STRATEGY FOR THE LONG HAUL

CSBA

Reshaping America's Alliances for the Long Haul

BY EVAN BRADEN MONTGOMERY

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RESHAPING AMERICA'S ALLIANCES FOR THE LONG HAUL

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By Evan Braden Montgomery

2009

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The United States currently faces a host of critical foreign and defense policy challenges, including the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, instability in Pakistan and the reconstitution of an operational sanctuary for key elements of al Qaeda and the Taliban in parts of that country, Iran's development of an indigenous uranium enrichment capability and perhaps a nuclear weapons program as well, a resurgent Russia that is increasingly authoritarian at home and assertive abroad, and China's ongoing development and deployment of advanced military capabilities. In addition to managing these current conflicts and potential crises, the President and his advisors will also be responsible for decisions that will shape US defense strategy and force structure for years and possibly even decades to come. Because the dangers the United States now faces are so numerous and so demanding, one of the most critical tasks for the Obama administration will be to reassess and reshape America's military alliances.

AMERICA'S GROWING NEED FOR ALLIES

For more than half a century alliances have proven to be a crucial and enduring source of advantage for the United States, particularly as it sought to implement its decades-long strategy of containment against the Soviet Union during the Cold War. Nevertheless, within the United States the perceived need for allies has waxed and waned throughout the nation's history. Most recently, with the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the United States entered what some referred to as the "unipolar moment": a period during which America's economic and military power was unprecedented and its dominant position in the international system was essentially uncontested. One notable consequence of this situation was a decreased need for military alliances. Throughout the 1990s, with no peer or near-peer competitor on the horizon to challenge American hegemony, the United States required alliances for its security far less than it did during the Cold War.

Today, however, there is a growing recognition that the existing and prospective threats confronting the United States, as well as the broader changes taking place in the security environment, necessitate a renewed emphasis on alliances. Although the United States still remains the world's preeminent global power, its advantage over potential rivals and competitors appears to be in the early stages of relative decline. Nations such as China and India are emerging as major powers that will increasingly compete with the United States and with one another for influence, and are likely to have a growing impact on international affairs in the years ahead. In addition to this general trend, it is increasingly apparent that the United States will be confronted with three primary and enduring strategic challenges over the next two decades: defeating (or at the very least weakening and containing) violent Islamist extremist groups, in particular al Qaeda and its various affiliates; hedging against the rise of a more powerful and more assertive China; and preparing for a world in which nuclear weapons have been acquired by a number of additional nations (and perhaps even terrorist groups), at least some of which may be hostile toward the United States. Because the United States is now facing or may soon face these three very different challenges, its already wide-ranging global commitments are increasingly under stress, while its limited diplomatic, military, and intelligence capabilities are progressively more dispersed and strained. Moreover, this is occurring just as the United States' relative economic and military power is beginning to wane. For these reasons, and because this situation is unlikely to change in the foreseeable future, the United States must give renewed attention to the status and nature of its alliances.

America's current alliances are by and large an artifact of the Cold War, however, and it is not evident that they are adequate or appropriate for helping the United States meet its security challenges. Nor is it clear what role America's current allies should be asked to play. The purpose of this report is to evaluate these issues and offer suggestions on how the current US alliance portfolio should be revised to address the three overarching challenges the United States is likely to confront in the years ahead.

COUNTERING THE TERRORIST THREAT

Perhaps more than any other challenge the United States currently faces, countering the threat of violent Islamist extremism will require the support of allies and partners. As the United States confronts this challenge today and in the years ahead, it will need to collaborate with as many nations as possible (and with nonstate actors where governments are extremely weak, uncooperative, or simply nonexistent) to gather and share intelligence. It must also work closely with allies that possess significant counterterrorism and counterinsurgency capabilities in order to hunt down terrorist operatives and prevent weak nations from becoming sanctuaries, and bolster the capabilities of unstable nations or territories so that they can address internal threats themselves.

The importance of the third task—often referred to as "building partner capacity"—has been emphasized repeatedly over the past several years, as the United States has struggled to fight the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq while simultaneously conducting other counterterrorism operations across the globe and preparing for an era of persistent irregular warfare. Although this type of indirect approach is intended to conserve resources by preventing nascent threats from fully materializing and by putting at-risk nations in a better position to combat sources of instability on their own, the United States' ability to train, advise, and equip foreign security forces is limited, while the demand for these services appears to be limitless.

One way to address this gap is to adopt a more "layered" indirect approach that both improves and leverages the capabilities of US allies. Here, the United States and core allies such as Britain and Australia would work with Jordan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, India, and others (all nations that have significant experience combating terrorist and insurgent groups and have achieved some notable successes in these areas) to enhance their ability to conduct their own training and advisory missions. These allies could then assist the United States by expanding their efforts to build partner capacity in weak, vulnerable, and failing nations. In this case, primary tasks for the United States would include: coordinating closely with its allies to determine where they are best suited to conduct these missions; jointly designing, funding, and providing logistical support for and then monitoring these missions; and helping to equip nations receiving support with the tools they need, such as small arms, body armor, communications equipment, rotary wing transport, and civilian vehicles, as well as patrol and riverine craft where necessary.

AMERICA'S ASIAN ALLIANCES AND THE RISE OF CHINA

Although the rise of China may ultimately be peaceful, the United States must be prepared for the possibility that Beijing will become a more hostile power, whether as the result of international conflicts of interest or internal instability leading to external aggression. In doing so, America's allies and partners in the region will play a critical role by helping to shape the trajectory of China's rise, dissuading aggressive behavior on its part, and checking Chinese aggression if necessary.

Specifically, the United States should continue its current strategy of strengthening and building closer relationships with nations in the region, in particular Japan, Australia, and India, all of which can serve as potential counterweights to China both individually and in concert with the United States. While cooperation with Japan should focus on the continued development and deployment of ballistic missile defense systems, the United States should also explore the possibility of new access agreements and even basing options in Australia, and should support India's efforts to develop an increased blue water naval capability that could balance future Chinese efforts to project maritime power into the Indian Ocean.

In addition to strengthening bilateral ties with these and other nations in the region, the United States should encourage closer bilateral and multilateral ties among its allies, to include joint military exercises in areas such as counterterrorism, counterinsurgency, maritime security, noncombatant evacuation operations, and disaster relief. By working more closely with its regional partners and fostering greater cooperation between them, the United States can retain and perhaps expand its influence with these nations, increase interoperability between their forces and those of the US military, and improve the prospects of US allies and partners balancing against rather than bandwagoning with China if it becomes hostile.

MEETING THE CHALLENGE OF NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION

Further nuclear proliferation could create a number of strategic and operational dilemmas for the United States, but the increased possibility of conducting military operations against a nuclear-armed opponent, the increased chance that terrorists might acquire and use a nuclear weapon, and the prospect of a proliferation "chain reaction" in the Middle East stand out as the three most worrisome potential developments. Unfortunately, when preparing to address the first of these dilemmas, the United States must be prepared to act without much support from other nations, as allies facing the possibility of a nuclear reprisal are unlikely to consent to the use of their territory for military operations, which is perhaps the most critical contribution they could make. To address the threat of nuclear terrorism, however, allied support will be crucial. Not only must the United States work as closely as possible with Russia and Pakistan to ensure the security of their nuclear weapons and fissile material stockpiles, it should collaborate with its allies in the Middle East to delegitimize mass casualty (and especially nuclear) terrorist attacks, and may also wish to consider undertaking the necessary training, joint exercises, and technology transfers that would allow nations such as Britain, France, Australia, Singapore, and possibly others to reliably interdict and render safe a stolen or improvised nuclear device. Finally, preventing a spiral of proliferation in the Middle East will be a critical goal if Iran's nuclear program continues to progress, and especially if Tehran develops nuclear weapons. This raises the possibility of the most significant expansion of US alliance obligations since the start of the Cold War, namely, committing to retaliate against Iran for an attack on its neighbors to dissuade the latter from pursuing nuclear weapons. Although this could ultimately be the best or only way to convince Iran's neighbors to forgo nuclear weapons, this option should not be pursued until it has been studied in depth.

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INTRODUCTION

The United States currently faces a host of critical foreign and defense policy challenges, including the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, instability in Pakistan and the reconstitution of an operational sanctuary for al Qaeda and the Taliban in parts of that country, Iran's development of an indigenous uranium enrichment capability and perhaps a nuclear weapons program as well, a resurgent Russia that is increasingly authoritarian at home and assertive abroad, and China's ongoing development and deployment of advanced military capabilities. In addition to managing these current conflicts and potential crises, the President and his advisors will also be responsible for decisions that will shape US defense strategy and force structure for years and possibly decades to come. Because the dangers the United States now faces are so numerous and so demanding, one of the most critical tasks for the Obama administration will be to reassess and reshape America's military alliances.

For more than half a century alliances have proven to be a crucial and enduring source of advantage for the United States, particularly as it implemented its decades-long strategy of containment against the Soviet Union during the Cold War. Not surprisingly, then, the value of alliances is routinely extolled by policymakers and in key strategic documents. The 2002 National Security Strategy, for instance, declared that the United States was "guided by the conviction that no nation can build a safer, better world alone. Alliances and multilateral institutions can multiply the strength of freedom-loving nations."[1] More recently, the 2008 National Defense Strategy maintained: "The U.S. alliance system has been a cornerstone of peace and security for more than a generation and remains the key to our success, contributing significantly to achieving all U.S. objectives."[2]

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1 *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, DC: White House, 2002), accessed at http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss.pdf on August 11, 2008.

2 *The National Defense Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, D.C., Department of Defense, June 2008), p. 15, accessed at http://www.defenselink.mil/news/2008%20national%20defense%20strategy.pdf on January 7, 2009.

Nevertheless, the perceived need for allies has waxed and waned throughout the nation's history, shifting as a result of changes in the United States' relative power, the type and scale of threats it has faced, domestic political debates, and other factors. Now, following a period during which the United States had a diminished need for allied support and appeared increasingly willing to "go it alone," there is a growing recognition that the existing and prospective threats confronting the US necessitate a renewed emphasis on alliances. Throughout the recent presidential campaign, the need to revitalize America's alliances was a commonly expressed theme, particularly given the intense disagreements between the United States and several of its oldest European allies over the merits of the war in Iraq, disagreements that raised questions over the solidarity of longstanding transatlantic partnerships. For example, as a candidate for the presidency in 2007, then-Senator Barack Obama authored an essay in the journal *Foreign Affairs* in which he pledged that, as president, he would work to "rebuild the alliances, partnerships, and institutions necessary to confront common threats and enhance common security."[3]

Yet America's current alliances are by and large an artifact of the Cold War, and it is not clear that strengthening them (if this is possible) is necessarily the most effective way to preserve and enhance US security. At the same time, if America's existing alliances do need to be strengthened or altered in some way, it is not clear how this should be done or what form they should take. Ultimately, careful analysis is needed to determine whom the United States should ally with, what it should expect its allies to contribute, and what it should be prepared to offer them in return. The purpose of this report, therefore, is to evaluate these questions and offer suggestions for how the current US alliance portfolio can and should be revised to address the three overarching challenges the United States is likely to confront in the years ahead: violent Islamist extremism, a rising China, and nuclear proliferation.

The remainder of this report is organized into four main chapters. Chapter 1 summarizes the role of alliances in grand strategy, explains why the United States will have a growing need for allied support in the years ahead, and outlines some of the key trends that will influence who those allies are likely to be and what they are likely to contribute. Chapters 2, 3, and 4 then discuss US allies and alliances in the context of the three major challenges cited above.

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[3] Barack Obama, "Renewing American Leadership," *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2007, p. 11.

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CHAPTER 1 > ALLIANCES, GRAND STRATEGY, AND THE CHANGING SECURITY ENVIRONMENT

As nations work to preserve and enhance their security, they continuously seek to maximize their friends and minimize or isolate their opponents. Alliances, specifically military alliances, are therefore a recurring fact of international politics and a core element of grand strategy.[4] An alliance can be defined as "a formal or informal relationship of security cooperation between two or more sovereign states."[5] This broad definition includes peacetime defense treaties as well as wartime coalitions, along with the less binding or tacit alignments that tend to be far more common among states. Given the challenges the United States currently faces, however, in particular the threat posed by transnational terrorist movements and insurgent groups, this definition of alliances should be amended to include relationships between states and nonstate actors, with whom the United States may have to collaborate more frequently in the future.[6]

THE PURPOSE AND PITFALLS OF ALLIANCES

Alliances can serve a number of different functions for states, often at the same time. This observation is best captured by the well-known remark that the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was formed in order "to keep the Americans in, the

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4 Paul Kennedy, "Grand Strategy in War and Peace: Toward a Broader Definition," in Kennedy, ed., *Grand Strategies in War and Peace* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1991), p. 5.

5 Stephen Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1987), p. 1, n. 1.

6 Although cooperation between states and nonstate actors is particularly relevant today, the latter have often served as important partners for the United States. For instance, the United States supported the mujahidin in Afghanistan during the Soviet occupation, defended the Kurdish population of northern Iraq against Saddam Hussein throughout the 1990s and until Operation Iraqi Freedom, has continued to assist the Palestinian party Fatah against its rival Hamas, and has recently cooperated with Sunni tribes in Iraq against al Qaeda.

Russians out, and the Germans down."[7] In other words, the creation of NATO guaranteed to Western Europe that the United States would not withdraw from the continent and retreat into isolationism, provided a mechanism for balancing against the Soviet Union, and ensured that a defeated Germany would not reemerge and become a revisionist power as it did after World War I.

More generally, alliances have at least six major functions. First and foremost, alliances can augment states' collective military power by combining their armed forces against a common threat. This not only complicates an adversary's military planning and increases the likelihood that the allied states will prevail if war should occur, it also enhances the credibility of deterrent threats that can prevent war from breaking out in the first place. Second, allies can host foreign bases, permit the use of their facilities, and allow passage through their territory, all of which enable a state to project its military power more efficiently and effectively. Today, for example, alliances support what Barry Posen has called "command of the commons"—the US military's dominance of air, sea, and space—by supplying "the formal and informal bases that are the crucial stepping stones for U.S. military power to transit the globe."[8] As a result, the United States is not only able to transport its forces rapidly throughout the world, it is also capable of providing public goods like freedom of the seas. Third, even if an ally does not contribute military forces or allow access to its territory, assuring that a rival power does not gain control over these resources may be just as valuable.

First and foremost, alliances can augment states' collective military power by combining their armed forces against a common threat.

Fourth, by guaranteeing an ally's security, an alliance commitment may allow that ally to forgo certain military options (for example, the acquisition of nuclear weapons or power projection capabilities that could threaten its neighbors), which can in turn diminish competition between rivals and decrease the likelihood of conflict. This motive has been a core element of US strategy throughout the Cold War and in the post-Cold War era; as Christopher Layne has persuasively argued, "The objective of American grand strategy is to prevent multipolarity by negating the capacity for autonomous strategic action." Specifically, "America's alliance commitments are the key to preventing a reversion to multipolarity: as long as the United States provides security for them, Western Europe, Germany, and Japan will have no need to develop the capabilities to defend themselves," a status quo that has helped to preserve stability in key regions of the world.[9] Fifth, by strengthening ties between states and creating a degree of security interdependence, allies can gain greater influence over decision-making in one another's capitals. Finally, the presence of allies can increase the legitimacy of military operations both domestically and internationally.

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7 The quote is generally attributed to Lord Ismay, NATO's first Secretary General.

8 Barry R. Posen, "Command of the Commons: The Military Foundation of U.S. Hegemony," *International Security*, Summer 2003, p. 44.

9 Christopher Layne, "The 'Poster Child for Offensive Realism': America as a Global Hegemon," *Security Studies*, Winter 2002/03, p. 137.

Of course, alliances also have drawbacks. Although countering a threat in concert with others may increase the capabilities states can marshal against their opponents, it can also lead to a loss of autonomy, because each ally may have a say over when, where, how, and even whether military capabilities are employed. By committing to protect an ally, a state may also be dragged into a war that it would have preferred to avoid, a factor that is often used to explain how a conflict between the Austro-Hungarian Empire and Serbia in 1914 quickly engulfed most of Europe.[10] In fact, the knowledge that others are obligated to come to its defense can encourage an ally to act recklessly and initiate or provoke a war because it will not bear the full costs of its actions, a dilemma more generally referred to as "moral hazard."[11]

Alliances can also drain a nation's limited resources and may therefore contribute to a decline in its relative power. As Paul Kennedy argued over two decades ago, great powers have historically grown weak when their extensive military commitments became economically unsustainable, a phenomenon he referred to as "imperial overstretch."[12] For a dominant power such as the United States, the demands of supporting and protecting allies across the globe may therefore become a significant burden, a problem that can be exacerbated if allies are reluctant to contribute to their own defense and instead choose to "free ride" at the expense of their more powerful partner.[13] Notwithstanding these disadvantages and despite the costs that alliance commitments have at times imposed upon the United States in terms of money spent or, in cases such as the Vietnam War, lives lost, it is generally accepted that overall, alliances have been a significant source of advantage for the United States.

AMERICA'S NEED FOR ALLIES: PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

Throughout American history, the perceived value of alliances has varied greatly. For example, during the nineteenth century alliances were frequently viewed as harmful rather than beneficial to American security, and were therefore avoided. This

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[10] This dynamic is often referred to as entrapment or the "chain gang" effect. See Glenn Snyder, *Alliance Politics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997), p. 181; and Thomas J. Christensen and Jack Snyder, "Chain Gangs and Passed Bucks: Predicting Alliance Patterns in Multipolarity," *International Organization*, Spring 1990.

[11] Snyder, *Alliance Politics*, p. 181; and David A. Lake, *Entangling Relations: American Foreign Policy in Its Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), p. 53.

[12] Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000* (New York: Random House, 1987), especially pp. xvi, 514–515.

[13] As noted above, however, oftentimes a degree of free riding is actually encouraged because it prevents an ally from acting more independently or developing certain military capabilities, either of which could be destabilizing. The dominant partner in an alliance relationship may therefore be caught between, on the one hand, wanting its partner to contribute greater effort and resources toward its own defense and, on the other hand, preferring that its partner not develop certain capabilities that would allow it to do so. This dilemma is perhaps most evident today in the US-Japan alliance.

principle was famously established in George Washington's Farewell Address, which cautioned the United States to "steer clear of permanent alliances with any portion of the foreign world," although it could, if necessary, "safely trust to temporary alliances for extraordinary emergencies."[14] From the perspective of many of the Founders, alliances would require the government to raise and keep a large military, expanding its power and creating a potential threat to freedom at home; lead to increased factionalism, for example between partisans of France and Britain; reduce America to a client state of more powerful patrons, none of whom shared its long-term interests; and disrupt its economic development and territorial expansion, which if allowed to progress would eventually enable the United States to deal with the great powers of the day from a position of strength.[15] In short, the prevailing logic of the time held that "Entangling alliances would only invite corruption at home and danger abroad, while neutrality could not but serve Liberty and national growth."[16]

During the twentieth century, successive great power wars in Europe and the expansion of Soviet influence after 1945 required the United States to participate in a series of military alliances to restore or preserve the global balance of power.

This situation changed dramatically during the twentieth century, however, as successive great power wars in Europe and the expansion of Soviet influence after 1945 required the United States to participate in a series of military alliances to restore or preserve the global balance of power. Moreover, the United States took on progressively greater roles within those alliances over time; while it fought as an "associated" rather than an allied power alongside Britain and France in World War I, it was one of the "Big Three" in World War II in concert with Britain and the Soviet Union, and afterward became the leading member in a series of alliances created to contain the threat posed by the Soviet Union and its allies, principally the Warsaw Pact nations of Central and Eastern Europe. When that threat disappeared, however, the role of alliances in US grand strategy began to shift again.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the United States entered what some referred to as the "unipolar moment": a period during which America's economic and military power were historically unprecedented and its dominant position in the international system was essentially uncontested.[17] One notable consequence of this situation was that military alliances were no longer as clearly needed as they once had been.[18] Throughout the 1990s, with no peer or near-peer competitor on the immediate

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[14] Cited in Walter A. McDougall, *Promise Land, Crusader State: The American Encounter with the World since 1776* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1997), pp. 46–47.

[15] Ibid., pp. 42–48. For further discussion see Walter Russell Mead, *Special Providence: American Foreign Policy and How it Changed the World* (New York: Routledge, 2002), chap. 6; and H.W. Brands, *What America Owes the World: The Struggle for the Soul of Foreign Policy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), chap. 1.

[16] McDougall, *Promise Land, Crusader State*, p. 42. The United States did, however, develop a relationship with Britain after the enunciation of the Monroe Doctrine in 1823 that took on some characteristic of a tacit alliance, as both sides had an interest in keeping European powers out of the Western Hemisphere but the United States did not possess or wish to build the naval capabilities necessary to do so on its own. Mead, *Special Providence*, pp. 199–202.

[17] See, for example, Charles Krauthammer, "The Unipolar Moment," *Foreign Affairs*, Winter 1990/1991; and William C. Wohlforth, "The Stability of a Unipolar World," *International Security*, Summer 1999.

[18] Stephen M. Walt, "Alliances in a Unipolar World," *World Politics*, January 2009, pp. 94–95.

horizon to challenge American hegemony, the United States required alliances for its security far less than it did during the Cold War, when the United States depended on the support of its NATO allies, Japan, and others to help contain the Soviet threat. Moreover, in the aftermath of the Cold War, longtime US allies such as Germany and Japan were often identified as potential great powers—and therefore possible future rivals—due in large part to their considerable economic strength.[19] Ultimately, America's Cold War-era alliances persisted, found new missions to justify their continued existence and, in the case of NATO, significantly expanded their membership. Nevertheless, the United States' seemingly overwhelming power and the absence of a single, unifying threat that could bring nations together in common purpose led to persistent debates over the value and appropriate role of these alliances.

