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A New

Division of Labor

Meeting America's Security Challenges Beyond Iraq

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Summary

In January 2005, George W. Bush took the oath of office for his second term as President. In his inaugural address, Bush pledged his administration to “seek and support the growth of democratic movements in every nation and culture, with the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in the world.” In so doing, he echoed a widely held sentiment that, over the long run, safeguarding America against extremism and tyranny will require a national commitment to fostering democracy, stability, and prosperity in other societies.

In a sense, this is a natural, almost reflexive American response to a threat to core U.S. interests. The spread of democracy and freedom has been a prominent feature of American policy and culture since the founding of the republic. It had been a key theme of nearly every 20th-century president and, in fact, animated Wilson and Roosevelt as they sought to shape the outcomes of the two great wars of that century. Moreover, it was a theme that motivated Bush’s immediate predecessors, particularly William Clinton, and led to American support for emerging democracies in Latin America, East Asia, and South Africa, as well as American military involvement in such places as the Balkans.

But, in another sense, it represents a sharp departure for American foreign and security policy in that this administration has demonstrated a willingness not only to stand up to America’s foes but also discomfit its friends. In pursuit of this strategy since September 11, 2001, the United States has demonstrated a willingness, in some cases, to create near-term instability to secure longer-term goals.

This expansive strategy has important implications for the entire national security establishment, and diplomats and soldiers alike are adapting to new demands and seeking to define new roles. Should the nation continue to pursue the broad contours of this strategy, if not some of the specific applications—and we believe that there is every evidence that it will²—the institutions of government will, of necessity, change and adapt, much as they did when America accepted new global responsibilities at the end of World War II.

A New Grand Strategy?

Just as in the late 1940s, when it took the emergence of a clear and compelling threat—Soviet expansionism backed by powerful military forces—to induce the United States to shake off its tradition of isolationism and adopt the strategy of containment, so too did the shock of 9/11 prompt this nation to put forth a far-reaching and ambitious national security strategy. That strategy, the centerpiece of which is promoting democracy and freedom abroad, is the necessary response to conditions that can breed serious threats to the security of Americans worldwide. Although this strategy has roots in all post–Cold War administrations, it has been given clearest expression by the current administration in the wake of 9/11. As a consensus forms around the idea that the United States and its allies must work to extend the reach of democracy and freedom, this strategy could come to be recognized as the long-awaited replacement for containment. (See pp. 3–7.)

The strategy is nothing if not ambitious. Pursuing this strategy in earnest will require the United States and its partners to marshal substantial levels of resources and to apply them with patience and commitment. It will require the energy of the public and private sectors and a renewed focus on diplomacy, education, outreach, and assis-

² In judging that the nation will continue on this path for the foreseeable future, we also recognize that different leaders will interpret this strategy in different ways. Just as “containment” was modified and adapted over the long years of the Cold War, so too will the strategy to promote democracy and freedom take different forms.

tance. It will also call for the involvement of, and significant changes to, America's armed forces.

Conflict in the Post Post–Cold War World

A new and expansive strategy, along with challenges posed by adversaries of the United States and its allies, will place daunting demands on America's military forces. Three in particular present novel and stern challenges to the armed forces of the United States:

- **Terrorist and insurgent groups.** Poverty, weak governance, and conflicts over identity have helped to create conditions that terrorists and insurgents can exploit. The spread of technological know-how related to means of killing—ranging from powerful explosive devices to biological and, ultimately, nuclear weapons—is giving small groups the means to kill thousands. By harnessing militant interpretations of Islam to new means of violence, al Qaeda and related groups have created a virulent threat that all responsible states must act to defeat. (See pp. 14–15.)
- **Regional powers with nuclear weapons.** Such states as North Korea and Iran appear determined to acquire nuclear weapons. Indeed, it is possible that North Korea already possesses a limited number of nuclear weapons. They and others, including terrorist organizations, have access to a worldwide supply chain that is not entirely under the control of states. If such adversaries succeed in fielding deliverable nuclear weapons, the implications for regional stability and the security of U.S. allies will be highly troubling. In the short run, the U.S. armed forces will face a challenge in posturing themselves appropriately for such contingencies in a way that reassures U.S. allies of its commitment to their security. In the long run, the challenge for this and future administrations will be coupling the appropriate military posture with a long-term political framework for evolving these societies toward democracy, stability, and integration into regional security structures. (See pp. 16–19.)

