Preparing for Major Challenges to National Security
ARROYO CENTER 2016–2017
For 70 years, the RAND Corporation has worked side by side with government as a trusted adviser. Through high-quality, objective research and the development of sophisticated analytic tools, RAND researchers from diverse disciplines and perspectives collaborate to create strategies and solutions to keep our nation strong.
Dear Soldiers and Leaders,

We created this brief document to address GEN Mark Milley’s top priority: readiness. The document provides answers to the inevitable question, ready for what?

Here you will find overviews of a wide range of recent analyses addressing four major threats to U.S. national security:
• Russia: resurgent, aggressive, and innovative
• North Korea: unpredictable, bellicose, and nuclear-capable
• the Middle East: chronically afflicted by mutating conflicts
• China: intent on expanding its regional hegemony and global presence.

Complicating the U.S. Army’s readiness challenge is the fact that each threat is unique and carries distinctive implications. The analyses highlighted in this document assess the challenges that each threat presents and delineate steps that should be taken to meet the challenges, not only by the Army but also by the nation and by its international partners.

The first set of analyses focuses on how to confront the Russian challenge. Russia will remain a major national security challenge for the foreseeable future. Because of Russia’s aggressive actions in Crimea, Ukraine, and Syria, its relations with the United States and NATO are at a low point. While relations sour, Russia’s military capabilities grow increasingly formidable, eroding assumptions about broad U.S. overmatch that have long underpinned U.S. plans and strategies for potential large-scale ground warfare in Europe. Many rounds of RAND wargaming sponsored by the Army have demonstrated NATO’s vulnerability to a rapid Russian attack through the Baltics. RAND’s recent studies on Russia, grounded in research capital created over decades, focus on these dynamic developments and their implications for the United States.

The second set of analyses focuses on dangerous scenarios that are possible on the Korean peninsula. The United States urgently needs to reformulate strategy and plans as North Korea’s nuclear capabilities increase. North Korea is rapidly building a significant nuclear arsenal and the means to deliver those weapons—including long-range ballistic missiles. Although the United States and South Korea have avoided escalations in response to North Korea’s provocations, there remain many feasible paths to major contingencies in response to North Korea’s provocations, there remain many feasible paths to major contingencies that would involve large-scale military operations by U.S. forces, particularly Army ground forces. RAND has developed a deep body of research on North Korea’s nuclear and other military capabilities and their implications for U.S. policy.
The third set of analyses is introduced by a short essay, “Protecting U.S. Interests in the Middle East,” that focuses on how the Army can expect its long-standing missions in that region to evolve. The Army will have major responsibilities in the campaign to finish off ISIL as a geographically coherent foe. After the defeat of ISIL, the Army should plan to continue its contributions to counterterrorism operations and to long-term U.S. efforts to build partner capacity. The Army must also be prepared to play a role in military dealings with Iran. In all of these endeavors, success or victory in the traditional military sense may be elusive.

The fourth set of analyses is introduced by a short essay, “Conflict with China Revisited,” that focuses chiefly on how U.S. strategy should change as Chinese military prowess and ambition increase. To avoid war with China, the United States needs to shift its strategy to emphasize deterrence by punishment rather than deterrence by denial. The nation needs to look more to nonmilitary options, such as resistance and persuasion—though not economic warfare. It should also strengthen its network of diplomatic relationships with China and engage early with China on potential flash points. The Army has important roles to play in this strategic shift, both in strengthening contacts with the Chinese military leadership and in helping to build the capacity of existing and prospective partners in the region that share concerns about an expansionist China.

Each of these threats is complex and continually evolving. RAND devotes large, ongoing streams of research to understand and anticipate threats to national security, fulfilling its now 70-year commitment to enhancing the public welfare and security of the United States. Many of these threat analyses are sponsored by the Army and conducted by RAND Arroyo Center as the Army’s federally funded research and development center (FFRDC) for studies and analysis.

The four threats focused on in this document, though critically important, compose only part of the Army’s challenges to be ready. These threats also represent only a fraction of the challenges that Army leadership asks us to address. The document closes with a survey of recent analyses conducted by RAND, grouped into four broad categories:

- the international security environment
- fundamental changes in the character of war
- attributes the United States needs in its Army
- making the institution of the U.S. Army more effective and efficient.

Please contact me if you wish to receive information on any of the analyses conducted by Arroyo. Reports are available for free to U.S. Army soldiers and leaders.

Thank you for your service, and for helping RAND Arroyo Center help the U.S. Army and the nation it serves.

With best regards,

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Confronting the Russian Challenge

Russia will remain a major national security challenge for the foreseeable future. In the past decade, Russia has revamped its military, invaded two neighboring countries, intervened on behalf of President Bashar al-Assad in Syria, and threatened NATO with nuclear saber rattling, aerial incursions, and military exercises. Since its invasion of Ukraine in 2014, Russia’s relations with the United States and NATO have plummeted to a post–Cold War nadir. In response, the United States and the European Union have imposed economic sanctions; excluded Russia from major diplomatic forums, such as the G8; and bolstered NATO’s defenses against Russia in Central Europe.

The military challenge represented by Russia is particularly germane for the U.S. Army: Russia’s ground forces constitute the paramount near-peer competitor against which the Army must benchmark its current and planned capabilities for land warfare. The speed and prowess of the Russian military were demonstrated in an unclassified RAND wargame focused on a Russian attack in the Baltics.¹ In multiple scenarios, Russian ground forces reached the outskirts of Riga, Latvia, and Tallin, Estonia, in no more than 60 hours (see map). NATO has inadequate forward defense to slow such an attack should it occur; the bulk of NATO forces in the defense is lodged around the capitals. Rapid operational defeat of NATO’s eastern flank would pose an intractable strategic conundrum for U.S. and NATO heads of state. Response options would risk nuclear escalation or NATO collapse.