While many of these debates continue today, the context in which they are taking place has transformed considerably. As a result of significant changes that have taken place in the security environment over the past several years, as well as changes that are expected to occur in the future, the United States once again finds itself in need of allies, perhaps as much as (if not more than) it did during the Cold War. Although the United States still remains the world's preeminent global power, the scale of its advantage over potential rivals and competitors appears to be in the early stages of relative decline. Nations such as China, India, and perhaps Russia are now emerging (or reemerging) as major powers that will increasingly compete with the United States and with one another for influence, and are likely to have a growing impact on international affairs in the years ahead. As a recent report by the US National Intelligence Council (NIC) concluded, over the next two decades the increasing economic and military power of China and India in particular will give rise to an international system in which the United States "will remain the single most important actor but will be less dominant."[20] Similarly, Fareed Zakaria has argued that, "On every dimension other than military power—industrial, financial, social, cultural—the distribution of power is shifting, moving away from U.S. dominance."[21] In short, while a multipolar world order characterized by several great powers of nearly equal strength is unlikely to take shape for quite some time, long-term trends do point toward an erosion of the substantial relative power advantage the United States has enjoyed for nearly twenty years.

The United States once again finds itself in need of allies, perhaps as much as (if not more than) it did during the Cold War.

In addition to this general trend, a number of events going back more than a decade have shown that the more optimistic assessments of the unipolar era proved to be overly sanguine, as dangers that were only nascent when the Cold War came to an

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[19] Kenneth N. Waltz, "The Emerging Structure of International Politics," *International Security*, Autumn 1993.

[20] NIC, *Global Trends 2025: A Transformed World*, November 2008, accessed at http://www.dni.gov/nic/NIC_2025_project.html on January 3, 2009, p. 1.

[21] Fareed Zakaria, "The Future of American Power," *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2008, p. 43. For more dramatic predictions of declining US power, see Parag Khanna, "Waving Goodbye to Hegemony," *New York Times Magazine*, January 27, 2008; and Robert A. Pape, "Empire Falls," *The National Interest*, January/February 2009.

end have become much more serious since that time. In particular, a series of attacks by al Qaeda against US targets—culminating in the 9/11 attacks on the Pentagon and the World Trade Center—erased any lingering doubts over the threat posed by transnational terrorist groups. At the same time, the 1998 nuclear tests conducted by India and Pakistan, North Korea's test of a nuclear weapon in 2006, and Iran's continuing efforts to develop an indigenous uranium enrichment capability and perhaps a nuclear weapons program have all highlighted the reality and the danger of nuclear proliferation. Finally, China's rapidly growing economy and its ongoing military buildup across the Taiwan Strait have made it a rising regional (and potential global) power, while its successful test of direct ascent anti-satellite weapon in January 2007 dramatically called attention to its growing military ambitions, the increasing sophistication of its capabilities, and the potential vulnerability of critical US civilian and military assets.

If strategy is fundamentally about balancing ends and means to ensure that a nation's resources are sufficient to meet its commitments, then the United States appears to be moving toward a dangerous imbalance.

These and other developments suggest that, over the next two decades, the United States will be confronted with three primary and enduring strategic challenges: defeating (or at the very least weakening and containing) violent Islamist extremist groups, in particular al Qaeda and its various affiliates; hedging against the rise of a more powerful and more assertive China; and preparing for a world in which nuclear weapons have been acquired by a number of additional nations (and perhaps even terrorist groups), at least some of which may prove hostile toward the United States.[22] Because the United States is now facing or may soon face these three very different challenges, its already wide-ranging global commitments are increasingly under stress, while its limited diplomatic, military, and intelligence capabilities are progressively more dispersed and strained. Moreover, this is occurring just as the United States' relative economic and military power is beginning to wane. If strategy is fundamentally about balancing ends and means to ensure that a nation's resources are sufficient to meet its commitments, then the United States appears to be moving toward a dangerous imbalance, a condition that Walter Lippmann referred to as "insolvency."[23] For these underlying reasons, the United States has a greatly increased need for allied support, a situation that is unlikely to change in the foreseeable future.

"OLD" ALLIES IN A NEW WORLD

Given the broad definition of alliances used in this report, as well as the United States' extensive military, economic, and diplomatic ties with so many nations, any list of American allies that is not limited to the states it is officially pledged to defend is

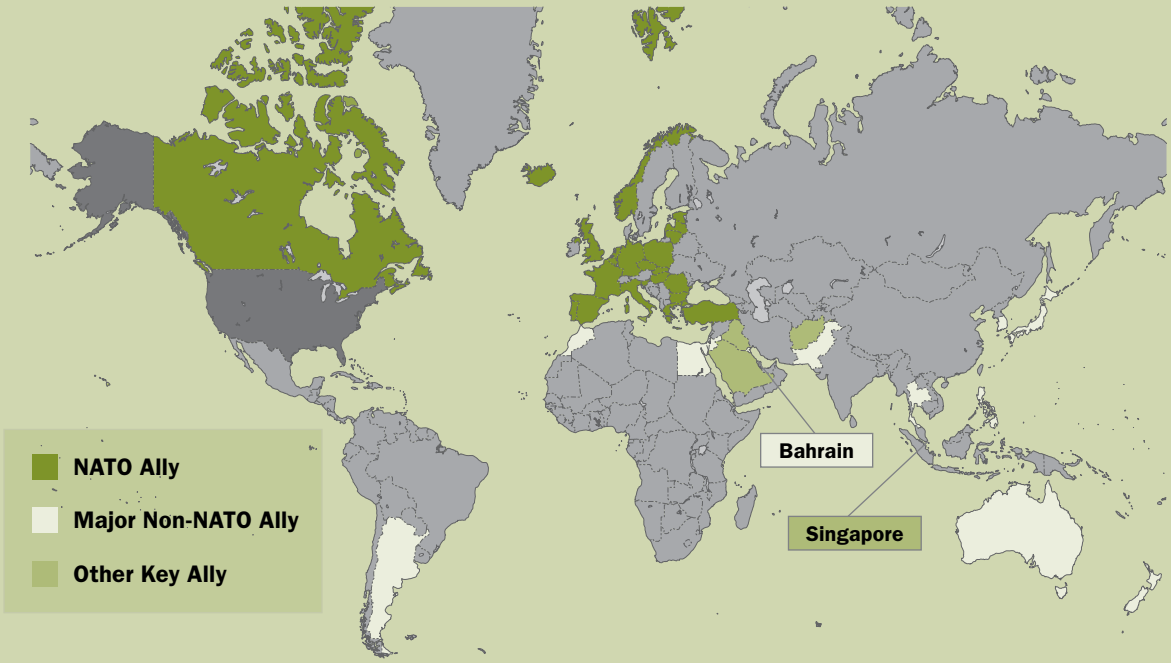
[22] For a more detailed assessment of these core strategic challenges and their operational implications, see Andrew Krepinevich, Robert Martinage and Robert Work, *The Challenges to US National Security* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2008).

[23] Samuel P. Huntington, "Coping with the Lippmann Gap," *Foreign Affairs*, America and the World 1987/88.

inherently subjective and therefore risks being incomplete.[24] At the same time, only including these formal allies would lead to a focus on many nations whose strategic significance has decreased a great deal since the end of the Cold War, for example states in Latin America, while excluding nations with which the United States works closely, depends upon for a variety of reasons, and might even defend with military force if necessary. Despite these caveats, it is probably safe to say that America's chief allies currently include the twenty-five other members of NATO, along with nations that have been designated as major non-NATO allies (Argentina, Australia, Bahrain, Egypt, Israel, Japan, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco, New Zealand, Pakistan, the Philippines, South Korea, and Thailand). Key additions to this list might include (but are not necessarily limited to) Saudi Arabia (considering America's longstanding support for the House of Saud and the importance of Saudi oil for the West), Afghanistan and Iraq (given the United States' substantial military commitments to both nations, which are likely to persist in some form well into the future), and Singapore (which has arguably become the United States' closest security partner in Southeast Asia in recent years).

[24] The United States is formally pledged to defend the members of NATO, Latin American countries that are party to the 1947 Rio Treaty, and a number of states in the Asia-Pacific region. Bruno Tertrais, "The Changing Nature of Military Alliances," *The Washington Quarterly*, Spring 2004, pp. 136–137.

FIGURE 1. **THE CURRENT UNITED STATES ALLIANCE PORTFOLIO**



America's alliance portfolio is thus rather remarkable for the sheer number of nations it comprises. It is also impressive for the combined resources those nations represent. For example, the United States and its closest allies—the members of NATO along with Australia, and Japan—have an aggregate defense budget of more than $860 billion, active military forces in excess of four million men and women, and a total military strength (including reserves) that is nearly double that number.[25] In addition, America's alliances include most countries in the advanced industrialized world, which account for a significant portion of global wealth—the United States, United Kingdom, Germany, France, Japan, and Australia have a combined gross domestic product (GDP) of more than $27 trillion, approximately 41 percent of the world's total GDP.[26]

It is becoming increasingly clear that Europe as a whole is likely to be a less reliable, less capable, and perhaps less frequently utilized partner as time passes.

Together, the large number of US allies and the substantial resources they possess would seem to indicate that existing alliances, if "rebuilt" or "repaired" to ameliorate the political divisions that have surfaced over the past few years, should be more than sufficient to help the United States meet its current and future security challenges. There are, however, a number of factors that suggest this may not be the case, many of which directly impact the relationship between the United States and its European partners. With the exception of Japan and Australia, the nations of Western Europe have traditionally been America's closest allies, and NATO its most valuable alliance. Yet tradition and strategic realities do not necessarily go hand in hand. Although NATO's value and its core missions have been debated repeatedly since the Soviet threat vanished, it is becoming increasingly clear that Europe as a whole is likely to be a less reliable, less capable, and perhaps less frequently utilized partner as time passes. This change can be attributed in large part to three interrelated developments: a shift in the United States' strategic focus from Europe to Asia, the limitations of European military capabilities, and America's growing reliance on "coalitions of the willing."

The Shift in Focus from Europe to Asia

Throughout the twentieth century, Europe was the principal theater of concern for the United States, as it was forced to contend first with Imperial Germany, then Nazi Germany, and finally the Soviet Union. Even during the nineteenth century, the rise of a European hegemon arguably posed the greatest threat to US security, as a dominant power on the continent that was not preoccupied with countering nearby rivals

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[25] Author's calculations based on data from International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), *The Military Balance 2008* (London: IISS, 2008). The combined defense budget of NATO members, Japan, and Australia alone is slightly more than $292 billion, while these nations have an active duty military strength of 2.5 million men and women (and nearly 5.2 million if reserve forces are included). All monetary figures are 2008 exchange rate dollars.

[26] Author's calculations based on data from Central Intelligence Agency, *The 2008 World Factbook*, accessed at https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/index.html, on November 16, 2008. Figures are 2007 purchasing power parity estimates.

could turn its attention to the Americas. Today, however, the United States' strategic focus has shifted decisively to Asia.

Although the challenges the United States faces are global in scope, violent Islamist extremism, a rising China, and nuclear proliferation are all concentrated along a wide arc stretching from North Africa to the Korean peninsula. This shift has a number of implications for US alliances. Most significantly, whereas the United States and Western Europe had an overwhelming incentive to cooperate militarily when they faced a common threat located on the European continent, the primary threats to US security are no longer on Europe's doorstep.[27] Consequently, the willingness of many European nations to help the United States combat these more distant threats and mobilize their economic and military resources in support of the United States and its objectives, while still dependent on the specific circumstances, has understandably diminished. Moreover, because existing and potential threats to the United States are primarily located outside of Europe, significant military support on the part of its European allies will require an ability to deploy forces abroad for "out of area" missions that they do not currently possess.[28]

Although the challenges the United States faces are global in scope, violent Islamist extremism, a rising China, and nuclear proliferation are all concentrated along a wide arc stretching from North Africa to the Korean peninsula.

American-European Military Divergence

As suggested above, the gap between American and European military capabilities is wide and growing, a trend that appears likely to persist and perhaps grow. Although European nations—either individually or collectively—should not be expected to field militaries as large, advanced, or effective as that of the United States, Operation Allied Force over Yugoslavia in 1999 highlighted just how stark the division between the two had become. Specifically, European NATO members' insufficient strategic mobility assets, precision-strike munitions, and electronic attack capabilities limited the contributions they were able to make operationally, while the American military's reliance on more advanced, secure, and exclusive communication systems hindered interoperability between the United States and its allies.[29] These limitations stemmed

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[27] This is not to suggest that the United States and Europe do not share common threats, however. For example, the 2004 Madrid train bombing and the 2005 London bombings clearly demonstrated that Western European nations confront a significant threat from radical Islamist terrorists.

[28] Only 3–5 percent of the military personnel in European NATO countries are capable of deploying outside of their territory. Stephen J. Flanagan, Leo G. Michel, James J. Przystup, and Jon A. Cope, "Adapting Alliances and Partnerships," in Flanagan and James A. Schear, eds., *Strategic Challenges: America's Global Security Agenda* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press/Potomac Books, 2008), p. 213.

[29] See Benjamin S. Lambeth, *NATO's Air War for Kosovo: A Strategic and Operational Assessment* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2001), pp. 166–168; and David S. Yost, "The NATO Capabilities Gap and the European Union," *Survival*, Winter 2000/01. According to one prominent commentator, the military disparity between the United States and Europe has had more than operational implications—it has led to broader and more fundamental differences over key national security issues, notably whether or not the use of force without the consent of the international community is acceptable. See Robert Kagan, "Power and Weakness," *Policy Review*, June/July 2002.

in large part from European militaries' Cold War orientation on fighting in place against invading Soviet and Warsaw Pact forces, their limited investment in military research and development (R&D), and their emphasis in defense spending on personnel rather than procurement.[30] The Kosovo campaign resulted in frustrations on both sides of the Atlantic, as the United States resented the Europeans' insistence on maintaining a significant role in decision-making despite the limitations of their armed forces, while the Europeans resented the United States' ability to act largely on its own.[31]

With encouragement from the United States, NATO has attempted to bolster its capabilities in recent years, specifically by developing a NATO Reaction Force (NRF) — a joint force of up to 25,000 troops intended for rapid deployment anywhere in the world. Unfortunately, while the NRF was declared to be fully operational in 2006, it has experienced significant troop and equipment shortages. The result, according to the International Institute for Strategic Studies, is that "its future is in doubt."[32] NATO also has responsibility for stabilization and reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan and is now in charge of security throughout the country, having taken command of the United Nations-established International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). This mission has been billed as a key test of the alliance's willingness and ability to conduct operations outside of Europe. But, like the NRF, ISAF has also suffered from persistent troop and equipment shortages.[33] To date, NATO members have contributed nearly 28,000 troops to this force, excluding the roughly 18,000 US military personnel assigned to ISAF (which includes non-NATO members as well).[34] According to one US Army general, NATO members' commitments of 15,000 peacekeepers in Kosovo in addition to their ISAF contributions have left their militaries "stretched."[35] A second problem (and a source of tension between alliance members) has been the use of national "caveats" that place restrictions on the types of activities member nations' armed forces can undertake and where they can be deployed, which are designed to keep troops out of harm's way.[36] These developments have led Secretary of Defense Robert Gates to warn his counterparts in Europe that NATO "must not...become a

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30 Yost, "The NATO Capabilities Gap and the European Union," p. 100.

31 Ibid., p. 110; and Edwina S. Campbell, "From Kosovo to the War on Terror: The Collapsing Transatlantic Consensus, 1999–2002," *Strategic Studies Quarterly*, Fall 2007, p. 44.

32 IISS, *The Military Balance 2008*, p. 103. On the inherent limitations of the NRF concept and its capabilities, see Sean Kay, "What Went Wrong with NATO?" *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, April 2005, pp. 76–77.

33 Renée de Nevers, "NATO's International Security Role in the Terrorist Era," *International Security*, Spring 2007, p. 50; and Vincent Morelli and Paul Gallis, "NATO in Afghanistan: A Test of the Transatlantic Alliance," Congressional Research Service, updated October 23, 2008, pp. 14–16.

34 ISAF Key Facts and Figures," current as of 1 September 2008, accessed at http://www.nato.int/ISAF/docu/epub/pdf/isaf_placemat.pdf on January 8, 2009.

35 Quoted in James G. Neuger, "U.S. to Supply Bulk of Additional NATO Afghan Troops," Bloomberg News, December 18, 2008.

36 Morelli and Gallis, "NATO in Afghanistan," p. 23, 2008, pp. 6–7.

two-tiered Alliance of those who are willing to fight and those who are not. Such a development...would effectively destroy the Alliance."[37]

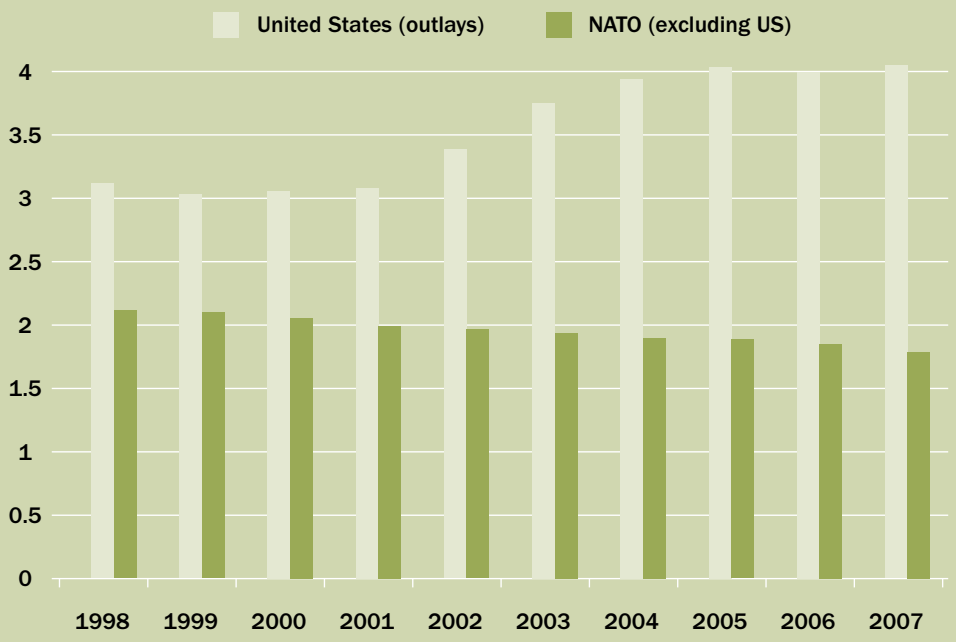
One explanation for the difficulties facing the NRF and the ongoing problems with ISAF—and a key reason for NATO's overall military limitations—is that defense spending has continued to decline in Europe over the past decade (see Figure 2 below). In 2006, only five NATO members other than the United States (Britain, France, Turkey, Greece, and Bulgaria) contributed at least two percent of GDP to defense spending, and two of those states—Greece and Turkey—remain focused on one another.[38] Moreover, the United States far outspends Europe in research and development: in 2006 the United States spent nearly $75 billion on military R&D, compared to only $12 billion between NATO's European members.[39] Although the free rider dilemma is hardly a new problem, it appears to be a growing one, and is unlikely to be resolved in the near future. In fact, taking into consideration demographic trends (and

[37] Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, Speech Delivered to the Munich Conference on Security Policy, February 10, 2008, accessed at http://www.defenselink.mil/speeches/speech.aspx?speechid=1214 on January 8, 2009.

[38] IISS, *The Military Balance 2008*, p. 107.

[39] Flanagan, et al, "Adapting Alliances and Partnerships," p. 212.

FIGURE 2. **DEFENSE SPENDING AS A PERCENTAGE OF GDP, 1998-2007***



* Source: IISS, *The Military Balance 2009* (London: IISS, 2009), pp. 20, 106. Defense spending in non-NATO Europe remains even lower, and stood at only 1.19 percent of GDP in 2007. Ibid., p. 110.

barring any significant external threat that mobilizes European publics and their governments to increase defense spending, such as a renewed threat from Russia), this problem is likely to get worse before it gets better.

Like much of the developed world, Europe's population is rapidly growing older. Through the combination of extremely low fertility rates and increased longevity (two demographic characteristics that are typical of highly developed societies) the nations of Europe are seeing their working-age adult populations decrease while those aged sixty-five and older comprise a growing portion of society, a trend that is projected to continue for decades (see Figure 3 below).[40] Within the European Union, for example, the number of workers between the ages of fifty and sixty-four will increase by 25 percent in the next twenty years. At the same time, the number between the ages of twenty and twenty-nine will shrink by approximately 20 percent.[41] This is also occurring to an even greater extent in Japan, and while the United States is not immune to population aging, demographic projections suggest that it will be affected far less than its allies.