- **Military competition in Asia.** Arguably, U.S. forces can prevail over the conventional forces of any nation, provided the full panoply of U.S. capabilities can be brought to bear. Recognizing this, regional adversaries are focusing their military investments on capabilities that can be used to impede U.S. forces from getting to the fight. China, with its burgeoning economy and growing technological sophistication, is fielding the most impressive set of such capabilities. They include advanced air defenses; numerous systems for attacking surface ships; antisatellite weapons; and, most troublingly, large numbers of accurate, long-range strike systems, principally conventionally armed ballistic and cruise missiles. These weapons not only can keep U.S. expeditionary forces at bay for significant periods but also be used to coerce and intimidate the leadership of Taiwan and other states in the region. The challenge here, again, will be coupling an appropriate military posture vis-à-vis China with a long-term effort to integrate it into the international system as a stable, responsible power. (See pp. 19–24.)

Meeting These Challenges

These developments carry several implications for U.S. defense planners:

- First, a substantial and sustained level of effort to suppress terrorist and insurgent groups abroad is essential if the nation is to make headway against the threats they pose.³ For DoD, this will sometimes take the form of direct action to locate and capture or kill terrorists and insurgents. Far more often, it will involve undertaking indirect actions, principally long-term, “hands-on” efforts to train, equip, advise, and assist the forces of nations that seek to suppress these groups in their own territories. (See pp 28–31.)

³ We recognize that not all fragile states will invite terrorists and that not all terrorist struggles are insurgencies in character.

- Related to this, U.S. forces will be called on to help bring stability and security to nations struggling to implement democratic reforms. This will involve providing support to defeat internal threats and shoring up regional security to cope with external enemies. (See pp. 31–33.)
- To sustain deterrence against hostile regional states and, in the future, to counter nonstate adversaries, U.S. forces must develop and field far more effective means for locating and destroying or otherwise defending against nuclear weapons and their means of delivery. (See pp. 33–35.)
- U.S. forces must also ensure that they can overcome modern anti-access weapons and methods. Of particular urgency is the need for highly effective, wide-area defenses against theater ballistic missiles. Cruise missiles also are a concern. (See pp. 36–38.)

America's new strategy, combined with daunting challenges emanating from states and nonstate adversaries, will impose new demands on U.S. armed forces. These demands will stress our forces both qualitatively (by creating needs for new types of capabilities) and quantitatively (calling for high and sustained levels of commitment abroad). At the same time, fiscal realities are placing strict limits on the resources available not only for defense but also for important related activities, such as counterproliferation initiatives, international development assistance, and public diplomacy. This combination of an ambitious strategy, a dynamic and challenging threat environment, and tightly constrained resources creates a profound dilemma for military strategists and force planners. How might these factors be reconciled?

Recasting U.S. Defense Strategy

DoD first needs to define a defense strategy that embraces the goal of extending the reach of democracy and freedom. This will not, in our estimation, necessarily involve more instances of forcible regime change along the lines of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Rather, it means placing far more emphasis than heretofore on helping to create or enhance sta-

bility in key areas abroad so that governments can effectively control their own territories. We refer to this as *stability operations*, by which we mean both direct counterinsurgency and other irregular operations by U.S. forces and, more importantly and more often, indirect efforts to train, equip, and advise allied indigenous forces. Practically speaking, this means that the force sizing criterion posited by the defense strategy of 2001—"1-4-2-1"—should be recast.⁴ Specifically, the nation will no longer be able to limit its day-to-day activities and posture to only the four regions in which it is deemed to have important geopolitical interests, as classically defined: Europe, Northeast Asia, the East Asian littoral, and the Middle East and Southwest Asia. It is now clear that such seemingly remote areas as Afghanistan, Sudan, the Horn of Africa, the Sahel, Central Asia, the Philippines, and Indonesia can gestate serious threats not only to regional peace and stability but also to American security interests. In fact, the number of places in which U.S. and allied forces might be called on to engage in promoting stability, democracy, and military competence is indeterminate. Thus, in our assessment, "4" has, of necessity, become "n."⁵

At the same time, the familiar missions of deterring aggression, redressing imbalances in military power, and defeating aggression through large-scale power-projection operations have not diminished in importance. In fact, these missions are, in many ways, becoming more challenging. Protecting U.S. national interests in Southwest Asia, East Asia, and elsewhere will demand that U.S. forces, in conjunction

⁴ The criterion that became known as "1-4-2-1" directed the armed forces to be prepared simultaneously to defend the United States (1), deter aggression and coercion in four critical regions (4), and swiftly defeat aggression in two overlapping conflicts (2), while preserving the option to impose a change of regime in one of the conflicts (1). It also stated that the forces were to be able to conduct a limited number of smaller-scale contingency operations. For further elaboration, see DoD (2001).

