture viewed the army and the business of waging war as distinct from civilian society and internal politics. The army represented duty, objectivity, and justice, ostensibly without bias, in a domestic world torn by nationalist passions and notions of democratization. Civil-military relations were poor and preciously little.

In 1914, the Austrian officer corps approached the outbreak of war with Serbia as an aberration. Wed to a limited-war tradition and a commitment to international norms, they abhorred a foe whom they understood to have radicalized warfare via a *levée en masse* with complete civilian participation. They expected to have to deal with wholesale popular atrocities, and their typical responses included threats, hostages, and executions. Gumz is emphatic that Austrian retaliation was dependent upon the specific incident and how Austrian commanders rejected universal total-war solutions, remaining tied to certain institutional, moral, and legal boundaries. Frankly, the responses were brutal.

Subsequently, Serbian occupation was under the military government of Serbia. The military governor answered directly to the chief of the general staff. Serbia was a military preserve, deliberately earmarked for civilian exclusion. The first preeminent mission was to denationalize and depoliticize conquered Serbia in preparation for its becoming part of Habsburg territory, the subject of Chapter 2. Thus, reestablished schools had soldier-teachers, though a teacher shortage was an early challenge. A police network targeted intelligentsia in a structure which saw policing as a military-intelligence function. The government's most powerful weapon was internment, that is, transportation to a different part of the empire. A new, harsher military governor and fears of an uprising in the wake of Russia's Brusilov Offensive in June 1916 and Romanian entrance into the war as an ally of the Entente in August 1916 brought mass internments. These actions soon became counterproductive due to little to no coordination with other governmental agencies, worsening labor shortages in a long war, and international opinion.

The law is the focus of Chapter 3. In brief, Serbia endured the most severe form of the increased permeation of military law into civil society throughout the wartime empire. The explanations are the army's military culture discussed above and the endorsement by the Austrian civilian minister-president. Space precludes a more detailed discussion. The text lays out the specifics, to include precise terms and procedures. Their easement came with the succession of Prinz Karl as emperor upon the death of Franz Joseph in November 1916.

Chapter 4 concerns food. The Austrians decided definitively to preclude starvation in Serbia. Ironically, Serbia became a sort of imperial bread basket. The reasons rest upon relative success within Serbia and worsening conditions throughout the empire, but particularly in Austria, the *Hinterland*. The army's total control over Serbia and its anathema over civilian interference make for quite a case study of interagency operations to distribute food outside Serbia.

From 1917, the military government of Serbia had to deal with internal warfare. The initial Austrian response viewed the scenario as civil war with mass uprising, much like their perspective in 1914. Leaders slowly came to realize that the enemy was more localized guerillas with limited numbers, who could not count on widespread popular support and hence punished civilian elements. Therefore, the Austrians changed their methods from larger-unit sweeps to platoon-level *jagdkommandos*, who tracked and laid ambushes. Ironically, this war evolved to Austrian forces becoming protectors of the population caught in a civil war of sorts.

The Resurrection and Collapse of Empire in Habsburg Serbia underscores the requirement to understand the past from the perspective of the participants, not the perspective of the readers. The book's conclusions provide statements with wider implications, including the increasing role of guerrilla war during the Great War and what the occupation of Serbia was not—another example of European colonial domination or a historical progression of events which led to the worst atrocities of the Third Reich.

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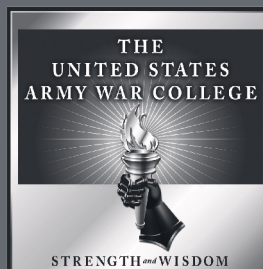
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