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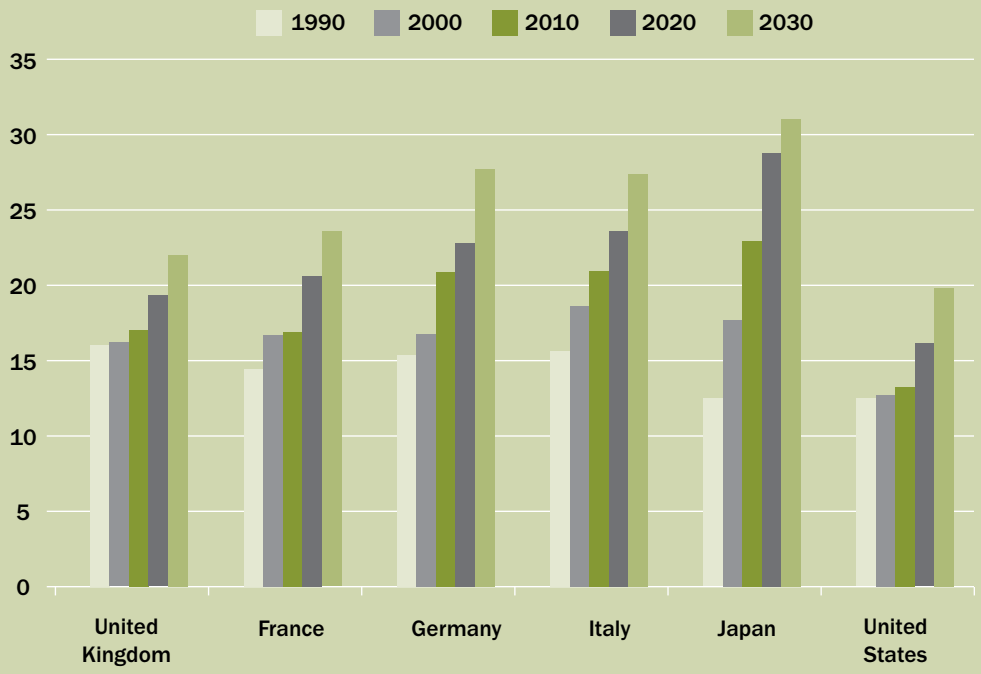
[40] See Ronald Lee, "The Demographic Transition: Three Centuries of Fundamental Change," *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, Fall 2003, pp. 170, 182; and Kevin Kinsella and David R. Phillips, "Global Aging: The Challenge of Success," *Population Bulletin*, March 2005.

[41] "Turning Boomers into Boomerangs," *The Economist*, February 18, 2006, p. 65.

FIGURE 3. **PERCENTAGE OF POPULATIONS AGES 65 AND OLDER, 1990-2030***



* Source: Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, *World Population Prospects: The 2006 Revision*, medium variant, accessed at http://esa.un.org/unpp, on January 05, 2009.

The consequences of this trend will be quite significant as aging nations begin to experience an economic slowdown at the same time that the fiscal demands of supporting their elderly increase substantially.[42] According to the NIC report cited above, "The drop-off in working age populations will prove a severe test for Europe's social welfare model…Defense expenditures are likely to be cut further to stave off the need for serious restructuring of social benefits programs."[43] While defense spending will likely remain flat or decline, those funds that are available will increasingly be used to meet personnel and pension costs rather than procurement and R&D, exacerbating an existing and problematic tendency and reducing the likelihood that NATO members will be able to transform their militaries to better project power and operate with less support from the United States.[44] Meanwhile, as military-age cohorts shrink and the demand for workers grows, the overall size of militaries may decrease as well.[45] This suggests that European militaries may be less willing and/or less able to contribute to manpower-intensive, post-conflict stabilization operations, one area where the Pentagon would like to see its allies take on a greater role.[46]

European militaries may be less willing and/or less able to contribute to manpower-intensive, post-conflict stabilization operations.

Toward "Coalitions of the Willing"

A third and final development bearing on America's relationship with its European allies is the United States' increasing reliance on "coalitions of the willing"—ad hoc, transient partnerships of convenience—as opposed to more formal and more highly institutionalized alliances like NATO.[47] For many analysts, this change is a direct consequence of the Bush administration's unilateralist tendencies, which have often been described as a dramatic departure from America's longstanding, multilateral approach to foreign affairs.[48] For example, Ivo Daalder and James Lindsay write that the Bush "revolution" in foreign policy was motivated in part by the administration's belief that the best way to guarantee American security was to "shed the constraints

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42 Mark L. Haas, "A Geriatric Peace? The Future of U.S. Power in World of Aging Populations," *International Security*, Summer 2007, p. 113.

43 NIC, *Global Trends 2025*, p. 32.

44 Haas, "A Geriatric Peace?" pp. 126–127.

45 Peter G. Peterson, "Gray Dawn: The Global Aging Crisis," *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 1999, p. 50.

46 According to the Pentagon's 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review, "The Department [of Defense] will continue to strengthen traditional allied operations, with increased emphasis on collective capabilities to plan and conduct stabilization, security, transition and reconstruction operations. In particular, the Department supports efforts to create a NATO stabilization and reconstruction capability and a European constabulary force." Donald Rumsfeld, Secretary of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review Report* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, February 6, 2006), p. 88, accessed at http://www.defenselink.mil/qdr/report/Report20060203.pdf on January 8, 2009.

47 Tertrais, "The Changing Nature of Military Alliances," p. 138; and Kurt M. Campbell, "The End of Alliances? Not So Fast," *The Washington Quarterly*, Spring 2004, p. 151.

48 See, for example, Ivo H. Daalder and James M. Lindsay, *America Unbound: The Bush Revolution in Foreign Policy*, revised edition (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2005), pp. 43–44.

imposed by friends, allies, and international institutions," all of which would "constrain America's ability to make the most of its primacy." [49]

Although it does seem clear that key members of the Bush administration came to office convinced that institutions and alliances frequently acted as a restraint on the United States' ability to exercise its power and too often favored process over substance, the supposedly radical nature of this perspective is frequently overstated.[50] More importantly, however, if this trend was simply the product of the Bush administration's worldview, then the presence of a new administration should lead to a shift back to previous patterns of multilateralism and alliance behavior, and consequently a renewed emphasis on working with and through NATO. Yet this shift seems unlikely to occur. The resort to more informal coalitions is a product of many factors, the Bush administration being only one.[51] Even before that administration came to office in 2001, NATO's decision-making procedures—specifically the need for unanimity among its members—caused frustrations that made the United States increasingly reluctant to work with or rely upon the alliance, a problem that persisted during the Bush years and is unlikely to be resolved anytime soon, especially if NATO continues to expand its membership.[52] Moreover, as discussed above, the inherent limitations of European military capabilities will also discourage the United States from looking first to NATO for support in many circumstances.

The threat of transnational terrorism will require the United States to work with a wide range of nations and nonstate actors, often in discrete or clandestine ways.

The willingness of NATO member nations to use the capabilities they do possess remains questionable as well, in part because the United States and Europe have such divergent threat perceptions when it comes to many of today's key challenges, from Iran to China and even to terrorism. As Secretary Gates recently remarked, "Even after September 11th and a string of attacks in Europe and elsewhere, the publics of many of our democratic allies view the terror threat in a fundamentally different way than we do, and this continues to be a major obstacle with respect to Afghanistan and other issues."[53] As a result, the United States will often be forced to look outside of Europe, or at least outside of NATO, for the assistance it needs. The threat of transnational terrorism will also require the United States to work with a wide range of nations and nonstate actors, often in discrete or clandestine ways; this is likely to reinforce the recent tendency toward operating outside the bounds of a sometimes-cumbersome alliance such as NATO.

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49 Ibid., pp. 12–13.

50 Melvyn P. Leffler, "9/11 and American Foreign Policy," *Diplomatic History*, June 2005.

51 As Stephen Walt notes, the US's dominant position in the international system has decreased its reliance on allies, which in turn has allowed the United States "to pick and choose among different alliance partners" and work primarily with those states "that demonstrate a clear willingness to follow its lead." Therefore, "It is…no accident that the Bush administration has explicitly endorsed reliance on ad hoc 'coalitions of the willing.'" Walt, "Alliances in a Unipolar World," pp. 94–95.

52 See Lambeth, *NATO's Air War for Kosovo*, pp. 185, 205; and Sean Kay, "What Went Wrong with NATO?"

53 Robert Gates, "Reflections on Leadership," *Parameters*, Summer 2008, p. 8.

SUMMARY

America's need for allies is great and growing. As a new administration develops its response to the challenges it currently faces and those it will confront in the future, and as it determines what roles allies can and should play in meeting these challenges, it will have to accept the reality that Europe in general and NATO in particular may no longer be the United States' principal partners, at least when it comes to addressing the three major challenges to US national security.

This does not mean, however, that Europe and NATO are not valuable to the United States. Even outside the boundaries of the Atlantic alliance, nations like Britain and Canada will remain among the United States' closest allies; Poland has continued to increase its defense spending and modernize its forces; and both Poland and the Czech Republic are set to host key elements of a US national missile defense system. Because of its geostrategic importance as a bridge between Europe and the Middle East, as well as its status as a Muslim democracy, Turkey's value as an ally is likely to increase rather than decline. In addition, many European nations also possess robust capabilities that the United States will want to leverage—for example Special Operations Forces (SOF)—and will remain critical sources of intelligence.[54] European nations also host bases that underpin the United States' ability to project power globally.[55]

NATO itself also retains considerable value by serving as a hedge against a resurgent Russia (and as source of reassurance to the alliance's newer members, many of which remain wary of Moscow), continuing to press for defense modernization and the maintenance of democratic civil-military relations in new member states, and undertaking or assisting in peacekeeping and stabilization operations (even if it is unlikely to substantially increase its capacity for these missions).[56] If they were willing to do so, NATO or individual member nations could also take on new roles in the future, for example assuming greater responsibility for maritime security in the Mediterranean, and perhaps the Gulf of Aden and Red Sea as well, which would allow the United States to concentrate a greater portion of its naval assets in the Pacific.[57] Finally, if Iran acquires nuclear weapons and its neighbors feel pressured to follow suit, a strong NATO could dissuade Turkey from developing its own nuclear program. Nevertheless, the following survey of the three major challenges indicates that, with some important exceptions, neither Europe nor NATO is likely to play a principal role in supporting the United States.

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[54] Most terrorism-related intelligence is gathered by law enforcement and domestic intelligences agencies, however, and is shared bilaterally rather than through NATO. See de Nevers, "NATO's International Security Role in the Terrorist Era," p. 44.

[55] Barry R. Posen, "European Union Security and Defense Policy: Response to Unipolarity?" *Security Studies*, April–June 2006, p. 152.

[56] Ryan C. Hendrickson, "The Miscalculation of NATO's Death," *Parameters*, Spring 2007, pp. 106–108.

[57] Robert D. Kaplan, "Equal Alliance, Unequal Roles," *New York Times*, March 27, 2008.

CHAPTER 2 > **COUNTERING THE TERRORIST THREAT**

Perhaps more than any other challenge the United States currently faces, countering the threat of violent Islamist extremism will require the support of allies and partners. Reflecting on US counterterrorism efforts before 9/11, for example, George Tenet writes, "There is one important moral to the story: you cannot fight terrorism alone. There were clear limitations on what we could do without the help of like-minded governments."[58] It is hardly surprisingly, then, that the 9/11 Commission's final report concluded, "Practically every aspect of U.S. counterterrorism strategy relies on international cooperation."[59] Other nations, including many that are directly at risk themselves, can provide valuable and often crucial assistance to the United States in a number of areas: sharing intelligence; locating, monitoring, capturing, and eliminating terrorist operatives; tracking and freezing financial assets; engaging in public diplomacy and strategic communications; and preventing unstable countries from becoming ungoverned terrorist sanctuaries. Beyond any of these individual tasks, however, the global and inherently asymmetric nature of this threat illustrates precisely why the United States cannot hope to succeed on its own.

Modern Islamist terrorist groups collectively have a worldwide presence, and many are linked together operationally, ideologically, or simply in their shared opposition to the West, the United States, and the regimes it supports throughout the Middle East, Africa, and Asia. Al Qaeda and its affiliates, for example, have a presence in approximately eighty countries, all of which are potential targets, areas where attacks elsewhere may be planned and organized, or both.[60] This loose network of terrorists has been described as a "global insurgency" comprising not only al Qaeda's

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[58] George Tenet, *At the Center of the Storm: The CIA During America's Time of Crisis* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2008), p. 129.

[59] National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, *The 9/11 Commission Report* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2004), p. 379.

[60] *Quadrennial Defense Review Report* (2006), p. 21.

central leadership, but also an array of regional and local movements.[61] Moreover, these groups and their members frequently live, train, recruit, and operate in parts of the world where the United States' presence is limited or practically nonexistent. As a result, the United States is often forced to work with or rely upon others to collect intelligence and even to take direct action against existing or potential threats.

The United States not only requires allies and partners, it requires allies and partners strong enough to address threats emanating from their territory largely on their own.

At the same time that the global nature of Islamist extremism places heavy burdens on the United States, America's expansive commitments and interests create vulnerabilities which terrorist groups are able to exploit. As Richard Betts has argued, modern transnational terrorism is an offense-dominant form of conflict that mimics the guerrilla warfare tactics employed by domestic insurgent groups. In particular, terrorists choose the time and place of their attack, concentrating their limited capabilities on a single weak point in order to generate effects that far exceed the modest effort and resources they expend. By contrast, the United States must invest in defensive measures to protect both its territory and its overseas interests—a nearly impossible task that imposes extraordinary economic costs and risks overstretching its military capabilities.[62] To lower these costs and reduce this unavoidable vulnerability, the United States not only requires allies and partners, it requires allies and partners strong enough to address threats emanating from their territory—or in some cases their broader geographic region—largely on their own, a reality that became increasingly apparent as the United States sought to balance the demands of conducting operations in Afghanistan and Iraq with the broader war on terrorism. As the 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review noted, "Recent operations demonstrate the critical importance of being organized to work with and through others, and of shifting emphasis from performing tasks ourselves to enabling others."[63]

ISLAMIST TERRORISM

There are two main branches of the violent Islamist threat: Salafi-Takfiri extremists within the broader Sunni Muslim community, notably al Qaeda and its various affiliates, and Khomeinist-inspired extremists within the Shiite Muslim community, in particular the Lebanese Hezbollah.[64] Of the two, the former represents the most immediate and significant threat to the United States and its interests. As the State

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61 David J. Kilcullen, "Countering Global Insurgency," *Journal of Strategic Studies*, August 2005.

62 Richard K. Betts, "The Soft Underbelly of American Primacy: Tactical Advantages of Terror," Political Science Quarterly, Spring 2002, pp. 27–28.

63 *Quadrennial Defense Review Report* (2006), p. 17.

64 For an overview of both branches and their current relative strength, see Robert Martinage, *The Global War on Terrorism: An Assessment* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2008). For a useful background on Sunni and Shiite Islamism, see International Crisis Group, "Understanding Islamism," Middle East/North Africa Report No. 37, March 2, 2005.

Department's 2008 report on terrorism summarizes, al Qaeda's goals include "uniting Muslims to fight the United States and its allies, overthrowing regimes it deems to be 'non-Islamic,' and expelling Westerners and non-Muslims from Muslim countries." Its ultimate objective, however, is "the establishment of a pan-Islamic caliphate throughout the world."[65]

Since the 9/11 attacks, the United States has deprived the group of its sanctuary in Afghanistan, eliminated most of its original senior leadership (with the critical exceptions of Osama bin Laden and his deputy, Ayman al-Zawahiri), and captured or killed a long list of mid-level operatives. Despite these successes al Qaeda remains a major threat, due in large part to the sanctuary it has established in Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas, a largely autonomous region bordering Afghanistan. In 2008, then-Director of National Intelligence Michael McConnell explained that this sanctuary "provides the organization many of the advantages it once derived from its base across the border in Afghanistan," and has allowed it "to maintain a cadre of skilled lieutenants capable of directing the organization's operations around the globe."[66] Moreover, the unclassified key judgments of a 2007 National Intelligence Estimate reaffirmed al Qaeda's continuing interest in weapons of mass destruction, warning that the group "will continue to try to acquire and employ chemical, biological, radiological, or nuclear material in attacks and would not hesitate to use them if it develops what it deems is sufficient capability."[67]

The unclassified key judgments of a 2007 National Intelligence Estimate reaffirmed al Qaeda's continuing interest in weapons of mass destruction.

The string of defeats al Qaeda has suffered in recent years has also transformed its structure in significant ways. Today, the organization appears to be comprised of at least three very different elements:

> The group's original leaders and its current senior managers, including bin Laden, Zawahiri, and their key lieutenants;

> A number of affiliated groups or "franchises" that support and in some cases have pledged their loyalty to bin Laden, including the remnants of Jemaah Islamiya and Abu Sayyaf in Southeast Asia, al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb and the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group in Africa, and al Qaeda in Iraq, among others; and

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65 Department of State, Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, *Country Reports on Terrorism 2007*, April 2008, pp. 297–298.

66 Statement for the Record of J. Michael McConnell, Director of National Intelligence, Annual Threat Assessment of the Intelligence Community for the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, February 7, 2008, p. 6, accessed at http://www.dni.gov/testimonies/20080207_testimony.pdf, on January20, 2009.

67 National Intelligence Estimate, *The Terrorist Threat to the US Homeland*, July 2007, accessed at http://www.dni.gov/press_releases/20070717_release.pdf on August 26, 2008.

> A wider ideological movement comprised of sympathizers and "homegrown" terrorists that look to bin Laden and al Qaeda for inspiration, but have little if any direct connection to the group or its affiliates.[68]

This evolution has shaped the way al Qaeda operates and the type of threat that it poses.[69] The declining influence of its central leadership, for example, has provided an opening for the various groups and individuals that comprise the broader movement to act more independently and conduct more frequent, if less dramatic, attacks. As a result, the importance of working with those nations that suffer from (and are the first line of defense against) the extremists that al Qaeda supports and inspires has only increased.

Hezbollah enjoys significant popular support among Lebanon's Shiite population and is respected throughout the region among both Sunnis and Shiites.

In contrast to the decentralized and global nature of Salafi-Takfiri extremism, Khomeinist-inspired Islamist terrorism is associated primarily (although not entirely) with the Lebanese Hezbollah, or "Party of God."[70] In addition to its different religious orientation and ideological beliefs, Hezbollah is a far different type of organization from al Qaeda. Whereas the latter has persistently alienated sympathizers with its brutal methods, which are often directed against Muslims as well as non-Muslims and Westerners, Hezbollah enjoys significant popular support among Lebanon's Shiite population and is respected throughout the region among both Sunnis and Shiites. In part, this is explained by Hezbollah's status as a political party that has successfully participated in all of Lebanon's post-civil war national elections, and by its willingness and ability to provide schools, medical care, and other social services in its strongholds of southern Lebanon, the Bekaa Valley, and south Beirut.

Superseding these factors, however, is the discipline and effectiveness that characterize Hezbollah's military wing, the Islamic Resistance, along with its reputation as the only Arab "army" to fight the vaunted Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) with any success since the Egyptians during the opening days of the Yom Kippur War in 1973. Hezbollah's fighters receive enormous support from Iran and Syria in the form of money, equipment, and training, are highly skilled at guerrilla warfare after more than two decades of fighting against the IDF in southern Lebanon, and have demonstrated an ability to conduct major terrorist operations as far away as South America. The group is also reported to be involved in training Iraqi Shiite fighters in Lebanon

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68 Martinage, *The Global War on Terrorism*, pp. 18–30; Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, revised and expanded edition (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), pp. 285–290; Rohan Gunaratna, "The Post-Madrid Face of Al Qaeda," *The Washington Quarterly*, Summer 2004; Bruce Riedel, "The Return of the Knights: al-Qaeda and the Fruits of Middle East Disorder," *Survival*, Autumn 2007; and Reid Sawyer and Michael Foster, "The Resurgent and Persistent Threat of al Qaeda," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, July 2008.

69 Bruce Riedel, "Al Qaeda Strikes Back," *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2007, p. 35.

70 For background on the group's origins and its capabilities, see Augustus Richard Norton, *Hezbollah: A Short History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007); and Hala Jaber, *Hezbollah: Born With A Vengeance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997).

and in Iraq.[71] As the State Department's report notes, "Hezbollah remains the most technically capable terrorist group in the world."[72] These capabilities were most recently displayed in the group's 2006 conflict with Israel, during which it engaged in continuous rocket fire against the Israeli home front and inflicted a surprising amount of punishment on Israeli forces in Lebanon. While the war took a heavier toll on Hezbollah given its comparatively small size, the group has since restocked its inventory of anti-tank missiles and rockets. In fact, Israel claims that Hezbollah now has between two and three times as many rockets as it did when the 2006 war began.[73]

STRONG STATES AND WEAK STATES: ALLIES IN THE WAR ON TERRORISM

The nature and scope of the radical Islamist threat hold a number of implications for US defense strategy, as well as for the types of allies and alliance relationships the United States will need in order to execute that strategy. In general, addressing this threat will require continued US involvement in both counterterrorism (CT) and counterinsurgency (COIN) operations.[74] While the former are obviously necessary to hunt down terrorist leaders, disrupt their support networks, and apply the continuous pressure that makes planning large-scale attacks difficult, the latter are crucial for denying terrorist groups potential sanctuaries from which to operate. The United States will therefore want allies with significant COIN and CT capabilities, a category that includes some traditional allies such as Britain and Australia as well as nations such as Jordan, Turkey, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, and India, which have recent experience combating both terrorism and insurgency, and have also demonstrated some major successes in these areas.

Perhaps the single most valuable thing these and other nations can provide is intelligence, which the United States now depends upon far more than it did in the past.[75] High-quality intelligence has been described as "the spearhead of counter-terrorism"

Perhaps the single most valuable thing these and other nations can provide is intelligence, which the United States now depends upon far more than it did in the past.