⁵ DoD, in its 2006 *Quadrennial Defense Review Report*, has recognized this, stating that U.S. forces must be structured and postured to operate on a sustained basis "around the globe and not only in and from the four regions called out in the 2001 QDR" (see DoD, 2006, p. 36). DoD has not, however, indicated how forces should be configured for these operations or where the capacity to sustain them will come from. For purposes of force planning, DoD should designate a rotation base of forces capable of sustaining roughly 50 "train, equip, and advise" missions of various size and duration worldwide (see Chapter Five).

with those of our allies, remain able to defeat the forces of adversary states in more than one region. This is critically important not only to credibly deter our adversaries but also to assure our allies and partners. Needless to say, U.S. forces must also do whatever is necessary to protect the United States itself. (See pp. 41–45.)

The question then becomes whether and how DoD can support a demanding “1-n-2-1” criterion for sizing and shaping the armed forces of the United States.

A New Division of Labor

The first thing to recognize is that the demands of “1-n-2-1” need not apply equally to every branch of the armed forces. The imperative to promote stability and democracy abroad will place the greatest demands on America’s ground forces—the Army and the Marine Corps—and special operations forces (SOF). Air and naval forces can make important contributions to these missions, principally in the areas of intelligence, lift, base operating support or offshore bases, and humanitarian support. But by and large, these missions call for substantial commitments of ground forces to work directly with their host-country counterparts. By the same token, the most plausible major combat operations that U.S. forces might be called on to fight in the coming years—involving Iran, China (over Taiwan), and North Korea—call for heavy commitments of air and naval forces and, in the first two cases, smaller numbers of U.S. ground forces.

Given limited resources, including limited numbers of available personnel, the nation’s leaders face a choice of where to apportion risk: Either they can continue to ask U.S. ground forces to prepare for major wars and risk a diminished ability to operate effectively in direct and indirect stability operations, or they can focus a much larger proportion of U.S. ground forces on such missions and accept the risk of shifting some of the burden for large force-on-force contingencies to air and naval forces. Given the demands of America’s new strategy, the certainty of the need for a sustained level of effort against terrorist and insurgent groups, and recent advances in the ability to use pre-

cision firepower to shape the battlefield to the ground commander's advantage, we suggest that DoD's leaders consider the latter course. Such a decision would permit the Army and Marine Corps, in conjunction with SOF, to improve their stability operations capabilities qualitatively and quantitatively by relieving these two services of the requirement to provide forces for more than one major war. Taking this step would help keep overall demands on the forces of these two services manageable. Equally important, it would also permit substantial portions of both services to optimize training, doctrine, and equipment on the development of forces for manpower-intensive operations now demanded by America's new strategy. Under this construct, the Navy and Air Force would retain their primary focus on large-scale power-projection operations, although both services will be called on to provide essential enabling capabilities for direct and indirect stability operations. Both will also need to place much greater emphasis on defeating enemies armed with nuclear weapons and with more sophisticated antiaccess capabilities than have heretofore been encountered. (See pp. 45–47.)

Potential Actions

The foregoing considerations suggest that DoD's leaders should consider the following actions to bring America's defense capabilities into better alignment with the nation's new strategy:

- **Recast U.S. defense strategy to incorporate “1-n-2-1” as its force sizing construct.** Relieve the Army and Marine Corps of the requirement to provide forces for more than one major combat operation at a time. Bringing stability to troubled nations, training and advising the forces of other countries, and conducting effective operations against insurgents and terrorists are important, complex, and politically charged missions. A greater level of effort is called for here if we and our allies are to make lasting progress against global terrorist threats. The accumulation of recent experience suggests that these missions cannot be done well

by forces whose primary focus is large-scale combat. Changes in the nature of the threats regional adversaries pose will allow DoD to reduce the level of ground forces it plans to commit to major combat operations. (See pp. 40–45.)