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71 Michael R. Gordon and Dexter Filkins, "Hezbollah Said to Help Shiite Army in Iraq," *New York Times*, November 28, 2006; and Associated Press, "Hezbollah Trains Shi'ite Militias in Iraq on Iran's Behalf," *Haartez*, February 7, 2008.

72 Department of State, *Country Reports on Terrorism 2007*, p. 281.

73 Sebastian Rotella, "In Lebanon, Hezbollah Arms Stockpile Bigger, Deadlier," *Los Angeles Times*, May 4, 2008; and Nicholas Blanford, "Hezbollah's Formidable Arsenal under Fresh Scrutiny," *Christian Science Monitor*, July 18, 2008.

74 CT and COIN operations will directly overlap in many cases, given that much of al Qaeda's time and effort has been devoted to supporting Islamist insurgencies in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq, and elsewhere, a pattern that is consistent with the group's stated ambition to overthrow "apostate" regimes in Muslim nations. Daniel Byman, "Remaking Alliances for the War on Terrorism," *Journal of Strategic Studies*, October 2006, p. 777; and Byman, "Friends Like These: Counterinsurgency and the War on Terrorism," *International Security*, Fall 2006, pp. 83–87.

75 Derek S. Reveron, "Old Allies, New Friends: Intelligence-Sharing in the War on Terror," *Orbis*, Summer 2006, p. 455.

and "the sine qua non of counterinsurgency."[76] With it, terrorists can be captured or killed and their plots can be disrupted; without it, preventing terrorist attacks will depend on heightened security measures, passive defenses, and oftentimes luck. Intelligence is arguably even more critical in COIN operations, given the potentially disastrous consequences of acting on limited or poor information. According to FM 3-24, the US Army's recently produced and widely read field manual on counterinsurgency, "Without good intelligence, counterinsurgents are like blind boxers wasting energy flailing at unseen opponents and perhaps causing unintended harm. With good intelligence, counterinsurgents are like surgeons cutting out cancerous tissue while keeping other vital organs intact."[77]

Although CT and COIN capabilities will make a nation attractive as an ally, the absence of these capabilities may be just as influential in choosing future partners.

It may only be a slight exaggeration to suggest that there is virtually no limit to potential US allies insofar as intelligence is concerned; ultimately, the more nations willing to collect and provide information, the better. Nevertheless, many of the nations mentioned above have particularly important characteristics, including a long history of dealing with terrorist and insurgent groups and a large intelligence and security apparatus focused on these types of internal threats. They are also located in, and have superior knowledge of, regions that are the focus of US counterterrorism efforts. For these reasons, they are likely to be key nodes as the United States works to establish what is sometimes described as a "global counterterrorism network."[78]

Although it goes without saying that strong CT and COIN capabilities will make a nation attractive as an ally, the absence of these capabilities may be just as influential in choosing future partners. Because the United States' resources will remain limited, as will those of its strongest allies, it will have to work closely with weaker countries to bolster their security forces in the hope that they will eventually be able to combat existing threats—and prevent the emergence of new ones—largely on their own. This is particularly the case for nations confronting insurgencies, or nations where full-blown insurgencies could emerge in the near future. Counterinsurgency operations are manpower-intensive, typically long in duration, and, as noted above, they depend on good intelligence and knowledge of the local environment for success. As a volunteer force with global commitments, however, the US military will often find it difficult to deploy large numbers of troops in a single theater for an extended period of time. Moreover, the American public generally expects conflicts to be short and de-

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[76] The former quotation is from Rohan Gunaranta, "Terrorism Threat in 2008," Research Briefing, Jebsen Center for Counter-Terrorism Studies, February 2008, p. 3. The latter quotation is from Byman, "Friends Like These," p. 92.

[77] U.S. Army Field Manuel No. 3-24/Marine Corps Warfighting Publication No. 3-33.5, *Counterinsurgency* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), p. 41.

[78] Washington Institute for Near East Policy, *Policy Watch #1421: Special Forum Report*, "Building the Global Counterterrorism Network," featuring Michael Vickers, Assistant Secretary of Defense (Special Operations, Low Intensity Conflict, and Interdependent Capabilities), November 4, 2008, accessed at http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC05.php?CID=2954 on January 24, 2009.

cisive, while its military personnel have only limited knowledge of foreign languages, cultures, and customs. Despite these constraints, the United States cannot afford to let beleaguered nations lose ground or fall to terrorist and insurgent groups.

Together, these factors strongly suggest that building partner capacity should be a core element of the United States' broader strategy against violent Islamist extremism, an idea Secretary Gates has emphasized on several occasions, including in a recent article:

> Where possible, U.S. strategy is to employ indirect approaches—primarily through building the capacity of partner governments and their security forces—to prevent festering problems from turning into crises that require costly and controversial direct military intervention. In this kind of effort, the capabilities of the United States allies' and partners may be as important as its own, and building their capacity is arguably as important as, if not more so than, the fighting the United States does itself.[79]

The United States cannot afford to let beleaguered nations lose ground or fall to terrorist and insurgent groups.

This approach has already proven valuable in places such as the Philippines, where US Army Special Forces (SF) and Navy SEAL (SEa-Air-Land) personnel have trained local military units, enabling them to achieve major successes against the al Qaeda-linked terrorist group Abu Sayyaf.[80] The United States has also provided basic equipment as well as military and intelligence training to African nations such as Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria and Senegal through the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership.[81] In addition, small numbers of US SOF personnel have trained Pakistan's Special Services Group and are currently instructing members of Pakistan's paramilitary Frontier Corps, while the United States is outfitting the latter with helmets, body armor, radios, and other equipment.[82] On a much larger scale, this approach is also crucial for success in both Afghanistan and Iraq, as the United States and its allies continue to train indigenous police and military forces so they can eventually maintain the security of their nations by themselves. Although US efforts to build partner capacity have clearly encountered difficulties, notably in Iraq and Afghanistan, improving and expanding this strategy should allow the United States to conserve its

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79 Robert M. Gates, "A Balanced Strategy: Reprogramming the Pentagon for a New Age," *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2009, pp. 29–30.

80 Stew Magnuson, "To Counter Terrorism, Philippine Army Takes Lessons From U.S. Forces," *National Defense*, February 2008. See also Rory Callinan, "Winning a War of Stealth," *Time*, June 12, 2008; and Peter Spiegel, "Elite Units Mentor Allies to Fight Terror," *Los Angeles Times*, October 13, 2008.

81 Department of State, *Country Reports on Terrorism 2007*, p. 14; and Government Accountability Office, "Combating Terrorism: Actions Needed to Enhance Implementation of Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership," Report to the Ranking Member, Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives, July 2008, pp. 3, 16.

82 Ann Scott Tyson, "U.S. to Step Up Training of Pakistanis," *Washington Post*, January 24, 2008; Erich Schmitt and Thom Shanker, "U.S. Plans to Widen Role in Training Pakistani Forces in Qaeda Battle," *New York Times*, March 2, 2008; and Stephen Graham, "US Training Pakistani Forces to Fight Taliban," *USA Today* [Associated Press], October 25, 2008.

limited military resources, concentrate them where they are most needed, multiply the number of partners that can effectively contribute to future CT and COIN operations, and help prevent insurgencies from taking root in the first place.

A NEW ALLIANCE STRUCTURE

Based on the preceding discussion, it is possible to divide most existing and prospective allies into three principal categories: *core* allies, *frontline* allies, and *embattled* or *vulnerable* allies. The list of nations associated with each category is intended to be illustrative, not exhaustive. Moreover, the categories themselves are somewhat fluid and necessarily subjective, and do not make room for partners of convenience such as China, where cooperation will be sporadic, potential allies like Uzbekistan with which the United States can no longer cooperate in meaningful ways because of their human rights abuses, or failed states like Somalia that have a significant Islamist terrorist presence but no effective government with which to work. Nevertheless, by applying this classification it is possible to highlight key aspects of America's alliance relationships and suggest new or expanded roles for a number of its allies.[83]

[83] As noted above, intelligence sharing will play a key role across all three categories, although it is likely to be highest between the United States and its core allies.

FIGURE 4. **AN ALLIANCE STRUCTURE FOR COMBATING TERRORISM**

The first category—core allies—includes four of the United States' closest partners: Britain, Australia, Canada and Japan. As the United States confronts the challenge of Islamist extremism, these longstanding alliances will continue to play a number of important roles. For example, British and Australian SOF, both in concert with US forces and on the United States' behalf, can reliably conduct direct-action missions against terrorist operatives, engage in foreign internal defense (FID) to build the capacity of partner governments and their security forces, and help to identify and work with nonstate actors opposed to Islamist terrorist or insurgent groups. Australia could also take on a primary role in maritime surveillance and security in Southeast Asia and, along with Japan, could help to organize bilateral and especially multilateral CT initiatives in Asia. Japan also remains a crucial source of funding for CT-related programs, providing grants to Southeast Asian nations in support of maritime security and anti-piracy initiatives, among other areas.[84] Canada also remains a critical ally for a number of reasons, not least of which is border security, which is central to preventing terrorist attacks on the US homeland.

This category also includes the nations of Western Europe, as well as Israel, Turkey and Singapore. Although many European states have relatively modest military capabilities or appear unwilling to use the capabilities they do possess to the extent that the United States would prefer, they remain both symbolic targets for terrorist groups in conflict with the West and critical sources of intelligence given their emphasis on domestic surveillance and law enforcement for counterterrorism. Moreover, because the size of Muslim populations is growing in many European nations, and because at least some elements of these populations are likely to be unassimilated, disaffected, and thus potentially radicalized, CT cooperation between the United States and Europe may become increasingly vital in the years ahead.[85] For its part, Israel is the United States' closest ally in the Middle East and has more experience dealing with terrorist and insurgent groups than perhaps any other nation, while Singapore has become a key military partner in Southeast Asia, a region that is still populated by several al Qaeda-linked terrorist groups. As a Muslim democracy with a large military, Turkey's importance as an ally can also be expected to increase.

Despite their rightful status as core allies, however, cooperation between these nations and the United States may be less extensive (or less overt) than the cooperation that exists between the United States and Britain, Australia, Canada, or Japan, for a number of reasons. For example, as noted above, American and European threat perceptions often differ, which may limit collaboration in some cases. In the future, moreover, as Muslim populations in Western Europe grow and Western European leaders increasingly consider the reactions of these populations when making policy decisions, the United States may find those leaders more reluctant to cooperate in

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[84] Department of State, *Country Reports on Terrorism 2007*, p. 37.

[85] Western Europe's Muslim population currently stands at 15 to 18 million, and is projected to increase to 25 to 30 million by 2025. NIC, *Global Trends 2025*, p. 25.

areas that could prove divisive or unpopular domestically.[86] Alternatively, the failure of Israelis and Palestinians to reach a final peace accord will continue to make public cooperation with Israel extremely controversial in many parts of the world.

The second category—*frontline* allies—includes Jordan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, and India, nations that share a number of characteristics: they all face or have recently faced major threats from terrorist and insurgent groups, they have significant military, police, and intelligence capabilities, and they are strategically located in areas where terrorist groups targeting the United States are known to operate. In comparison to core allies, the relationship between the United States and these nations will be characterized by a lesser degree of intelligence sharing and greater limitations on the transfer of technologies relevant to both COIN and CT operations, either because the United States may not fully trust them or (as in the case of India) because the bilateral relationship with the United States is still at an early stage.

Although frontline nations can assist the United States in a number of different ways, one of the most critical may involve taking on a greater role in building partner capacity.

Although frontline nations can assist the United States in a number of different ways, one of the most critical may involve taking on a greater role in building partner capacity. Traditionally, the mission of training and advising foreign forces has been the responsibility of SOF, particularly Army SF. At present, however, approximately 80 percent of SOF personnel deployed overseas are located in Iraq and Afghanistan, which has limited their ability to conduct these missions in other nations and other regions.[87] According to Admiral Eric Olson, the commander of US Special Operation Command, "We're going to fewer countries, staying for shorter periods of time, with smaller numbers of people than historically we have done."[88] Moreover, it appears that a large SOF presence will be retained in Iraq even as US conventional forces withdraw, while an increasing number of SOF personnel—likely including SF personnel—will be deployed to Afghanistan to help combat the growing insurgency there.[89]

While the Pentagon is in the process of increasing the number of SF battalions in the force, they clearly represent a high-demand, low-density asset. Building on recent experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan, one solution to this problem would be to have regular US troops permanently take on a greater role in training local security forces. Secretary Gates, for example has argued that "The standing up and mentoring of indigenous armies and police—once the province of Special Forces—is now a key mission for the military as a whole."[90] It remains unclear, however, the extent to

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[86] Ibid., p. 25. This development could influence relations with Britain as well, however.

[87] Julian E. Barnes, "U.S. Special Forces to Stay in Iraq, Afghanistan," *Los Angeles Times*, May 22, 2008; and Sandra I. Erwin, "Special Forces' Skills 'Needed More Than Ever'," *National Defense*, March 2007. Many of these forces have also been focused on conducting direct action missions such as capturing and killing terrorist and insurgent operatives, rather than FID.

[88] Associated Press, "Green Berets Stretched by Two-Front War," May 6, 2008, accessed at http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/24478506 on January 26, 2009.

[89] Ibid., and Sean D. Naylor, "Special Ops 'Surge' Sparks Debate," *Army Times*, December 23, 2008.

[90] Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates, Remarks to the Association of the United States Army, October 10, 2007, accessed at http://www.defenselink.mil/speeches/speech.aspx?speechid=1181 on January 26, 2009.

which this approach will actually be adopted and whether it will prove viable. Another (not mutually exclusive) alternative, however, would be to encourage frontline allies to take on this role themselves, particularly in *embattled* and *vulnerable* nations. Frontline allies have significant experience in both COIN and CT, and could conduct training and advisory missions in countries where their familiarity with local languages and cultures would be a major advantage; they may also be able to operate openly in countries where the United States is either unwanted or cannot deploy its forces in sufficient numbers because of political sensitivities. Jordan, for example, has trained Iraqi police and military units as well as the Palestinian Authority's (PA) National Security Force and PA President Mahmoud Abbas's Presidential Guard through American-funded programs.[91] Although these efforts have hardly been free of problems,[92] they could be improved and expanded in the future, reducing the burden on the US military.

The final category includes two different types of nations or territories that the United States must approach in a similar way. Embattled allies such as Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Algeria, Yemen, Lebanon, Indonesia, and the Philippines are all facing a significant threat from radical Islamist groups and have a limited ability to address that threat. Vulnerable allies such as the Palestinian Authority, Nigeria, and Thailand do not yet confront a major threat from Salafi-Takfiri or Khomeinist Islamists.[93] They are, however, experiencing instability for other reasons, making them attractive to terrorists. The West Bank and Gaza, for example, are chronically weak as a result of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as well as intra-Palestinian conflicts between Fatah and Hamas, and either territory could serve as a platform for attacks against Israel.[94] Nigeria has suffered continual unrest, especially in its oil-rich Delta region, claims to have arrested al Qaeda operatives in the past,[95] and is one of the world's leading producers of oil. Finally, the insurgency in southern Thailand has

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91 Jeremy M. Sharp and Christopher M. Blanchard, "Post-War Iraq: Foreign Contributions to Training, Peacekeeping, and Reconstruction," Congressional Research Service, CRS Report for Congress, updated September 25, 2007, p. 6; and Avi Issacharoff, "U.S. Supervises Training of Elite PA Unit in Jordan," *Haaretz*, June 4, 2008.

92 Ellen Knickmeyer and Glenn Kessler, "Palestinian Forces' Training Marred by Delays, Politics," *Washington Post*, March 15, 2008; and Griff Witte and Ellen Knickmeyer, "Palestinian Recruits Hit Streets Unprepared," *Washington Post*, May 3, 2008.

93 The Palestinian Authority—identified here with the secular Fatah party that currently controls the PA and has jurisdiction over the West Bank—does confront a Sunni Islamist challenge from the terrorist group Hamas, although Hamas is not a Salafi-Takfiri organization like al Qaeda that completely rejects nonviolent activities; it is instead a "nationalist" or "political" Islamist group that resorts to violence in addition to (and oftentimes instead of) nonviolent alternatives. International Crisis Group, "Understanding Islamism," p. 17, n. 61; and Tamara Cofman Wittes, "Three Kinds of Political Movements," *Journal of Democracy*, July 2008, p. 8.

94 In 2007, shortly after Hamas took control of the Gaza Strip, PA President Abbas claimed that Hamas allowed al Qaeda operatives to infiltrate Gaza, a claim Hamas denied. Associated Press, "Hamas Denies Letting al-Qaeda Infiltrate Gaza," *USA Today*, July 10, 2007.

95 Dan Murphy, "Nigeria Arrests Alleged Al Qaeda Operatives," *Christian Science Monitor*, November 13, 2007.

raised concerns that it could become a future sanctuary for al-Qaeda linked groups in the region.[96] In the case of both types of allies, the United States' key interest is in helping them defeat or contain the threats they face and prevent them from losing ground or collapsing. These allies should therefore be the principal targets for capacity-building efforts, with priority given to embattled states that are most at risk. Ultimately, the goal is for embattled and vulnerable allies to transition into frontline allies that have essentially addressed the threat of Islamist terrorism, a transition that nations like Indonesia and the Philippines appear closer to making given their successes against Jemaah Islamiya and Abu Sayyaf, respectively.

Arguably the most troublesome risk for the United States is that its efforts to combat terrorism in the short term could have very serious and very negative ramifications in the long term.

TREADING CAREFULLY

Finding common cause with disagreeable or unsavory nations is sometimes an unfortunate reality of international politics, one the United States has hardly been immune to. In World War II, for example, the United States fought alongside the Soviet Union as part of a Grand Alliance against Nazi Germany, while during the Cold War it devoted enormous human and material resources in defense of South Vietnam, which was by most measures a corrupt regime. Although partnering with nations that do not reflect or actively oppose the United States' core values is sometimes necessary, it often carries significant risk, including the possibility that an ally's lesser attributes or misdeeds will seriously undermine America's reputation with the rest of the world— a particular concern today as the US attempts to bolster its image abroad and compete more effectively in the "battle of ideas" with extremists groups.[97]

Arguably the most troublesome risk for the United States, however, is that its efforts to combat terrorism in the short term could have very serious and very negative ramifications in the long term. Many of the United States' principal allies in the war on terrorism are nondemocratic, impoverished, corrupt, or incapable of providing social services to their entire populations, and in some cases all of the above.[98] Table 1 presents several key political and economic indicators for the frontline, embattled, and vulnerable allies discussed above, as well as for the United States, to provide a basis of comparison. It demonstrates that all of these nations have significant internal problems, even the democracies, of which there are only two (India and Indonesia).[99] Moreover, five of these nations (Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Lebanon, and Nigeria) are ranked in the top twenty of *Foreign Policy* magazine's comprehensive failed states

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96 Stew Magnuson, "Southeast Asia Struggles to Create Anti-Terrorist Network," *National Defense*, June 2007.

97 Byman, "Remaking Alliances for the War on Terrorism," p. 771.

98 For a discussion of other negative characteristics that afflict important US allies in the war on terrorism, see Byman, "Friends Like These," p. 99.

99 The United States' core allies, by contrast, are generally democratic and wealthy with relatively honest and effective government institutions.

index.[100] At the same time, the United States is actively trying to build the capacity of these weak states. While this is a sensible strategic goal from the American perspective insofar as it conserves US resources and increases allies' capabilities, it does have a significant drawback. Namely, by strengthening these states, and particularly by

[100] "Failed States Index 2008," *Foreign Policy*, July/August 2008, accessed at http://www.foreignpolicy.com/story/cms.php?story_id=4350&page=1 on January 26, 2009.

TABLE 1. **POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC INDICATORS FOR KEY ALLIES***

Category	Nation	Political Rights and Civil Liberties	GDP per Capita	Corruption	Government Effectiveness
Frontline Allies	Jordan	Partly Free	$4,700	47	64.9
	Saudi Arabia	Not Free	$19,800	80	51.2
	Egypt	Not Free	$5,00	115	38.9
	Morocco	Partly Free	$3,700	80	54.5
	India	Free	$2,600	85	57.3
Embattled or Vulnerable Allies	Afghanistan	Partly Free	$1,000	176	8.1
	Iraq	Not Free	$3,700	178	1.9
	Pakistan	Not Free	$2,400	134	28.4
	Indonesia	Free	$3,600	126	41.7
	Algeria	Not Free	$6,700	92	36.0
	Lebanon	Partly Free	$10,300	102	39.4
	Philippines	Partly Free	$3,200	141	56.4
	Yemen	Partly Free	$2,500	141	13.3
	Palestinian Territories	Not Free	$1,100	n/a	9.5
	Nigeria	Partly Free	$2,100	121	14.7
	United States	Free	$45,800	18	93.8

* Sources: Freedom House, *Freedom in the World 2008*, accessed at http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=363&year=2008 on January 22, 2009 [Freedom House categorizes nations and territories as "Free," "Partly Free," or "Not Free" based on the extent of the political rights and civil liberties available to their people]; CIA, *The 2008 World Factbook*, accessed at https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/ on January 22, 2009 [GDP per capita figures are 2007 purchasing power parity estimates]; Transparency International, *Corruption Perceptions Index 2008*, accessed at http://www.transparency.org/policy_research/surveys_indices/cpi on January 22, 2009 [The numbers in the table represent country rankings from 1-180, 1 being the least corrupt and 180 being the most corrupt]; and The World Bank, *The Worldwide Governance Indicators Project*, 2007, accessed at http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/sc_country.asp on January 22, 2009 [The category of government effectiveness refers to "the quality of public services, the quality of civil service and the degree of its independence from political pressures, the quality of policy formulation and implementation, and the credibility of the government's commitment to such policies." The numbers represent a percentile ranking (0-100), with 0 being the lowest rank and 100 the highest].

strengthening the security forces that keep their regimes in power, the underlying problems that give rise to terrorism and insurgency (or which terrorist and insurgents can exploit to their benefit) may be perpetuated.[101]

Admittedly, US strategy is not and should not be focused solely on building partner nations' police and military forces. Secretary Gates has, for example, emphasized the importance of adopting "measures aimed at promoting better governance, economic programs that spur development, and efforts to address the grievances among the discontented, from where terrorists recruit."[102] While this certainly makes sense, it is not unreasonable to suspect that strategic exigencies will drive the United States to focus the bulk of its efforts on building police and military forces that can be used to hunt down terrorists and create the secure environment that remains a precondition for economic and political development. Unfortunately, these same forces can also be used by a nation's leaders to keep incompetent and corrupt institutions firmly in place.

Whereas building security forces may create short-term stability at the cost of continued popular resentment over the long term, political reforms that may actually be crucial for long-term stability could be dangerous in the short term by increasing the power and influence of radical groups.

One obvious alternative that would "address the grievances among the discontented" is to promote democratization. Yet this presents the opposite problem: whereas building security forces may create short-term stability at the cost of continued popular resentment over the long term, political reforms that may actually be crucial for long-term stability could be dangerous in the short term by increasing the power and influence of radical groups, something that was demonstrated by Hezbollah's electoral success in 2005 and Hamas's even more dramatic success in 2006. Ultimately, there is no clear way to resolve this dilemma; US policy toward its weaker allies will inevitably be a balancing act between short-term and long-term stability, between exigent threats and root causes.

SUMMARY

Alliances are a crucial aspect of US efforts to address the threat of violent Islamist extremism, which it cannot defeat on its own. As the United States confronts this challenge today and in the years ahead, it will need to collaborate with as many nations as possible (and with nonstate actors where governments are extremely weak, uncooperative, or simply nonexistent) to gather and share intelligence. It must also work closely with allies that have significant CT and COIN capabilities and bolster the capabilities of nations or territories that are suffering from terrorism and insurgency to prevent them from becoming sanctuaries.

The importance of the third task— building partner capacity—has been a point of emphasis in recent years, as the United States has struggled to fight the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq while simultaneously conducting other counterterrorism operations across the globe and preparing for an era of persistent irregular warfare.

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[101] Byman, "Remaking Alliances for the War on Terrorism," pp. 792, 805.

[102] Gates, "A Balanced Strategy," p. 29.

Although this type of indirect approach is intended to conserve resources by addressing nascent threats before they fully materialize and by putting at-risk nations in a better position to combat sources of instability on their own, the United States' ability to train, advise, and equip foreign security forces is limited, while the demand for these services appears to be limitless.

One way to address this gap is to adopt a more "layered" indirect approach that both improves and leverages the capabilities of US allies. Here, the United States and core allies such as Britain and Australia (and perhaps others such as France or Singapore) would continue to strengthen indigenous CT and COIN capabilities in frontline states (and, where appropriate, in embattled and vulnerable states as well), with an increasing emphasis on "training the trainers," that is, enhancing their capability and capacity to conduct their own training and advisory missions. Those frontline allies can then build capacity in embattled and vulnerable allies themselves, something that already occurs but could likely be expanded and could certainly be improved upon. For the United States, then, key tasks would involve coordinating closely with its allies to determine where the latter are best suited to conduct these missions (by virtue of existing relationships, historical experiences, geography, or other factors); jointly designing, funding, providing logistical support for, and then monitoring these missions; and helping to equip those nations receiving support with the tools they need, such as small arms, body armor, communications equipment, rotary wing transport, civilian vehicles, and patrol and riverine craft where necessary. In doing so, however, the United States must always be mindful of potential negative ramifications, and must do its best to balance these efforts with plans to tackle the root causes of instability and extremism.

CHAPTER 3 > NEITHER CONTAINMENT NOR WITHDRAWAL: AMERICA'S ASIAN ALLIANCES AND THE RISE OF CHINA

The rapidly growing economy and improving military capabilities of the People's Republic of China (PRC) together constitute one of the most significant global developments of the past several decades, and will progressively become a defining feature of the twenty-first century security environment. Whether China continues to expand along both dimensions of national power, as most observers predict, and how it chooses to use that power, will be of great interest to the United States for many years to come. Today, US-Chinese relations are by and large amicable, and while the two disagree on a number of issues they have also worked together on crucial matters such as the denuclearization of North Korea through the medium of the Six Party Talks. Moreover, both nations' economies have become increasingly interdependent, which acts as a restraint on the possibility of conflict. Nevertheless, each side understandably remains wary of the other's intentions. Although the United States should not assume the worst, caution demands that it hedge against the possibility of China becoming more assertive or aggressive at some point in the future. Doing so will require the support of its allies in Asia.

CHINA'S RISE AND THE POSSIBILITY OF CONFLICT[103]

Since the process of economic reform began in 1978 under Deng Xiaoping, China's economy has maintained an impressive rate of growth, increasing by an average of 9.8 percent annually.[104] When measured using the purchasing power party metric, the

[103] This section briefly summarizes some of the key issues that are developed in Krepinevich, Martinage, and Work, *The Challenges to US National Security*, Chap. 2.

[104] "Suddenly Vulnerable," *The Economist*, December 11, 2008.

Chinese economy is already the second largest in the world after the United States.[105] According to various estimates, Chinese GDP will actually surpass that of the United States in approximately thirty years (and possibly sooner depending on what metric is used), presuming that its growth does not falter.[106] Perhaps even more significant, however, is that China's economic development has helped support a wide-ranging and ambitious effort to improve its military capabilities.

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Although China is unlikely to match the military power of the United States in the foreseeable future, that is not its objective. According Thomas Christensen:

> ...China's strategy for the next twenty to thirty years appears more realistic: to develop the capabilities to dominate most regional actors, to become a regional peer competitor or near peer competitor of the other great powers in the region (including Russia, Japan, and perhaps a future unified Korea), and to develop politically useful capabilities to punish American forces if they were to interfere in a conflict of great interest to China.[107]

The last goal in particular has been a critical driver behind China's military modernization, both in terms of the capabilities it has acquired and the doctrine it has developed to guide their employment. Chinese leaders remain focused on the possibility of US military intervention in a conflict between the PRC and Taiwan. Should a conflict break out in the Taiwan Strait, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) would likely be tasked with preventing the United States from using its forward bases in the region and restricting the US military's ability to operate within the first island chain (a defense perimeter extending outward to Japan in the north and running south through Taiwan, the Philippines, and toward Indonesia) and perhaps even further east. To this end, the PLA is developing a multidimensional anti-access/area-denial (A2/AD) network—one that includes surface-to-surface and anti-ship ballistic missiles, land-attack and anti-ship cruise missiles, submarines, anti-satellite weapons, and information and electronic warfare capabilities—that will enhance its ability to intimidate US allies and attack US forces based in the region or entering the theater of operations.[108]

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[105] Central Intelligence Agency, *The 2008 World Factbook*, accessed at https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ch.html#Econ on January 10, 2009.

[106] See, for example, Dominic Wilson and Roopa Purushothaman, "Dreaming With BRICS: The Path to 2050," Global Economics Paper No. 99, Goldman Sachs, October 2003, accessed at http://www2.goldmansachs.com/ideas/brics/book/99-dreaming.pdf on January 7, 2009; and Albert Keidel, "China's Economic Rise—Fact and Fiction," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Policy Brief 61, July 2008, accessed at http://www.carnegieendowment.org/files/pb61_keidel_final.pdf on January 7, 2009.

[107] Thomas J. Christensen, "Posing Problems Without Catching Up: China's Rise and Challenges for U.S. Security Policy," *International Security*, Spring 2001, p. 9.

[108] See ibid., pp. 21–32; Roger Cliff, Mark Burles, Michael S. Chase, Derek Eaton, and Kevin L. Pollpeter, *Entering the Dragon's Lair: Chinese Antiaccess Strategies and Their Implications for the United States* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2007), chaps. 2–4; and Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Annual Report to Congress: Military Power of the People's Republic of China, 2008* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 2008).

Despite its increasing strength and authoritarian form of government, China's rise does not represent a danger to the United States comparable to the Soviet threat: it is not yet a peer competitor, it does not espouse an overtly hostile or expansionist ideology, and perhaps most importantly it is deeply embedded in the global economy. Nor does China appear determined to supplant the United States as the dominant power in the Asia-Pacific region, at least not in the near-to-medium term. Yet it could still present significant security challenges for the United States. Historically, the emergence of a new great power has been a disruptive event for the international system. Rising nations often see their interests expand with their capabilities, and not surprisingly demand influence commensurate with their power.[109] If China continues to grow and firmly establishes itself as the United States' only economic and military peer, its interests and those of the United States may come into conflict, especially if it attempts to roll back the United States' position in the region or if its neighbors—many of which are formal and informal US allies—increasingly resort to accommodation and even bandwagoning with Beijing in response to China's rise, progressively eroding US influence in East Asia.[110]

If China continues to grow and firmly establishes itself as the United States' only economic and military peer, its interests and those of the United States may come into conflict.

Conflict between the United States and China could also break out for reasons far removed from traditional balance-of-power considerations. In particular, the legitimacy of the Chinese regime no longer rests on communist ideology but rather on nationalism and continued economic growth. As Aaron Friedberg notes, "If economic progress falters, the present government will have little choice but to lean more heavily on nationalist appeals as its sole remaining source of support. It may also be inclined to resort to assertive external policies as a way of rallying the Chinese people and turning their energies and frustrations outward, most likely toward Taiwan or Japan or the United States, rather than inward, toward Beijing."[111] China also suffers from demographic and environmental difficulties that could, over time, contribute to an economic slowdown or spark domestic instability for other reasons. Because of these considerations, a strategy of hedging remains a necessary and prudent course of action for the United States.

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[109] The classic statement of this argument is Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981). The rise of the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was an exception to this general rule, but in this particular case the state most likely to challenge America's rise, namely Britain, shared a democratic form of government and cultural tradition with the United States, and was more concerned about the rise of German power on the European continent.

[110] Neither development is occurring yet. As one recent study concludes, "China is not gradually pushing the United States out of the region or otherwise making it irrelevant. Regional states are not trying to ingratiate themselves in the expectation of an eventual Chinese hegemony." Evan S. Medeiros, Keith Crane, Eric Heginbotham, Norman D. Levin, Julia F. Lowell, Angel Rabasa, and Somi Seong, *Pacific Currents: The Responses of U.S. Allies and Security Partners in East Asia to China's Rise* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2008), p. 232.

[111] Aaron L. Friedberg, "The Future of U.S.-China Relations: Is Conflict Inevitable?" *International Security*, Fall 2005, p. 30. See also Christensen, "Posing Problems Without Catching Up," pp. 14–16.

CONTAINMENT, OFFSHORE BALANCING, AND THE ROLE OF ALLIANCES

During the early stages of the Cold War, the United States established a network of alliances in Asia—sometimes referred to as the "San Francisco System" after the 1951 peace treaty with Japan—which, for the most part, remains intact today. Like NATO in the European theater, these alliances had multiple functions. They were designed to keep Japan and its industrial potential out of the communist orbit, rehabilitate it economically along with the rest of the region, and reassure former victims of Japanese imperialism that a revitalized Japan would not pose a threat to them. Unlike NATO, however, the United States' Asian alliances were not integrated into a single multilateral framework, but were instead created and maintained as separate, principally bilateral ties, known collectively as the hub and spoke model.[112] The Cold War is long over, yet, as with NATO, many of these defense commitments (those with Australia, Japan, the Philippines, South Korea, and Thailand) remain in place. What role should these allies and other partners in the region play as the United States hedges against the rise of China? Should the bilateral hub-and-spoke architecture be retained, abandoned, or modified? Ongoing debates over these issues revolve around two very different perspectives regarding the appropriate grand strategy for the United States in Asia, namely containment and offshore balancing.

During the early stages of the Cold War, the United States established a network of alliances in Asia which, for the most part, remains intact today.

The assumption underlying a strategy of containment is that if left unchecked China will eventually threaten its neighbors, attempt to undermine the United States' current position in Asia, and challenge the United States for regional and perhaps eventually global hegemony. Even if China is not certain to become a revisionist power, the potential consequences of assuming otherwise and being proven incorrect are simply too grave. Proponents of containment would therefore replicate key aspects of America's Cold War strategy against the Soviet Union and apply them to China today. Not surprisingly, this would entail an expansion and reorientation of the United States' alliances in the region, which would become increasingly focused on China and adopt a more openly confrontational posture toward it. Based on the success of NATO, advocates of containment also suggest that the United States' existing bilateral alliances might be replaced by a multilateral "Asian NATO," or Asian Treaty Organization (ATO). According to Bradley Thayer,

> ATO would harness the military power of the U.S. and its allies to deter Chinese expansionism against India, Russia, or in the South China Sea. ATO would provide bases for the U.S. military and intelligence community to monitor political, economic, and military developments within China. These bases would also encircle China, and permit the

[112] See Kent E. Calder, "Securing Security Through Prosperity: the San Francisco System in Comparative Perspective," *Pacific Review*, March 2004. The United States did help establish the Southeast Asian Treaty Organization (SEATO) in 1954, but SEATO nations were never as militarily integrated as NATO members nor did they share the same overriding threat, and the organization was dissolved in 1977.

> U.S. to station aircraft and missiles closer to China, and to make the responsibility for defending China more difficult due to the multiple avenues of approach...While bilateral alliance relationships would allow the U.S. to establish bases, the advantage of an ATO would be that there is a greater deterrent to Chinese expansionism, because they would know that any war would involve all members of ATO.[113]

A less aggressive and more popular alternative to containment is offshore balancing (sometimes referred to as restraint or neo-isolationism), which takes the exact opposite position with respect to alliances. Rather than expanding its existing commitments, the United States would abandon most if not all of those commitments and adopt a posture similar to the one it maintained toward Europe in the first half of the twentieth century, only joining with allies to preserve the balance of power when a major threat emerges to challenge the existing international or regional order.

A less aggressive and more popular alternative to containment is offshore balancing; rather than expanding its existing commitments, the United States would adopt a posture similar to the one it maintained toward Europe in the first half of the twentieth century.

A strategy of offshore balancing rests on several assumptions.[114] First, the combination of geographic insularity and a large nuclear arsenal has made the United States safe from virtually any threat, with the possible exception of a European or Asian hegemon capable of dominating its region and becoming roughly as powerful as the Soviet Union once was. Second, the United States' current economic and military dominance will inevitably wane, and efforts to perpetuate that dominance and prevent rival great powers from emerging will only provoke balancing coalitions and accelerate its decline. Third, America's alliances impose disproportionate risks and costs on it by creating the possibility of unnecessary conflicts and encouraging free-riding on the part of allies. According to Barry Posen, "U.S. security guarantees and security assistance tend to relieve others of the need to do more to ensure their own security, and they often ironically enable others to pursue policies that are unhelpful to the United States."[115] A final assumption is that, because other states are geographically closer to any threats that might emerge, they have a strong incentive to address these challenges on their own. Ultimately, as Stephen Walt explains, "offshore balancing prefers to rely primarily on local actors to uphold the regional balance of power. Under this strategy, the United States would intervene with its own forces only when regional powers are unable to uphold the balance of power on their own."[116] In Asia, therefore, nations such as Japan, Russia, India and perhaps others would be responsible, either alone or together, for preventing a hostile China from emerging as the

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[113] Bradley A. Thayer, "Confronting China: An Evaluation of Options for the United States, *Comparative Strategy*, January–March 2005, p. 81.

[114] For an overview of the offshore balancing argument, see Barry R. Posen and Andrew L. Ross, "Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy," *International Security*, Winter 1996/1997, pp. 7–14; Christopher Layne, "From Preponderance to Offshore Balancing: America's Future Grand Strategy," *International Security*, Summer 1997; and Eugene Gholz, Daryl G. Press, and Harvey M. Sapolsky, "Come Home, America: The Strategy of Restraint in the Face of Temptation," *International Security*, Spring 1997.

[115] Barry R. Posen, "After Bush: The Case for Restraint," *The American Interest*, November/December 2007, p. 15.

[116] Stephen M. Walt, "In the National Interest," *Boston Review*, February/March 2005.

dominant power in the region. Paradoxically, while alliances themselves are not essential from this perspective, allies (or former allies) are in fact more important than they are in a strategy of containment, because they are expected to take on the role of countering new threats by themselves.

While a premature effort to contain China could deter aggressive behavior on its part, it is equally likely to produce an intensified security dilemma and provoke China to take aggressive actions.

The Limits of Containment

There are two major problems with a strategy of containment. First, while a premature effort to contain China could deter aggressive behavior on its part, it is equally likely to produce an intensified security dilemma and provoke China to take aggressive actions that it might otherwise have avoided.[117] At the very least, any chance that China could become a responsible international power would effectively be eliminated. Already, some in China view the United States' East Asian alliances—especially when combined with its military deployments in Central Asia associated with Operation Enduring Freedom and ISAF in Afghanistan as well as other counterterrorism efforts in the region—as a form of encirclement.[118] Moreover, deepening US ties with India (discussed in greater detail below) have only exacerbated these concerns. Assembling a containment coalition against China would therefore foster this sense of insecurity, leading to the predictable response of an intensified military buildup or other aggressive behavior on China's part and an end to cooperation in areas such as nonproliferation and counterterrorism.

At the same time, adopting a strategy of containment could result in a dangerous pattern of escalation, whether in Asia or other parts of the world. For example, developing a NATO-like alliance or even a more informal anti-China coalition would in all likelihood be a time-consuming and public process. This period could represent a "danger zone," however, during which China might be emboldened to take aggressive actions, possibly against Taiwan, in the hope of executing a fait accompli before a countervailing alliance could be formed and the balance of power in the region shifted decisively against it. The use of alliances to encircle China could also encourage Beijing to respond by taking analogous and provocative actions in the United States' own sphere of influence, for example by strengthening ties or forging its own alliances with nations like Venezuela or Ecuador.[119] It is worth recalling that one motive behind Nikita Khrushchev's risky decision to place Soviet missiles in Cuba in 1962 was the

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[117] The concept of the security dilemma holds that one state's efforts to increase its security—often by expanding its military capabilities but also by forging alliances—may incorrectly indicate that it possesses hostile intentions, leading other states to respond in kind and increasing the possibility of an unwanted conflict.

[118] Friedberg, "The Future of U.S.-China Relations," p. 23; and David Shambaugh, "China's Military Modernization: Making Steady and Surprising Progress," in Ashley J. Tellis and Michael Willis, eds., *Strategic Asia 2005–06: Military Modernization in an Era of Uncertainty* (Seattle: National Bureau of Asian Research, 2005), pp. 74–76.

[119] China's influence in Latin America, while still relatively minimal, has been increasing in recent years. Loro Horta, "China on the March in Latin America," *Asia Times*, June 28, 2007.

belief that doing so was a proportional response to the United States' own deployment of Jupiter missiles in Turkey, along the Soviet Union's periphery.[120]

A second and more fundamental problem with a strategy of containment is that none of the United States' regional allies and partners would be willing to support it. The conditions that preceded NATO's formation in 1949 were completely different from those prevailing in East Asia today. The Atlantic alliance was formed in the aftermath of a devastating war and addressed member nations' shared concerns regarding the Soviet threat, as well as the possibilities of a resurgent Germany and US abandonment of Europe. By contrast, East Asia is now characterized by growing economies, rising levels of intraregional trade and investment, and increased participation in international institutions, with China at the center of these developments.[121] Considering their increasingly important economic ties with China (not to mention China's growing military strength, which looms in the background), even states concerned about its rise would be unwilling to upset the status quo based on the mere possibility that it will become overtly hostile in the future. As a recent RAND study concludes, "None of America's East Asian allies wants to have to choose between the United States and China. Being forced to do so is considered a worst-case scenario, one to be avoided at all costs." While America's allies may not wish to see China become the dominant power in the region at the United States' expense, "none supports an explicit or implicit U.S.-led effort to contain China's rise."[122]

A more fundamental problem with a strategy of containment is that none of the United States' regional allies and partners would be willing to support it.

Most Southeast Asian nations, for example, are seeking to develop or maintain good relations with both the United States and China rather than siding with either.[123] Among the United States' key allies in this part of the region, Singapore continues to work closely with the United States and remains concerned about China's rise, but Thailand and the Philippines (despite cooperating with the United States to combat terrorist and insurgent groups) have not displayed a similar level of concern, in large part because of their focus on internal rather than external security threats.[124] In Northeast Asia, the US-Japanese alliance is arguably stronger than it has been in some time and remains the centerpiece of the United States' regional security strategy. Not surprisingly, Japan is perhaps more concerned than any other nation about the possibility that China could become increasingly assertive over time. As one assessment summarizes, "Japan is worried about China's willingness to project military power in pursuit of its national interests, to possibly challenge the United

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[120] See Aleksandr Fursenko and Timothy Naftali, *"One Hell of A Gamble": Khrushchev, Castro, and Kennedy, 1958–1964* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1997), chap. 9.