- **Complete the transition of the joint command structure.** Regional commanders need to remain focused on strategic matters, including achieving strategic victory in areas where U.S. forces are engaged. To allow them to do so, more, and more effective, joint task force headquarters are needed for running ongoing operations. Ongoing efforts in this regard at U.S. Joint Forces Command should be buttressed. Moreover, the joint division of labor among regional commands, global commands, and military services and supporting agencies should be clarified. The concept of a division of labor among users, managers, and providers may be useful in guiding this effort. (See pp. 52–55.)
- **Complete the effort to realign U.S. global military posture; reevaluate that posture regularly.** The overseas posture of U.S. military forces and bases should directly reflect broader U.S. strategy. That is not the case today. Forces and facilities will need to be realigned to support new democracies, counter terrorist and insurgent groups, deter and defeat regional adversaries, and dissuade military competition in Asia. Current plans for adjusting the global basing structure should be implemented and reevaluated regularly to ensure that U.S. strategy and posture remain in proper alignment. (See pp. 47–50.)
- **Increase investments in promising systems for surveillance and reconnaissance.** U.S. defense planners should aspire to put an end to the situation in which sensor systems and the means to interpret the information they acquire are chronically “low-density, high-demand” assets. And efforts should be made to accelerate the development of new systems better suited to finding such targets as mobile missiles, nuclear weapons, and small groups of armed combatants. (See pp. 61–64.)

But realigning the defense strategy and reallocating risk alone will not provide the needed results. New partnerships need to be formed

(and old ones need to be strengthened); new capabilities need to be developed; and new competencies need to be cultivated. These include the following:

- **Foster new and stronger partnerships among the military services to achieve greater strategic and operational depth and joint tactical proficiency.** Even as diversification among military services and agencies is required to support U.S. strategy, new interdependencies need to be forged. We view this as something akin to brokering a new set of partnerships among the military services. The process will be difficult, but in our judgment it is essential. (See pp. 55–57.)
 - **Partnership 1: Develop and implement plans for air and land forces to train for and to conduct highly integrated operations.** To become more strategically deployable and agile on the battlefield, the Army is reducing its organic artillery and increasingly relying on air-delivered fires. Recent operations have demonstrated the potential of this concept, but it is far from established as a new way of war. Realistic air-ground exercises and training are rare, and procedures for controlling and integrating air operations and ground maneuver are outdated. The services need to see themselves as mutually enabling partners. Regular joint training, new fire-control mechanisms (including investments in new gear for tactical air controllers), and cultural changes will be necessary to realize the potential of the air-ground partnership. (See pp. 76–80.)
 - **Partnership 2: Foster much tighter links among air, naval, and space forces to create a more-durable, more-effective power-projection force.** Without better integrating the capabilities of America’s air, naval, and space forces, the U.S. military runs the risk of not having an effective power-projection capability against adversaries with ballistic and cruise missiles, advanced air defenses, and perhaps nuclear weapons. Forging robust links will require more routine training and the development of common command-and-control procedures and mechanisms. (See pp. 80–88.)

- **Partnership 3: Promote a more-seamless integration between the Marine Corps and SOF.** Just as the Marine Corps could give SOF more depth by providing combined-arms support for sensitive SOF missions, so too could the Marine Corps give SOF more reach by expanding the area and frequency of routine SOF missions and activities. These two branches have much in common, and they should exploit the exceptional qualities of both. This implies less focus on the Marine Corps’ traditional amphibious missions and much more openness in the SOF community to cooperating with another military branch. (See pp. 89–92.)
- **Pursue an aggressive effort to develop and produce more-effective defenses against theater ballistic missiles and cruise missiles.** These weapons, whether armed with accurate conventional warheads or nuclear weapons, pose grave obstacles to U.S. power-projection operations. Indeed, for the first time since the conclusion of the Cold War, the United States faces the prospect that its forces could be defeated or excluded from the fight. Large concentrations of troops and materiel within range of enemy missiles will be at great risk. And it may prove impossible to mount effective combat operations from even hardened fixed bases within range of these weapons. Because of the importance of protecting the civilian populations and infrastructures of allied nations, special emphasis should be placed on developing concepts for layered theater missile defenses that are effective over wide areas. Truly effective defenses will require the fielding of larger numbers of existing theater missile defense systems (e.g., the Theater High-Altitude Area Defense and the Navy’s SM-3) and one or more additional “layers” of active defense. (See pp. 83–85.)
- **Greatly expand the capacity and competence of forces devoted to combat advisory and training missions.** New democracies and friendly nations threatened by insurgent and terrorist groups will look to the United States for assistance. It is neither desirable nor feasible to send U.S. ground forces routinely to fight other countries’ insurgencies. Rather, the most effective means for DoD to counter terrorist and insurgent groups abroad is to train, equip,

advise, and assist the forces of friendly governments. The United States already possesses first-rate combat advisors and trainers in all the services, but their numbers are small, resources are limited, and activities are greatly restricted. Substantial portions of the “regular” forces must contribute to this vital mission. Although the largest number of advisors will likely come from the Army and Marine Corps, the advisory capabilities of the Navy and Air Force need to expand as well. Expanded foreign area officer programs in the services are essential to develop the language and cultural understanding necessary to be effective advisors. (See pp. 68–73, 86–87, 92–96.)