[121] David Shambaugh, "China Engages Asia: Reshaping the Regional Order," *International Security*, Winter 2004/05, p. 64.

[122] Medeiros, et al, *Pacific Currents*, p. 233.

[123] William T. Tow, "America's Asia-Pacific Strategy is Out of Kilter," *Current History*, September 2007, pp. 285–286; and Acharya, "Will Asia's Past Be Its Future?" *International Security*, Winter 2003/04, pp. 152–153.

[124] Medeiros, et al, *Pacific Currents*, p. 235.

States militarily in the region over the longer term, and to even use ballistic missiles to strike against U.S. bases in Japan and against rear area support facilities provided by Japan in the event of a full-blown conflict resulting from any Taiwanese move to declare independence."[125] South Korea, on the other hand, has enjoyed a much closer economic and cultural relationship with China in recent years. Moreover, Seoul has voiced strong opposition to the US preference that its forces on the Korean peninsula be available for regional contingencies other than an attack by North Korea against the South, fearing that those forces might be used against China in the event of a conflict in the Taiwan Strait, which could in turn drag South Korea into a war it does not support.[126] Finally, although the US-Australian alliance remains extremely strong, Canberra has a growing trade relationship with China centering on the export of natural resources, and would be reluctant to become involved in a conflict with China. If asked by Washington to provide support in the event of a war over Taiwan, for example, it would face what one analyst has referred to as its "nightmare scenario"—a choice between participating in a conflict it would prefer to avoid or declining the United States' request and alienating its closest ally.[127]

The PRC undertook a comprehensive effort to project a more benign image and reassure its neighbors in the region through the use of diplomacy, the development of economic and security relationships, and by increasing its participation in various regional forums.

In sum, although many nations in Asia held serious reservations about China's rise only a decade ago, "most nations in the region now see China as a good neighbor, a constructive partner, a careful listener, and a nonthreatening regional power," rending the question of whether or not to develop an active containment coalition with allies moot.[128] Interestingly, this development is in part the result of a deliberate Chinese strategy, one intended to hedge against the possibility of encirclement by allaying concerns regarding the consequences of its rise. As a number of observers have noted, during the mid-1990s Chinese leaders became acutely aware that their more aggressive actions were having counterproductive effects, creating the image of a "China threat" that had the potential to interrupt China's economic development and even provoke a balancing coalition against it. As a result, the PRC undertook a comprehensive effort to project a more benign image and reassure its neighbors in the region through the use of diplomacy, the development of economic and security relationships, and by increasing its participation in various regional forums.[129]

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125 Christopher W. Hughes, "Japanese Military Modernization: In Search of a 'Normal' Security Role," in *Strategic Asia 2005–06*, p. 109.

126 Ibid., pp. 236–237; Robert Ross, "Balance of Power Politics and the Rise of China: Accommodation and Balancing in East Asia," *Security Studies*, July–September 2006, p. 381; Thomas J. Christensen, "Fostering Stability or Creating a Monster: The Rise of China and U.S. Policy toward East Asia," *International Security*, Summer 2006, p. 98; and IISS, "America's Alliances in East Asia," *Strategic Comments*, May 2005.

127 Tow, "America's Asia-Pacific Strategy," p. 286.

128 Shambaugh, "China Engages Asia," p. 64.

129 See Avery Goldstein, "An Emerging China's Emerging Grand Strategy: A Neo-Bismarckian Turn?" in G. John Ikenberry and Michael Mastanduno, eds., *International Relations Theory and the Asia-Pacific* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), chap. 2; Evan S. Medeiros, "Strategic Hedging and the Future of Asia-Pacific Stability," *The Washington Quarterly*, Winter 2005/06, p. 155–156; Daniel Twining, "America's Grand Design in Asia," *The Washington Quarterly*, Summer 2007, p. 90; and Christensen, "Fostering Stability or Creating a Monster?" pp. 83, 98–99, 104.

The Limits of Offshore Balancing

While a strategy of containment has inherent problems, the alternative of offshore balancing has its own shortcomings. Two significant limitations stand out. First, relying upon local actors to balance China's rise and ensure that it does not dominate the region is a risky proposition. History has shown that counter-coalitions often fail to emerge in time to check a rising revisionist power before it begins a major war because of several recurring tendencies, including the decision by some potential balancers to bandwagon instead and ally with the rising power, buck-passing by states in the hope that they can sit back and allow others to act so they will not have to, and disagreements between potential allies over issues relating to burden-sharing and strategy.[130] As Josef Joffe pointedly notes, "benign neglect *à la* Britain works well only when regional balances take care of themselves most of the time. But today, most of them do not do so."[131]

Moreover, given the lingering grievances and suspicions between many of the more powerful nations in Asia, it might be possible for China to play these states off one another and pursue a divide-and-rule strategy that, absent the United States, will allow it to rise unimpeded. By at least maintaining its military presence and alliance relationships in the region, the United States will be in a better position to organize a balancing coalition against China if doing so eventually becomes necessary. Interestingly, even an advocate of offshore balancing like Stephen Walt still recommends that the United States "maintain a significant military presence in Asia...and continue to build cooperative security partnerships with its current Asian allies," because doing so "lays the foundation for an effort to contain China in the event that China's rising power eventually leads to a more ambitious attempt to establish a hegemonic position in East Asia."[132]

By at least maintaining its military presence and alliance relationships in the region, the United States will be in a better position to organize a balancing coalition against China if necessary.

The second major problem with a strategy of offshore balancing is that by reducing its military presence and scaling back on its alliance commitments, the United States could set the stage for more intense security competition between nations in Asia, many of which have outstanding territorial disputes and historical grievances that remain quite salient today.[133] For example, Japan's alliance with the United States helps reassure China (and other states in the region), which believes that absent that alliance, Japan would become more hawkish politically and aggressive

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[130] John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2001), pp. 156–157.

[131] Josef Joffe, "'Bismarck' or 'Britain'? Toward an American Grand Strategy after Bipolarity," *International Security*, Winter 1996/97, p. 109 (emphasis in original).

[132] Walt, "In the National Interest."

[133] For an overview of these issues and their continuing significance, see Bill Emmott, *Rivals: How the Power Struggle Between China, India, and Japan Will Shape Our Next Decade* (New York: Harcourt Books, 2008), chap. 7.

internationally.[134] At the same time, the US military presence in Japan and South Korea has helped to reassure both sides and keep their historical animosities at bay.[135] Even now, South Korea's long-term concerns are focused more on Japan than on China.[136] Adopting an offshore balancing strategy could, therefore, increase the prospects of conflict in the region, provide China with an easier route to regional hegemony if it chooses to pursue that course, and possibly lead to further nuclear proliferation.[137]

Over the past several years the United States has sought to "shape" China's rise and dissuade it from behaving aggressively by working to strengthen key nations in the region.

A THIRD WAY?

For nearly two decades, the purpose of America's alliances in East Asia has been more or less consistent with a grand strategy of selective engagement, which simply holds that the United States must maintain a significant military presence in the world's key regions—Europe, the Middle East, and Asia—in order to keep the peace between its allies and deter or defeat any aggressors that might attempt to disturb that peace.[138] Over the past eight years, the Bush administration clearly did not pursue the alternative strategy of offshore balancing, nor did it adopt a strategy of containment despite occasional claims to the contrary by some observers. Instead, it began to adopt a new approach, one that charts a middle course between these two poles, retains the basic goals underpinning selective engagement while making a future shift toward containment (if necessary) easier to accomplish, and modifies the basic hub-and-spoke architecture without abandoning it.

Specifically, over the past several years the United States has sought to "shape" China's rise and dissuade it from behaving aggressively by working to strengthen key nations in the region—in particular the democratic powers—that could potentially serve as counterweights to China, while simultaneously encouraging these states to work more closely with the United States and with one another. The apparent goal is to foster an environment where China faces a number of states that are capable of

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134 Thomas J. Christensen, "China, the U.S.-Japan Alliance, and the Security Dilemma in East Asia," *International Security*, Spring 1999, pp. 51–52, 58. As the United States encourages Japan to become a "normal" great power and the latter's military capabilities (and willingness to use them) increase, however, the US-Japanese alliance will be viewed less and less as a means of restraining Japan by other nations in the region, particularly China. Already, there are some in China who believe that "the alliance is no longer a restraint on Japanese remilitarization but rather the main vehicle for a buildup aimed at limiting Chinese power and forestalling reunification [with Taiwan]." Medeiros, "Strategic Hedging and the Future of Asia-Pacific Stability," p. 154.

135 Khalilzad, et al, *The United States in Asia*, p. 49.

136 Medeiros, et al, *Pacific Currents*, pp. 236–237.

137 Posen and Ross, "Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy," p. 15; and Zalmay Khalilzad, David T. Orletsky, Jonathan D. Pollack, Kevin L. Pollpeter, Angel Rabasa, David A. Shlapak, Abram N. Shulsky, and Ashley J. Tellis, *The United States in Asia: Toward a New U.S. Strategy and Force Posture* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2001), p. 46.

138 On selective engagement, See Posen and Ross, "Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy," pp. 15–21.

resisting any aggressive moves on its part, willing to push back against any efforts to dominate the region as a whole, and are therefore unlikely to bandwagon with China as it rises. If this approach is successful, the PRC may be discouraged from pursuing destabilizing courses of action, which would in turn make a full-blown containment policy unnecessary.[139]

In practice, this strategy can be seen in a number of developments. For example, the United States has continued to support Japan's transformation into a "normal" great power, in particular by working to increase interoperability between US military forces and the Japanese Self-Defense Forces (SDF), encouraging the SDF to take on new roles beyond immediate territorial defense, and cooperating in areas such as the development and deployment of ground and sea-based ballistic missile defense (BMD) systems.[140] According to one assessment of US strategy in the region, "As Japan grows increasingly comfortable as a great power that is able to deploy military forces overseas and to possess growing military capabilities, Washington is actively working to construct Japan as a center of power in an effort to position it within a new Asian and global security order as China rises."[141] The United States has also expanded defense cooperation with Singapore and has explored closer ties with both Indonesia and Vietnam.[142]

Another major change that has taken place over the past several years has been the development of an entirely new relationship between the United States and India, as clearly demonstrated by the recent agreement allowing India to purchase nuclear fuel and technology from the United States despite remaining outside the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) regime.[143] The US rapprochement with India has arguably been the most critical and certainly the most dramatic aspect of the Bush administration's alliance strategy in Asia, in part because of India's role as leader of the Non-Aligned Movement but more importantly because the US-India nuclear deal has been extremely controversial with many nuclear proliferation experts. Nevertheless, former US officials seemed determined to assist India's rise to great power status on the assumption that its democratic form of government, the threat it faces from

The US rapprochement with India has arguably been the most critical and certainly the most dramatic aspect of the Bush administration's alliance strategy in Asia.

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139 Medeiros, "Strategic Hedging and the Future of Asia-Pacific Stability," p. 149; Tow, "America's Asia-Pacific Strategy," p. 283; Daniel Twining, "America's Grand Design in Asia"; and Michael J. Green and Daniel Twining, "Democracy and American Grand Strategy in Asia: The Realist Principles Behind an Enduring Idealism," *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, April 2008.

140 Medeiros, "Strategic Hedging and the Future of Asia-Pacific Stability," p. 150; Hughes, "Japan's Military Modernization"; and Nick Bisley, "Securing the "Anchor of Regional Stability'? The Transformation of the US-Japan Alliance and East Asian Security," *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, April 2008.

141 Twining, "America's Grand Design in Asia," p. 81.

142 Medeiros, "Strategic Hedging and the Future of Asia-Pacific Stability," p. 152; Twining, "America's Grand Design in Asia," p. 84; and Michael R. Gordon, "An Upbeat Rumsfeld and Vietnam Agree to Broaden Ties," *New York Times*, June 5, 2006.

143 For a brief summary of these developments and some of the concerns surrounding them, see Esther Pan and Jayshree Bajoria, "The U.S.-India Nuclear Deal," Council on Foreign Relations Backgrounder, updated October 2, 2008, accessed at http://www.cfr.org/publication/9663/ on October 22, 2008.

terrorist and insurgent groups, and its mutual interest in ensuring that China does not dominate Asia make it an ideal partner for the United States.[144] Based on these shared interests, these officials are confident that India "will emerge as a friendly, independent pole in Asia's emerging security order."[145]

Finally, there has been a growing trend toward cooperation between the region's key powers outside the confines of the traditional hub-and-spoke system of bilateral US alliances. This includes both multilateral cooperation between the United States and its allies (notably the Trilateral Strategic Dialogue between the United States, Japan, and Australia), and increased bilateral cooperation between US allies (the best example being the 2007 Japan-Australia Joint Security Declaration, which, although not a formal alliance, was the first post-World War II defense agreement between Japan and a nation other than the United States).[146]

A more powerful and more capable Japan that works closely with the United States and its other allies is a far better option than most alternatives, particularly if China does indeed become more aggressive in the future.

MOVING FORWARD

Although not without its problems, this nascent strategy could yield significant benefits both in the short term and in the more distant future. The United States should, therefore, continue and expand many of the initiatives discussed above. For example, encouraging Japan to contribute more to its own defense and become a more equal security partner for the United States has been a US goal for some time, whether the focus of these efforts has been on missile defense, maritime security in East Asia, or post-conflict reconstruction operations. Although Japan's growing role in these areas will undoubtedly cause some concern in the region, a more powerful and more capable Japan that works closely with the United States and its other allies is a far better option than most alternatives, particularly if China does indeed become more aggressive in the future. With respect to this possibility, the principal area for cooperation between the United States and Japan remains ballistic missile defense, given that China's ballistic and cruise missile inventory is undoubtedly its most worrisome coercive capability.[147] To improve crisis stability in the region, the United States should also work with Tokyo to harden airbases in Japan and expand Japan's basing

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[144] See, for example, "The India Imperative," a Conversation with Robert D. Blackwill, *The National Interest*, Summer 2005; R. Nicholas Burns, "America's Strategic Opportunity With India: The New U.S.-India Partnership," *Foreign Affairs*, November/December 2007; and Ashley J. Tellis, "What Should We Expect From India as a Strategic Partner?" in Henry D. Sokolski, ed., *Gauging U.S.-Indian Strategic Cooperation* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2007).

[145] Twining, "America's Grand Design in Asia," p. 83.

[146] Ibid., pp. 87–88; Medeiros, et al, *Pacific Currents*, pp. 243–244; and William T. Tow, "Asia's Competitive 'Strategic Geometries': The Australian Perspective," *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, April 2008.

[147] In addition to their primary function of ballistic missile defense, the Patriot Advanced Capability-3 (PAC-3) ground-based BMD batteries that Japan has purchased from the United States are also equipped with radars capable of detecting and jamming incoming cruise missiles. David A. Fulghum and Douglas Barrie, "F-22 Tops Japan's Military Wish List," *Aviation Week and Space Technology*, April 22, 2007.

infrastructure, to include modifying civilian airfields so that military aircraft could be more widely dispersed in the event of a conflict with China.

Australia is another critical ally, and the United States should encourage and assist Canberra in improving its capabilities for maritime surveillance and security as well as sea line of communication (SLOC) interdiction throughout Southeast Asia, which could lessen the burden on US naval forces if deteriorating relations with China require an even greater American military presence in Northeast Asia. The United States might also explore the possibility of access agreements or more permanent basing options in northern Australia. Given their distance from Mainland China, Australian bases would have limited utility for operations in defense of Japan or Taiwan, even if the United States deployed long-range strike assets and/or refueling aircraft for tactical fighters. They would, however, further disperse US forces in the region (which are located primarily in Japan, South Korea, and on Guam), which would in turn complicate (and therefore help to deter) any Chinese efforts to attack US forces if a conflict with Taiwan broke out. Moreover, this distance could also be a virtue—an increased US military presence in Australia would appear far less threatening to China than efforts to acquire or reacquire basing rights in Vietnam or the Philippines, respectively.

India is clearly a rising power, one that has much in common with the United States and could become a valuable, albeit informal, ally over time.

Closer cooperation between India and the United States is also a sensible course of action; India is clearly a rising power, one that has much in common with the United States and could become a valuable, albeit informal, ally over time.[148] Because both nations are concerned about the rise of China, the United States should consider supporting India's development of blue water naval capabilities, which would provide it with an increased ability to control the Indian Ocean.[149] In recent years, China has spent substantial resources constructing port facilities along the Indian Ocean littoral in Pakistan, Burma, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka, which have been given the moniker "string of pearls."[150] The reason for this development is that China's demand for energy—particularly foreign oil—is increasingly rapidly,[151] and the bulk of those supplies pass through the natural chokepoints of the Malacca Strait or the Lombok and Makkasar Straits when transported by sea from the Persian Gulf and Africa. Beijing has thus grown increasingly concerned about the security of its SLOCs, which run

[148] The prevailing view appears to be that neither the United States nor India has any interest in a formal alliance. C. Raja Mohan, "India's Quest for Continuity in the Face of Change," *The Washington Quarterly* (Autumn 2008), p. 151.

[149] India is already planning to construct two new aircraft carriers, in addition to purchasing a third from Russia. *The Economist*, "Into the Wide Blue Yonder," June 5, 2008.

[150] James R. Holmes and Toshi Yoshihara, "China's Naval Ambitions in the Indian Ocean," *Journal of Strategic Studies*, June 2008, p. 377.

[151] China is currently the world's second largest consumer of oil and the third largest importer of oil, following the United States and Japan. According to projections, its oil imports are expected to increase from 3 million barrels per day (bpd) in 2005 to between 6 and 11 million bpd by 2020. Erica Downs, "China," The Brookings Foreign Policy Studies Energy Security Series, December 2006, pp. 6, 10.

from these straits through the Indian Ocean.[152] These facilities, along with the growing influence China has acquired with a number South Asian states, could increase its ability to project power into the Indian Ocean and defend its SLOCs in the event that either US or Indian navies sought to disrupt its oil supplies during a conflict.[153] For some in India, however, China's actions have appeared as an early form of encirclement.[154] If India further develops its blue-water capabilities, it would not only be able to take on a greater role in providing maritime security in the Indian Ocean,[155] it could also lead China to devote more resources to its own blue-water fleet and away from military capabilities more threatening from the perspective of the United States (e.g., capabilities like ballistic and cruise missiles that would be useful for China in a conflict over Taiwan).[156]

In addition to its own bilateral ties with Japan, the United States should promote bilateral (and multilateral) security cooperation between its allies and partners.

In addition to its own bilateral ties with Japan, Australia, and India, the United States should promote bilateral (and multilateral) security cooperation between its allies and partners, for instance between Japan and India, Japan and South Korea, and Australia and Japan. At the same time, joint military exercises that include the United States and other nations in the region—in particular Japan, Australia, South Korea, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and perhaps eventually Vietnam—should be expanded in frequency and/or scale to the greatest extent possible. These combined military exercises and other forms of security cooperation have significant tangible benefits, notably improving both intelligence-sharing and the ability of foreign forces to operate effectively with one another. They can also have intangible benefits, however, which may be even more important in the long run. For example, creating a dense web of interrelationships between the United States and other nations in the region will improve the odds that other states will oppose China in the event that it takes an aggressive turn (or will at least create greater uncertainty in the minds of PRC leaders regarding which and how many nations will join the United States in opposing them), and lays a stronger foundation for some type of formal or informal containment coalition if China does attempt to dominate the region in the future.

Almost certainly, these actions will be viewed with great concern in China, which already looks warily upon developments like the American-Australian-Japanese

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152 Ian Storey, "China's 'Malacca Dilemma'," *China Brief*, April 12, 2006.

153 Emmott, *Rivals*, p. 60; Holmes and Yoshihara, "China's Naval Ambitions in the Indian Ocean," pp. 368–370, 377–378; and Gavin Rabinowitz, "The Latest 'Great Game' Involves Indian Ocean," *Los Angeles Times*, August 31, 2008.

154 Lisa Curtis, "U.S.-India Relations: The China Factor," Backgrounder No. 2209, Heritage Foundation, November 25, 2008, pp. 1–2; and Emmott, *Rivals*, p. 61.

155 Anand Giridharadas, "Land of Gandhi Asserts Itself as Global Military Power," *New York Times*, September 28, 2008.

156 The set of capabilities China would require to better secure its SLOCs are by and large very different from those it has acquired for use in the event of a conflict in the Taiwan Strait. For a discussion of what China would require for the former mission, see Holmes and Yoshihara, "China's Naval Ambitions in the Indian Ocean," p. 389.

Trilateral Strategic Dialogue.[157] To deflect and diminish these concerns, cooperative measures and military exercises between the United States and its allies and partners in the region should remain focused on areas such as counterterrorism, maritime security, counterproliferation, counterinsurgency, disaster relief, and noncombatant evacuation operations. At present, developing improved multinational capabilities in many of these areas is arguably more pressing and, more importantly, far easier to accomplish than working jointly with allies to address any potential threats posed by China (something few allies are likely to support). Moreover, preparing to address these areas should not be viewed by China as a direct or immediate danger.[158] At the same time, the United States should attempt to increase its cooperation with China on issues where the two have common interests, in particular counterterrorism and nonproliferation.

In addition to these steps, the United States has a strong interest in preserving the status quo in its relations with both South Korea (the Republic of Korea, or ROK) and Taiwan. With regard to the former, the United States has, in recent years, decreased the size of its military presence on the Korean peninsula by approximately ten thousand personnel and is in the process of shifting most of its forces near the demilitarized zone to locations south of Seoul. The military balance between North and South Korea and the latter's great advantage in wealth and access to technology would probably allow for a further drawdown in forces (particularly ground forces) over time, and this option should be kept in reserve. With South Korea enjoying a closer economic relationship with China, however, the United States should try to avoid any dramatic changes in the US-ROK alliance that could undermine its influence in Seoul, which has been on shaky ground for several years as a result of disagreements over policy toward North Korea, among other issues.[159] Moreover, because the American military presence in Japan is justified in part by the need to support and reinforce US and ROK forces in the event of a war with North Korea, another major drawdown in forces could call this rationale into question and lead to increased public opposition to the US-Japan alliance within Japan.[160]

The United States has a strong interest in preserving the status quo in its relations with both South Korea and Taiwan.

In addition to the Korean peninsula, Taiwan remains a key flashpoint in East Asia and the most likely place in the region where the United States and China could come into conflict in the near term. While the United States does not wish to see a conflict erupt in the Taiwan Strait, it understandably hopes to avoid a reunification between Taiwan and the PRC that would undermine the former's status as a democracy. To maintain deterrence and avoid incentivizing either side to break from the status

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[157] Tow, "Asia's Competitive 'Strategic Geometries'," pp. 41–42; and Anirudh Suri, "India and Japan: Congruence, at Last," *Asia Times*, June 9, 2007.

[158] Medeiros, "Strategic Hedging and the Future of Asia-Pacific Stability," p. 150; and Tow, "Asia's Competitive 'Strategic Geometries'," p. 41.

[159] Richard Weitz, "The United States and South Korea: A Troubled Alliance," *World Politics Review*, April 5, 2007, accessed at http://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/article.aspx?id=686 on January 19, 2009.

[160] I am grateful to Jan van Tol for calling this point to my attention.

quo, the United States has relied upon a policy of strategic ambiguity, leaving both parties uncertain about what its response would be if a conflict broke out between them. Although this policy does carry with it the risk of miscalculation that could ultimately lead to war, it remains a far better option than either abandoning or formalizing the United States' implicit commitment to Taiwan's de facto independence, both of which would be destabilizing. Continuity with the previous administration's policy is therefore warranted. As Thomas Christensen has observed, "The Bush administration has combined credible threats of a military response by Taiwan and the United States if the mainland uses force against Taiwan with frequent, high-profile, and explicit assurances to the mainland and warnings to Taipei that the United States does not support Taiwan independence and opposes unilateral changes in the status quo that threaten stability."[161] For lack of a better alternative, this should remain the core of US policy vis à vis Taiwan.

SUMMARY

Although the rise of China may ultimately be peaceful, the United States must be prepared for the possibility that Beijing will become a more hostile power in the future, whether as the result of international conflicts of interest or internal instability that leads to external aggression. In doing so, America's allies and partners in the region will play a critical role by helping to shape the trajectory of China's rise, dissuading aggressive behavior on its part, and checking Chinese aggression if doing so becomes necessary.

Specifically, the United States should continue its current strategy of strengthening and building closer relationships with nations in the region, in particular Japan, Australia, and India, all of whom can serve as potential counterweights to China both individually and in concert with the United States. While cooperation with Japan should focus on the continued development and deployment of ballistic missile defense systems, the United States should also explore the possibility of new access agreements and even basing options in Australia, and should support India's efforts to develop an increased blue water naval capability that could balance future Chinese efforts to project maritime power into the Indian Ocean.

In addition to strengthening bilateral ties with these and other nations in the region, the United States should encourage closer bilateral and multilateral ties among its allies, to include joint military exercises in areas such as counterterrorism, counterinsurgency, maritime security, noncombatant evacuation operations, and disaster relief. By working more closely with its regional partners and fostering greater cooperation between them, the United States can retain and perhaps expand its influence with these nations, increase interoperability between their forces and those of the

[161] Christensen, "Fostering Stability or Creating a Monster?" p. 112.

US military, and improve the prospects of US allies and partners balancing against rather than bandwagoning with China if it becomes hostile in the years ahead. At the same time, however, the United States must look for opportunities to collaborate with China on issues like nonproliferation and counterterrorism that will not only serve both states' interests, but could prevent the Sino-American relationship from deteriorating into overt competition and conflict, and perhaps lay the foundation for deeper and more meaningful cooperation.

London
Warsaw
Ankara
Shahab-3
1,300 km
Riyadh
Scud C 500 km
Fateh-110 and
Scud B 300 km

CHAPTER 4 > MEETING THE CHALLENGE OF NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION

The third major challenge the United States must be prepared to confront in the years ahead is the further proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD)—especially nuclear weapons and the fissile material needed to construct them—to states and possibly even terrorist groups. Although the spread of chemical and biological weapons remains a grave concern, nuclear weapons are unparalleled in their ability to immediately kill and injure vast numbers of people, damage and destroy infrastructure, and render large areas uninhabitable as a result of radioactive contamination. As the 2006 National Security Strategy appropriately concluded, "The proliferation of nuclear weapons poses the greatest threat to our national security. Nuclear weapons are unique in their capacity to inflict instant loss of life on a massive scale. For this reason, nuclear weapons hold special appeal to rogue states and terrorists."[162]

If additional nations (or nonstate actors) manage to acquire nuclear weapons, the United States would be faced with a host of changes in its security environment. This chapter focuses on three specific changes that bear directly on US alliances. First, the possibility that the United States might find itself at war with (or intervening in) a nuclear-armed state would increase. Second, the possibility of a nuclear terrorist attack would rise sharply as well. Finally, the proliferation of nuclear capabilities, even to a very small number of states, could be a catalytic development that leads to further proliferation, which would in turn exacerbate the first two changes.[163] Unlike the core security challenges discussed earlier in this report, however, alliances should

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[162] *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, DC: White House, March 2006), p. 19, accessed at http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss/2006/nss2006.pdf on January 16, 2008.

[163] Nuclear proliferation could have other effects as well, including an increased likelihood that the nuclear "taboo" will be broken and nuclear weapons will be used, and the possibility that these weapons will embolden rogue regimes to increase their support for terrorist and insurgent groups or take other aggressive actions. See Krepinevich, Martinage, and Work, *The Challenges to US National Security*, chap. 3, for a discussion of these issues.

not be expected to play a central role in addressing all three aspects of the proliferation threat. Specifically, while allies may be crucial for the prevention of a nuclear terrorist attack and perhaps for restricting the number of states that pursue nuclear weapons in the first place, they are unlikely to provide a significant level of support should the United States undertake a military operation against a nuclear-armed opponent. Each of these issues is addressed in greater detail below.

A series of events over the past decade have demonstrated that a future in which nuclear weapons are no longer limited to a relatively small group of nations still remains a very real and very frightening possibility.

A GROWING DANGER

While it has received increased attention in recent years, the spread of nuclear weapons has been a source of concern for the United States ever since it anticipated losing its short-lived atomic monopoly following World War II. By the mid-1960s, the USSR, Britain, France, and China had acquired nuclear weapons, and these five nations (with Russia eventually succeeding the Soviet Union) would eventually be recognized as the only legitimate nuclear weapon states under the NPT. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s concerns over nuclear proliferation remained, as India, Pakistan, Taiwan, South Africa, South Korea, and several other nations explored or some in cases vigorously pursued the nuclear option. Nevertheless, it was not until the end of the Cold War that proliferation finally emerged as a core security challenge for the United States, as a result of concerns over the status of the Soviet nuclear arsenal, revelations after the Gulf War that Iraq's nuclear program had been much more advanced than suspected, and the 1994 nuclear crisis with North Korea. Since then, policymakers have increasingly focused their attention on the dangers of nuclear proliferation, and a number of prominent commentators have even suggested that the world may be on the cusp of a "second nuclear age" characterized by the spread of nuclear weapons and other WMD to a growing number of states.[164]

Although the NPT has helped keep proliferation in check for nearly forty years, a series of events over the past decade have demonstrated that a future in which nuclear weapons are no longer limited to a relatively small group of nations still remains a very real and very frightening possibility. For example, in 1998 India and Pakistan both clarified what many suspected when they conducted a series of nuclear weapons tests.[165] In 2004, Pakistani scientist Abdul Qadeer Kahn publicly confessed to his role as head of an illicit network that trafficked in sensitive nuclear technology, which Kahn provided to aspiring nuclear powers such as North Korea, Libya, and Iran.[166] In 2006, having withdrawn from the NPT three years earlier, North Korea conducted its

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[164] See, for example, Fred Charles Iklé, "The Second Coming of the Nuclear Age," *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 1996; and Paul Bracken, "The Second Nuclear Age," *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2000.

[165] For a concise overview of the Indian and Pakistani nuclear weapons programs, see Bruce Riedel, "South Asia's Nuclear Decade," *Survival*, April/May 2008.

[166] See Adrian Levy and Catherine Scott-Clark, *Deception: Pakistan, the United States, and the Secret Trade in Nuclear Weapons* (New York: Walker and Company, 2007).

first test of a nuclear weapon.[167] In September 2007, the Israeli Air Force executed a military strike against a Syrian target that US intelligence officials later described as a covert, graphite-moderated nuclear reactor designed to produce plutonium, which was apparently close to achieving an operational capability.[168] In addition to these developments, there remains the as-yet-unresolved issue of Iran's nuclear program, which many observers suspect is intended to produce fuel for nuclear weapons.[169] Ultimately, as one study argues, "we may very soon be approaching a nuclear 'tipping point,' where many countries may decide to acquire nuclear arsenals on short notice, thereby triggering a proliferation epidemic."[170]

NUCLEAR WEAPONS, POWER PROJECTION, AND ALLIED SUPPORT

The first major change that would result from an increasingly proliferated world is a greater likelihood that the United States might find itself contemplating military operations against a nuclear-armed opponent. There are at least two general scenarios that could lead to this outcome. First, if a nuclear state could not be discouraged from pursuing aggressive actions, or if intelligence indicated that a nuclear state was on the verge of crossing certain "red lines" (for example, launching an attack against the United States or one of its allies, or transferring a nuclear weapon to a terrorist group), the United States might be forced to conduct a preemptive or punitive attack in order to roll back that state's nuclear capability. Alternatively, a nuclear-armed state could experience internal instability, either from the top down (a coup) or the bottom up (widespread unrest and violence leading to civil war and/or state collapse). The security of its nuclear arsenal might then be jeopardized; in the worst case, it could even fall into the hands of radical elements within the regime or extremist groups external

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[167] As the result of the Six-Party Talks that began after North Korea's withdrawal from the NPT, the United States removed North Korea from the State Department's list of state sponsors of terrorism in October 2008 in exchange for a declaration of its plutonium production. See Helene Cooper, "Bush Rebuffs Hard-Liners to Ease North Korean Curbs," *New York Times*, June 27, 2008; and Cooper, "U.S. Declares North Korea Off Terror List," *New York Times*, October 12, 2008.

[168] "Background Briefing with Senior U.S. Officials on Syria's Covert Nuclear Reactor and North Korea's Involvement," April 24, 2008, accessed at http://dni.gov/interviews/20080424_interview.pdf on October 5, 2008. See also Richard Weitz, "New Insights About 2007 Israeli Air Strike in Syria," *WMD Insights*, June 2008, accessed at http://www.wmdinsights.com/I25/I25_ME2_NewInsights.htm on October 5, 2008.

[169] In November 2007 a US National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) judged that Iran had halted its nuclear weapons program in the Fall of 2003, although considerable skepticism still exists regarding Iran's intentions. Office of the Director of National Intelligence, *Iran: Nuclear Intentions and Capabilities*, November 2007, accessed at http://www.dni.gov/press_releases/20071203_release.pdf on July 11, 2008.

[170] Mitchell B. Reiss, "The Nuclear Tipping Point: Prospects for a World of Many Nuclear States," in Kurt M. Campbell, Robert J. Einhorn, and Reiss, eds., *The Nuclear Tipping Point: Why States Reconsider their Nuclear Choices* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2004), p. 4.

to it. Irrespective of the particular circumstances, the United States might consider intervention to remove that nation's nuclear weapons and material or to destroy its nuclear infrastructure.

Both of these scenarios are unpalatable, and it cannot be predicted with any certainty what the United States Government would ultimately do if confronted by them. Yet neither possibility can be ignored. Several of the nations that have pursued nuclear weapons in recent years have done so at least partially with the United States in mind. Moreover, because of its overwhelming superiority in conventional warfare, enemies of the United States have a strong incentive to seek nuclear weapons as a means of offsetting this advantage. There is, therefore, a selection effect that influences nuclear proliferation, insofar as nations that the United States is most likely to find itself in conflict with for a variety of other reasons are precisely those nations that may have the strongest interest in acquiring nuclear weapons. At the same time, some existing nuclear powers—notably North Korea and Pakistan—are dangerously unstable.[171] Pakistan is arguably the greatest concern at present, given the presence of al Qaeda and the Taliban in parts of the country as well as efforts by both groups to destabilize the regime.[172] Not surprisingly, Pakistani officials have repeatedly sought to reassure the United States and other nations that the security of its nuclear arsenal is robust, a conclusion US intelligence officials publicly concur with for now.[173] In addition, a number of prospective nuclear states, particularly in the Middle East and North Africa, are hardly immune from domestic instability and could be potential candidates for nuclear state failure in the future.

Because of its overwhelming superiority in conventional warfare, enemies of the United States have a strong incentive to seek nuclear weapons as a means of offsetting this advantage.

Should the United States confront a situation such as this and decide to act, it will undoubtedly find that the presence of nuclear weapons will make projecting power far more difficult. Not only might US forces be threatened with these weapons once inside the targeted nation, but, depending on the capabilities of its opponent (in particular the size of its nuclear arsenal and the delivery methods available to it), US theater air bases, ground force staging areas, and logistics hubs in the region could all be threatened with nuclear attack, as could the population centers of any nations that allow the United States to use or transit their territory, particularly for offensive strike operations. As a result, allies might not grant the United States access because of the fear of nuclear retaliation; even if they did, the United States might still avoid

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[171] For a discussion of the possibility that either of these nations could collapse and how the United States might respond, see Michael O'Hanlon, "What if a Nuclear-Armed State Collapses," *Current History*, November 2006.

[172] Bruce Riedel, "Al-Qa'ida's Resurgence in Pakistan," *CTC Sentinel*, December 2007, pp. 8–10.

[173] John Glionna, "Pakistan Says its Nuclear Arsenal is Secure," *Los Angeles Times*, January 27, 2008; Peter Crail, "Pakistan Defends Nuke Security Amid Instability," *Arms Control Today*, March 2008; and J. Michael McConnell, Director of National Intelligence, "Annual Threat Assessment of the Intelligence Community for the Senate Armed Services Committee," February 27, 2008, p. 14, accessed at http://www.dni.gov/testimonies/20080227_testimony.pdf on January 17, 2009.

massing forces that could be the target of a nuclear attack.[174] In either case, the United States' ability to project power at significant distances and over an extended period of time would be severely compromised.

It may be possible to mitigate—though not eliminate—the threat of a nuclear attack against overseas bases or ally population centers, for example by deploying theater missile defenses along with other air defense systems, but these capabilities may not be effective enough to convince an ally to allow US forces to operate from its territory, nor would they guard against unconventional methods of delivery. In addition, deploying these systems and, more generally, negotiating access in such a high-threat environment may be a lengthy process. Yet executing a preemptive or preventive strike may require US forward-based or forward-deployed forces to act quickly, which may not prove feasible.[175] Negotiating access and deploying defensive capabilities could also signal the United States' intent to its opponent, and would therefore create a window during which that opponent might conduct a preemptive strike or engage in other coercive measures, which would only confirm an ally's fears.

In sum, US allies are likely to be far less reliable when the prospect of a nuclear attack enters the equation. Although the United States may in some cases actually receive requested support, it must increase both its capability and its capacity to undertake missions against a nuclear-armed opponent largely on its own, for example by investing in long-range strike platforms such as cruise missile submarines (SSGNs) and a stealthy next-generation bomber.

Nuclear proliferation has also heightened the possibility of a nuclear terrorist attack against the United States or one of its allies.

PREVENTING NUCLEAR TERRORISM

In addition to making power-projection operations significantly more difficult, nuclear proliferation has also heightened the possibility of a nuclear terrorist attack against the United States or one of its allies. Today, a broad consensus exists across the political spectrum and throughout the policy community that nuclear terrorism is one of the most significant dangers confronting the United States; not only was it emphasized repeatedly by the Bush administration, but President Obama has also described "the spread of nuclear weapons, material, and technology and the risk that a nuclear device will fall into the hands of terrorists" as "the most urgent threat to the

[174] See Christopher Bowie, *The Anti-Access Threat and Theater Air Bases* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2002), p. 51; Andrew F. Krepinevich and Robert O. Work, *A New US Global Defense Posture for the Second Transoceanic Era* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2007), pp. 284–285; Owen R. Coté, "Assuring Access and Projecting Power: The Navy in the New Security Environment," MIT Security Studies Program, April 2002; and Michael May and Michael Nacht, "The Real Nuclear Threat is to America's Bases," *Financial Times*, September 22, 2005.

[175] Andrew F. Krepinevich, *The Quadrennial Defense Review: Rethinking the US Military Posture* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2005), pp. 82–83.

security of the United States and the world."[176] Preventing an act of nuclear terrorism must therefore be a priority for the US Government, particularly given al Qaeda's longstanding interest in WMD and its avowed willingness to use nuclear weapons against its enemies.

Although there are various routes by which a terrorist group might acquire a nuclear weapon, two possibilities stand out as the most likely alternatives. First, inadequate security measures, lax accounting procedures, or the onset of severe domestic instability that undermines existing security arrangements could each provide an opportunity for terrorists to steal an intact nuclear weapon from a nation's arsenal. Russia, for example, retains a large nuclear inventory, parts of which may still be vulnerable to theft, while Pakistan has a relatively small arsenal that could become vulnerable if the country experiences a wider civil conflict or collapses. Second, terrorists could purchase fissile material—either highly enriched uranium (HEU) or separated plutonium—on the black market or steal it from a military or civilian facility; that material could then be used to construct an improvised nuclear device. As a number of analysts have warned, a determined and well-funded terrorist group with enough HEU would have a reasonable chance of constructing a gun-type nuclear weapon.[177]

The United States cannot expect to prevent a nuclear terrorist attack on its own or even with a small number of close allies.

Just as the threat of terrorism more generally requires broad support, the United States cannot expect to prevent a nuclear terrorist attack on its own or even with a small number of close allies. Rather, it will require working with dozens of partners on a sustained basis to share intelligence, install and maintain detection systems at various points of entry, and secure or remove nuclear material from vulnerable civilian reactors located around the world. There are, however, a number of areas where certain allies will play a crucial role, and some areas where non-traditional allies may become increasingly valuable.

Securing "Loose Nukes"

Reducing and securing stockpiles of nuclear weapons and material is generally regarded as the single most important measure that can be taken to prevent a nuclear terrorist attack. Because stealing an intact weapon and acquiring a sufficient amount of fissile material to build one represent the most likely routes to the bomb for a terrorist group, closing off these pathways is the logical focus for preventive efforts.[178] In addition, improving the security of vulnerable nuclear weapons and material is also the most feasible defense against the nuclear terrorist threat, in comparison,

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[176] Obama, "Renewing American Leadership," p. 8.

[177] For a more detailed assessment, see Evan Braden Montgomery, *Nuclear Terrorism: Assessing the Threat, Developing a Response* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2009), chap. 3.

[178] Graham Allison, *Nuclear Terrorism: The Ultimate Preventable Catastrophe* (New York: Henry Holt, 2005), p. 143.

for instance, to relying primarily on detecting and interdicting nuclear weapons and material once they have been stolen and are in transit.[179]

At present, the US Government runs a host of programs through the Departments of Defense, Energy, and State to address these issues. The main focus of these programs continues to be securing warhead storage sites, increasing the security of nuclear weapons and material in transit, enhancing accounting procedures, consolidating nuclear material in fewer and less vulnerable locations, and reducing stockpiles of civilian and military fissile material, all primarily in Russia and the former Soviet republics.[180] The United States has also worked to eliminate vulnerable civilian sources of HEU worldwide through the Global Threat Reduction Initiative, and has supported a number of international efforts to prevent nuclear terrorism, including the Group of Eight Global Partnership against the Spread of Weapons and Material of Mass Destruction, the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism, and United Nations Security Council Resolution 1540, which prohibits member states from helping nonstate actors acquire WMD or delivery mechanisms and requires them to secure WMD and related materials.

Ultimately, the most critical partners for the United States as it seeks to prevent a nuclear terrorist attack will be the two nations that remain the most likely sources of stolen nuclear weapons and fissile material: Russia and Pakistan. The problem is that American-Russian relations have deteriorated markedly over the past few years as a result of Moscow's anti-democratic reforms at home, its aggressive behavior abroad (including the recent conflict in Georgia and coercive economic practices against Ukraine), and disputes over issues such as the deployment of US national missile defense components in Eastern Europe. As a result, there have been debates within Washington over the extent to which the United States should continue cooperating with Russia.[181] While US-Pakistani relations remain cooperative in areas such as counterterrorism, lingering suspicions regarding the loyalty of its military and its intelligence service, its status as a nuclear-weapon state outside the NPT regime, and its chronic political instability combine to make cooperation on nuclear issues both imperative and problematic. Despite these obstacles, the United States must find ways both to expand its efforts to eliminate and secure Russian nuclear weapons and

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[179] Matthew Bunn and Anthony Weir, "The Seven Myths of Nuclear Terrorism," *Current History*, April 2005, p. 159; and National Research Council, Committee on Science and Technology for Countering Terrorism, *Making the Nation Safer: The Role of Science and Technology in Countering Terrorism* (Washington, DC: National Academies Press, 2002), p. 52.