Finally, specific entities within DoD will need to adopt different approaches, develop new or refined capabilities, and cultivate new talents. But these changes will likely need outside intervention to “jump start” the activity. We have highlighted the most important of these changes, including the following:

- **Direct the Army to explore creating distinct elements within its tactical structure. One element would specialize in conventional warfighting operations, and the other would specialize in stability, support, and advisory operations.** Resource constraints and limitations on the ability of soldiers to master and maintain widely divergent skill sets make it impossible for the Army to fully prepare its entire tactical structure for both conventional warfighting and stability operations. By bifurcating its tactical structure, the Army would free the units assigned conventional missions to prepare more fully for warfighting operations and would free the units assigned to stability operations to prepare more fully for these difficult missions. The result would be that the Army as a whole would become more proficient at both. (See pp. 68–71.)
- **Direct the Army to create doctrine and a professional military education curriculum that emphasize stability operations.** Current doctrine and curriculum focus on conventional warfighting to the near exclusion of stability operations. This imbalance should be corrected by balancing capstone and operational-level

doctrine equally between warfighting and stability operations. Tactical doctrine and training literature will likely need to be bifurcated by mission as well. (See pp. 73–75.)

- **Direct the Air Force to reevaluate its concepts for large-scale power-projection operations, assessing in particular the implications for its mix of long- and short-range platforms.** The Air Force’s planned investments in new combat aircraft implicitly reflect the belief that forces will be able to deploy forward and conduct high-tempo operations from air bases in the theater of conflict. Such assumptions seem increasingly untenable. A platform mix that increases emphasis on long-range platforms for surveillance and strike would provide commanders more options for basing aircraft in locales less threatened by attack from enemy missiles. It would also provide more “battle space,” allowing defensive systems more opportunities to engage incoming missiles. Longer-range platforms would also be better suited to providing enduring, responsive information and fire support to joint forces on battlefields where enemy forces are less likely to be massed and more likely to be encountered episodically. (See pp. 85–88.)
- **Help rebuild the nation’s intelligence system—and, by implication, DoD’s intelligence capabilities—by focusing first and foremost on the human dimension.** New sensors, platforms, and technologies are vital to answering the challenges of the future security environment—and we believe that a thorough reassessment of investment priorities is needed. However, above all, enabling decisionmakers at the tactical, operational, and strategic levels demands properly trained and experienced people throughout the collection, assessment, and dissemination chain. Especially within the four military services, more people are needed with the skills to understand the political and social dynamics in troubled regions. And institutional incentives must be put in place to create satisfying career paths that encourage and reward professionalism. (See pp. 61–64.)
- **Direct U.S. air forces to train more frequently with SOF and the ground forces of friendly nations.** In most cases, U.S. involvement in counterinsurgency operations will be limited to advising,

equipping, and training. Where the threat is particularly great or host-nation capabilities are limited, the U.S. may want to provide direct operational support. Because a large or highly visible presence can undermine the credibility of the government the United States seeks to support, direct support must have a minimal footprint. U.S. air forces can provide critical surveillance, strike, and lift support in low-key ways, flying from remote bases or even from outside the assisted country. When combined with competent local ground forces, U.S. air forces can be extremely effective against insurgents. To be effective working with local forces, selected elements from U.S. air forces will need to train with U.S. SOF, U.S. Air Force terminal attack controllers, and allied ground forces on a regular basis. (See pp. 88–89.)

Finally, while striving to fix what is broken, DoD should be careful not to break what is fixed. The U.S. armed forces are the most powerful and successful in the world, perhaps in history. Their dominance of the conventional “force on force” battlefield is so overwhelming that it has, among other things, rendered a whole class of historically troubling scenarios—massed cross-border aggression by large, armored forces—largely obsolete. Maintaining appropriate levels of the capabilities that created this situation is critically important. Continued, selective investment in the areas in which the United States currently enjoys “overmatch” will be needed alongside the new initiatives required to address the nation’s emerging security problems.