[180] A comprehensive overview of current efforts to reduce and secure nuclear weapons and material globally can be found in Matthew Bunn, *Securing the Bomb 2007*, Project on Managing the Atom, Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, Harvard University, September 2007, chapter 2. On US programs in Russia and the former Soviet republics, see Amy W. Woolf, "Nonproliferation and Threat Reduction Assistance: U.S. Programs in the Former Soviet Union," Congressional Research Service, Updated January 3, 2008.

[181] Josh Meyer, "Risks Seen for U.S. as it Freezes Out Russia," *Los Angeles Times*, September 22, 2008.

material and to work with Pakistan (within the confines of the NPT) to ensure that the security of its nuclear arsenal is not compromised.

Delegitimizing Nuclear Terror

According to the 2006 National Security Strategy, "the War on Terror has been both a battle of arms and a battle of ideas...for it is ideas that can turn the disenchanted into murderers willing to kill innocent victims."[182] Yet the US Government's attempt to fight this particular battle has often been singled out as the least effective element of its broader war on terrorism. In 2006, for example, then-Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld admitted that the United States had experienced little success in this area, and only deserved "a 'D' or a 'D plus' as a country as to how well we're doing in the battle of ideas that's taking place in the world today."[183] Improving the United States' ability to promote our ideas and our ideals while simultaneously undermining those of al Qaeda and other terrorists groups is critical, however, because progress in this area can help to decrease the likelihood of a catastrophic attack, including an act of nuclear terrorism.

One way to discourage terrorists from employing or even pursuing nuclear weapons and other WMD is to delegitimize the use of these weapons.

One way to discourage terrorists from employing or even pursuing nuclear weapons and other WMD is to delegitimize the use of these weapons in the eyes of their supporters and sympathizers. If terrorists can be convinced that a nuclear attack would actually prove counterproductive by alienating these audiences, they may abandon or avoid the nuclear option and resort to less controversial (but undoubtedly still violent) methods. In the case of al Qaeda, for example, recent evidence suggests that the group is already suffering diminished popularity throughout the world in light of the murder of Muslim civilians in many of its attacks, a development that has caused significant concern within its central leadership.[184] Moreover, one assessment notes that the use of nuclear weapons in particular "does have the potential of provoking revulsion among the very communities that [Osama] bin Laden is seeking to rally to his restored Muslim Caliphate."[185]

The US Government should therefore take steps to convince al Qaeda and other terrorist groups that mass casualty and catastrophic attacks will harm rather than advance their underlying aims. To do so, the United States will need to identify and work through intermediaries across the Muslim world that can counter al Qaeda's propaganda and credibly argue to large audiences that killing civilians, using WMD,

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[182] *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (2006), p. 9.

[183] Associated Press, "Rumsfeld: U.S. Losing War of Ideas," March 27, 2006, accessed at http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2006/03/27/terror/main1442811.shtml on September 16, 2008.

[184] For a discussion of this development, see Lawrence Wright, "The Rebellion Within," *The New Yorker*, June 2, 2008; Peter Bergen and Paul Cruickshank, "The Unraveling," *The New Republic*, June 11, 2008; and Jarret Brachman, Brian Fishman, and Joseph Felter, "The Power of Truth? Questions for Ayman al-Zawahiri," Combating Terrorism Center, United States Military Academy, 21 April 2008.

[185] Lewis A. Dunn, "Can al Qaeda be Deterred from Using Nuclear Weapons," Occasional Paper No. 3, Center for the Study of Weapons of Mass Destruction, National Defense University, July 2005, p. 11.

and especially using nuclear weapons are all immoral, religiously impermissible acts that harm the very people al Qaeda claims to fight for and prevent the resolution of any legitimate grievances they may have. These intermediaries are allies of a very different sort—nongovernmental organizations, media outlets, grassroots networks, religious leaders, and other groups or individuals with whom the United States may wish to quietly establish strong, possibly long-term relationships in order to disseminate ideas and information that counter al Qaeda's increasingly efficient propaganda operations and undermine its ideological foundations.

In many cases, however, the United States may be better served by working through "middle men," or existing partners like Egypt and Saudi Arabia that will be more adept at identifying the appropriate groups and individuals and will also have far more influence over them. Both states already have a strong incentive to work closely with the United States in this area, because they themselves have suffered at the hands of Islamist terrorists and would be at risk if a group like al Qaeda acquired a nuclear device or any other weapon of mass destruction. Moreover, both nations have demonstrated some success in this area of counterterrorism. For instance, in 1997 the imprisoned leaders of the terrorist organization the Egyptian Islamic Group (IG) unexpectedly proclaimed an end to armed attacks in Egypt and abroad. Eventually, the Egyptian government worked with the group's leaders to disseminate their new message by allowing them to tour the country's detention facilities and give lectures, publishing and distributing books by IG members that explained their rejection of violence and criticized al Qaeda, and by permitting the state-controlled media to cover these developments.[186] Similarly, Saudi Arabia has worked to delegitimize aspects of Salafi-Takfiri ideology through various means: providing counseling and religious "reeducation" programs for imprisoned jihadists, publicly airing testimonials by religious leaders discrediting the doctrinal basis for terrorist activities, and even hiring religious scholars to debate extremists over the Internet.[187]

The United States may be better served by working through "middle men," or existing partners like Egypt and Saudi Arabia.

Intercepting Nuclear Weapons or Material

Ideally, all vulnerable nuclear weapons and material would be locked down and all potential nuclear terrorists could be convinced not to pursue or use these items. Unfortunately, there are no guarantees, even if all possible preventive measures are taken. Prudence dictates, therefore, that the United States have the capability to find and intercept terrorists who might obtain a nuclear weapon or fissile material. In order to succeed at these challenging tasks, at least two things will be required: high quality human intelligence (HUMINT) that will lead to the target, and special operations forces trained to secure "loose nukes," and positioned to respond quickly.

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[186] Omar Ashour, "Lions Tamed? An Inquiry into the Causes of De-Radicalization of Armed Islamist Movements: The Case of the Egyptian Islamic Group," *Middle East Journal*, Autumn 2007, pp. 622–624.

[187] *The Economist*, "The Struggle Against al-Qaeda," October 23, 2008.

As discussed above, intelligence is crucial to preventing terrorist attacks. In the case of nuclear terrorism, HUMINT is particularly vital because locating nuclear weapons and material from any significant distance based on the radiation they emit is nearly impossible, and the terrorists who are most likely to be at the center of a credible nuclear plot—the members of al Qaeda's central leadership—are themselves extremely difficult to identify and locate through technical means such as intercepting electronic communications.[188] Yet al Qaeda (as well as other groups whose members are primarily from the Middle East and South Asia) is also notoriously difficult to penetrate via the cultivation of human sources.[189] One option, then, is for the United States intelligence community to develop closer relationships with groups and individuals who may learn of an attempt to smuggle a nuclear weapon or a significant quantity of fissile material. For example, given the increased use of radiation monitors and other detection methods at ports, border crossings, and other points of entry, terrorists transporting a nuclear device are likely to avoid these chokepoints, instead traveling along poorly-monitored routes used to smuggle drugs or other contraband. By establishing ties with the local authorities, clans, tribes, or even criminal organizations that control or are located along these routes, the United States could increase the odds of locating missing weapons and material.[190]

Once stolen fissile material or a nuclear weapon is located, these items will need to be intercepted before they can be smuggled into the United States and transported to their target. For a variety of reasons, SOF will likely be tasked to conduct the WMD elimination mission if it is discovered that a terrorist group overseas has acquired, constructed, or is in the process of transporting a nuclear device. According to open sources, the only SOF units qualified to seize, disable and secure (render safe) a nuclear weapon belong to Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC), the subordinate command to Special Operations Command (SOCOM) that controls the US military's premier counterterrorism forces, including the Special Military Units (SMUs) Delta Force and Seal Team Six.[191] Ideally, these teams would be able to respond rapidly upon receiving intelligence about a nuclear terrorist threat. In reality, however, the small number of SMU personnel, the high demand for their capabilities in support of ongoing operations in Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere, and the uncertainty over where a threat might emerge all make this unlikely.

Given these factors, increasing the prospects of intercepting nuclear terrorists will require working more closely with allies. In particular, the United States should

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188 Craig Whitlock, "The New Al-Qaeda Central," *Washington Post*, September 9, 2007.

189 Peter Bergen, "Al Qaeda at 20… …Dead or Alive?" *Washington Post*, August 17, 2008. See also Commission on the Intelligence Capabilities of the United States Regarding Weapons of Mass Destruction, Laurence H. Silberman and Charles S. Robb, Co-Chairmen, Report to the President of the United States, March 31, 2005, p. 274.

190 William Langewiesche, "How to Get a Nuclear Bomb," *Atlantic Monthly*, December 2006.

191 See Robert Martinage, *Special Operations Forces* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2008), chap. 1.

consider training and equiping select allies and partners that it trusts to conduct render-safe missions. Should terrorists armed with nuclear weapons be located in or near one of these nations, local forces would be able to respond far more rapidly, and would be in a position to act alone or monitor the situation and reinforce SMU personnel once they arrived. In addition, US forces might also be able to preposition necessary equipment in these countries for use in the event of a crisis, whether in the countries themselves or somewhere in the region. Ultimately, depending on the United States' actual capacity in this area (which is classified), it could even cede primary responsibility for render-safe missions in certain regions to its closest allies. For example, given their status as nuclear-weapon states, Britain and France could play this role in Europe, while their extremely capable special operations forces and close relationships with the United States make Australia and Singapore possible candidates in Southeast Asia. This would allow the United States to concentrate its scarce resources for this mission in other regions where threats are perhaps more likely to emerge and where reliable and capable partners are in short supply, for instance South Asia, Central Asia, and the Persian Gulf.

AVOIDING A PROLIFERATION CHAIN REACTION

The third and final effect of increased nuclear proliferation is, simply, the prospect of further proliferation. That is, the acquisition of nuclear weapons or the development of a "latent" nuclear weapon capability on the part of one or more states could be the catalyst for other states to pursue nuclear weapons.[192] This possibility is one of the chief reasons for opposing additional nuclear proliferation, and is perhaps more worrisome than almost any aggressive action a new nuclear-armed state might take. According to Kurt Campbell, "One of the primary reasons for seeking to block various states...from achieving nuclear status has long been the concern about how such a capacity would affect neighboring states. A rogue state's successful acquisition of a nuclear weapon could trigger a range of potentially destabilizing responses, including the further proliferation of nuclear weapons beyond the rogue."[193] In short, proliferation on the part of some states could trigger an intensified security dilemma or even a competition for prestige and regional influence that may lead others to respond in kind. Voicing these concerns in 2003, then-Director of Central Intelligence George

[192] A latent nuclear weapon capability—sometimes referred to as a "hedging" strategy—would involve acquiring the material, infrastructure, and knowledge to develop nuclear weapons in a relatively short period of time, most importantly the capability to enrich uranium or separate plutonium from spent nuclear fuel, capabilities that are not themselves prohibited by the NPT. See Reiss, "The Nuclear Tipping Point," p. 4; and Ariel E. Levite, "Never Say Never Again: Nuclear Reversal Revisited," *International Security*, Winter 2002/03. Today, for example, the possibility exists that even if Iran wants to acquire nuclear weapons, it may instead settle for a hedging strategy to avoid provoking a hostile response on the part of the United States, Israel, or others in the region.

[193] Kurt M. Campbell, "Reconsidering a Nuclear Future: Why Countries Might Cross over to the Other Side," in *The Nuclear Tipping Point*, pp. 25–26.

Tenet warned the US Senate Intelligence Committee, "The 'domino theory' of the 21st century may well be nuclear."[194]

Today, these fears are most acute with respect to nations in the Middle East and North Africa, many of which have long felt threatened by the regime in Tehran and have recently expressed an interest in developing their own nuclear power capabilities in response to Iran's nuclear program.[195] As King Abdullah II of Jordan observed not long ago, "The rules have changed. Everybody's going for nuclear programs."[196] Although this interest in nuclear power is still nascent and may not constitute a direct proliferation threat if pursued within the confines of the NPT, it could nonetheless have a significant impact on the regional security environment in years to come, especially if Iran ultimately develops nuclear weapons and becomes more aggressive as a result. Looking ahead, the NIC's recent report notes that "A number of states in the region are already thinking about developing or acquiring nuclear technology useful for development of nuclear weaponry. Over the next fifteen to twenty years, reactions to the decisions Iran makes about its nuclear program could cause a number of regional states to intensify these efforts and consider actively pursuing nuclear weapons."[197]

In the worst-case scenario, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Turkey, and perhaps other nations could acquire nuclear weapons or develop the materials and infrastructure needed to produce them sometime in the next two decades.

In the worst-case scenario, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Turkey, and perhaps other nations could acquire nuclear weapons or develop the materials and infrastructure needed to produce them sometime in the next two decades. Under pressure from an Iranian nuclear arsenal or even a Saudi or Egyptian bomb, Israel could also abandon its policy of nuclear ambiguity; the United States would then be confronted with a much more dangerous and volatile region. For example, a number of nations in the Middle East and North Africa have struggled with internal violence and armed opposition groups, which would create an increased possibility for nuclear state failure (and thus US intervention to secure or destroy a nation's nuclear arsenal). The possibility that terrorists could acquire a nuclear weapon or a significant quantity of fissile material would increase as well, especially if new nuclear powers fail to properly secure these items. Moreover, the likelihood of a third nuclear terrorism scenario—the direct transfer of a weapon from a nation to a terrorist group—would increase, perhaps substantially. Although the probability of a direct transfer is currently quite low because of the fear of discovery and retaliation, the greater the number of nuclear powers, the greater

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194 Walter Pincus, "CIA Head Predicts Nuclear Race," *Washington Post*, February 12, 2003.

195 On the nuclear programs of Iran's neighbors and regional fears of proliferation, see "Chain Reaction: Avoiding a Nuclear Arms Race in the Middle East," Report to the Committee on Foreign Relations of the United States Senate, February 2008; and Dalia Dassa Kaye and Frederic M. Wehrey, "A Nuclear Iran: The Reactions of Neighbours," *Survival*, Summer 2007.

196 Quoted in William J. Broad and David E. Sanger, "With an Eye on Iran, Rivals Also Want Nuclear Power," *New York Times*, April 15, 2007.

197 NIC, *Global Trends 2025*, p. 61.

the chance that a rogue regime might believe that it could provide terrorists with a nuclear weapon and still remain anonymous.[198]

Thus, if the United States and the international community fail to stop Iran from developing nuclear weapons or even a latent nuclear weapon capability, a key goal will be to discourage other states in the region from following suit. According to some analysts, the limited technical infrastructure of states like Saudi Arabia, the significant leverage the United States has over its regional partners, and Turkey's existing security guarantee through its membership in NATO should be sufficient to prevent any further proliferation.[199] Another option, however, especially for those who believe that Iran's neighbors will not allow its nuclear program to go unanswered, is to extend a formal security commitment and perhaps even the US nuclear "umbrella" to prospective nuclear powers in the region—including Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the Gulf states, and, according to one proposal, Israel—or to the region as a whole.[200] In fact, during her campaign for the presidency Secretary of State Hillary Clinton advocated the extension of a US security guarantee to most of the Middle East.[201]

If the United States and the international community fail to stop Iran from developing nuclear weapons or even a latent nuclear weapon capability, a key goal will be to discourage other states in the region from following suit.

Doing so would obviously entail a significant expansion of US alliances in the region, which may be warranted in this case. There is little doubt that US alliance commitments have in the past discouraged allies from pursuing nuclear weapons, and the strength of those commitments remains an essential restraining factor on potential nuclear powers.[202] Such a critical decision should not be taken lightly, however, and requires significant deliberation within government and consultation with allies abroad. There are unanswered questions, for example, as to whether a US commit-

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198 As the NIC's report concludes, "If the number of nuclear-capable states increases, so will the number or countries potentially willing to provide nuclear assistance to other countries or to terrorists. The potential for theft or diversion of weapons, materials, and technology... also would rise." Ibid., p. 63.

199 See, for example, Barry Posen, "We Can Live with a Nuclear Iran," *New York Times*, February 27, 2006. In the case of Saudi Arabia, however, the possibility exists that Riyadh could use its close relationship with Islamabad to acquire a nuclear weapon or the components and material needed to make one, or that Pakistan could extend its own nuclear umbrella and perhaps even station some of its own nuclear forces in Saudi Arabia as a deterrent to Iran. "Chain Reaction," pp. 12,20.

200 Variations of this proposal have been suggested in Christopher Layne, "Who Lost Iraq and Why it Matters: The Case for Offshore Balancing," *World Policy Journal*, Fall 2007, pp. 43–44; Elizabeth Bakanic, Mark Christopher, Sandya Das, Laurie Freeman, George Hodgson, Mike Hunzeker, R. Scott Kemp, Sung Hwan Lee, Florentina Mulaj, and Ryan Phillips, *Preventing Nuclear Proliferation Chain Reactions: Japan, South Korea, and Egypt*, Woodrow Wilson School, Princeton University, January 2008, p. 21; and Bruce Riedel and Gary Samore, "Managing Nuclear Proliferation in the Middle East," in Richard N. Haass and Martin S. Indyk, eds., *Restoring the Balance: A Middle East Strategy for the Next President* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2008), pp.116–117. For a skeptical view of the United States' willingness to extend these commitments and their potential effectiveness, see Kurt M. Campbell and Robert J. Einhorn, "Avoiding the Nuclear Tipping Point: Concluding Observations," in *The Nuclear Tipping Point*, p. 334; and NIC, *Global Trends 2025*, p. 62.

201 "Transcript: Democratic Debate in Philadelphia," April 16, 2008, accessed at http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/16/us/politics/16text-debate.html on October 5, 2008.

202 Campbell and Einhorn, "Avoiding the Tipping Point: Concluding Observations," p. 321.

ment would even be credible and, if not, what it would take to make it so.[203] Moreover, most existing proposals are vague as to which nations would receive this commitment, whether it would apply only to a nuclear attack or to conventional and irregular attacks as well, whether it would apply only to aggression perpetrated by Iran or by other nations inside (or perhaps outside) the region, and by what means the United States would retaliate. Answering these questions and fully understanding the implications of those answers is a necessary first step before expanding and deepening US alliances in the region.

SUMMARY

Further nuclear proliferation could create a number of strategic and operational dilemmas for the United States, but the increased possibility of conducting military operations against a nuclear-armed opponent, the increased chance that terrorists might acquire and use a nuclear weapon, and the prospect of a proliferation "chain reaction" in the Middle East stand out as the three most worrisome potential developments. With regard to the first dilemma, the United States must be prepared to act without support from other nations, as allies facing the possibility of a nuclear reprisal are unlikely to consent to the use of their territory for military operations, which is perhaps the most vital contribution they could make. To address the threat of nuclear terrorism, however, allied support will be crucial. Not only must the United States work as closely as possible with Russia and Pakistan to ensure the security of their nuclear weapons and fissile material stockpiles, it should also consider the necessary training, joint exercises, and technology transfers that would allow nations like Britain, France, Australia, Singapore, and possibly others to reliably interdict and render safe a nuclear device, to help compensate for the simple fact that US Special Operations Forces cannot be everywhere. Finally, preventing a spiral of proliferation in the Middle East will be a critical goal if Iran's nuclear program continues to progress, and especially if Tehran develops nuclear weapons. Yet the need to do so raises the possibility of the most significant expansion of US alliance obligations since the start of the Cold War. Although explicitly committing to retaliate against Iran may ultimately be the best or only way to convince its neighbors to forgo nuclear weapons themselves, this option should not be pursued until it has been examined in much more depth than has been the case thus far.

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[203] Kathleen J. McInnis, "Extended Deterrence: The U.S. Credibility Gap in the Middle East," *The Washington Quarterly*, Summer 2005.

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CONCLUSION

Given the challenges it now confronts and those appearing on the horizon, it seems clear that the United States will need the support of allies and partners far more over the next two decades than it has over the past twenty years. Although this monograph has offered one perspective on the role America's allies can and should play in countering the threat of radical Islamist extremism, hedging against the rise of China, and preparing for a more proliferated world, implementing these recommendations will not be easy. The current security environment is extremely complex; unlike the Soviet threat during the Cold War, there are few clear fault lines that divide friends from enemies. Instead, today's environment is characterized by crosscutting areas of conflict and cooperation that will make alliances more difficult to establish and maintain. As Richard Haass has argued, "it will become harder to classify other countries as allies or adversaries; they will cooperate on some issues and resist on others."[204] Moreover, alliances that help to address one challenge may end up exacerbating others. For example, a closer partnership between the United States and India could prove extremely useful in combating terrorism and shaping (or, if necessary, containing) China's rise. Yet by recognizing India as a nuclear-weapon state outside of the NPT, the agreement reached to cement this new relationship may have harmed the cause of nonproliferation. At the same time, while guarding against the possibility of an aggressive China should be one of the main factors influencing US alliance decisions, the United States may still require China's help in areas such as nonproliferation and, to a lesser extent, counterterrorism. Ultimately, balancing these countervailing demands may be one of the most daunting challenges the new administration will face.

[204] Richard N. Haass, "The Age of Nonpolarity: What Will Follow U.S. Dominance," *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2008, p. 56.

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