RAND research on contending with Russia is deep and extensive and has been sustained for decades. Current major streams of analysis focus on understanding Russian military capabilities and strategy; strengthening strategic stability through a combination of deterrence, arms control, transparency, and other measures; supporting Ukraine, Georgia, and other U.S. partners; communicating with Russia; and reinforcing NATO’s deterrence and defense capabilities.

Assessing Russian Reactions to U.S. and NATO Posture Enhancements
www.rand.org/t/RR1879
RAND researchers develop a framework to assess likely Russian reactions to ongoing and proposed NATO posture enhancements in Europe to help policymakers determine the utility and advisability of different options.

European Relations with Russia
Threat Perceptions, Responses, and Strategies in the Wake of the Ukrainian Crisis
www.rand.org/t/RR1579
This report examines how European states perceive Russia’s behavior in eastern and northern Europe and whether they regard Russian policy and behavior in these regions as an important security priority.

False Alarms, True Dangers?
Current and Future Risks of Inadvertent U.S.-Russian Nuclear War
www.rand.org/t/PE191
This Perspective synthesizes the literature on how misinterpretations could lead to a nuclear strike, by either U.S. or Russian forces, and identifies measures that both nations can take to reduce the probability of an inadvertent nuclear conflict.

Friends, Foes, and Future Directions
U.S. Partnerships in a Turbulent World
www.rand.org/t/RR1210
This report, the third in RAND’s Strategic Rethink series, evaluates three broad strategies for dealing with U.S. partners and adversaries in Europe, Asia, and the Middle East in a time of diminishing defense budgets and an American public preference for a domestic focus. The three strategies are to be more assertive, to be more collaborative, and to retrench from international commitments.

Hybrid Warfare in the Baltics
Threats and Potential Responses
www.rand.org/t/RR1577
This report analyzes the threat of hybrid warfare—deniable and covert actions, supported by the threat or use of conventional or nuclear forces, to influence the domestic politics of target countries—to the Baltic nations, focusing on three types of potential Russian aggression: nonviolent subversion, covert violent action, and conventional warfare supported by subversion.

Lessons from Russia’s Operations in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine
www.rand.org/t/RR1498
This report assesses the annexation of Crimea by Russia (February to March 2014) and the early phases of political mobilization and combat operations in eastern Ukraine (late February to late May 2014). The report examines Russia’s approach, draws inferences from Moscow’s intentions, and evaluates the likelihood of such methods being used again elsewhere.

Limiting Regret
Building the Army We Will Need
www.rand.org/t/RR1320
This report addresses the U.S. Army capacity needed to help the nation achieve high-level national security interests and mitigate important risks, focusing on three specific examples, including the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Maintaining Arctic Cooperation with Russia
Planning for Regional Change in the Far North
www.rand.org/t/RR1731
This report examines security challenges that could alter Russia’s current cooperative stance in the Arctic, explores how these could undermine Arctic cooperation, and offers recommendations for the U.S. government to manage risks to cooperation.
NATO Needs a Comprehensive Strategy for Russia
www.rand.org/t/PE143
This Perspective describes two possible strategies for how NATO can respond to Russian actions, notably its continuing intervention in Ukraine: (1) punishment and disengagement and (2) resilience and engagement.

NATO’s Northeastern Flank
Emerging Opportunities for Engagement
www.rand.org/t/RR1467
This report examines the implications of the changing security relationship with Russia for the U.S. Air Force and for defense engagement with key allies and partner states in northeastern Europe.

Reinforcing Deterrence on NATO’s Eastern Flank
Wargaming the Defense of the Baltics
www.rand.org/t/RR1253
This report describes the results of a series of wargames conducted between summer 2014 and spring 2015 that examined the shape and probable outcome of a near-term Russian invasion of the Baltic states. The games’ findings were unambiguous: As presently postured, NATO cannot successfully defend the territory of its most exposed members.

Russia and the West After the Ukrainian Crisis
European Vulnerabilities to Russian Pressures
www.rand.org/t/RR1305
This report examines European vulnerabilities to various forms of possible Russian influence, pressure, or coercion.

Russian Foreign Policy in Historical and Current Context
A Reassessment
www.rand.org/t/PE144
This Perspective analyzes sources of Russian foreign policy to help explain Russia’s actions in Ukraine in 2014 and 2015.

Russian Strategy in the Middle East
www.rand.org/t/PE236
This Perspective seeks to identify the important elements of Russian interests in the Middle East beyond Syria, to define the nature of Russian engagement in the region, and to describe the contours of a Russian strategy in the Middle East.

Russian Views of the International Order
www.rand.org/t/RR1826
This report examines Russian views of the international order and identifies core Russian foreign policy interests, including defense of the regime, influence in its neighborhood, and status as a great power.

The Russian Way of Warfare
A Primer
www.rand.org/t/PE231
This Perspective provides a primer on how Russia’s military might fight in the event of a major conflict against a peer or near-peer adversary.

Smarter Power, Stronger Partners, Volume I
Exploiting U.S. Advantages to Prevent Aggression
www.rand.org/t/RR1359
This volume examines trends in military capabilities among potential U.S. adversaries, and the report proposes an alternative way for the United States to secure its interests.

Smarter Power, Stronger Partners, Volume II
Trends in Force Projection Against Potential Adversaries
www.rand.org/t/RR1359z1
This volume describes nine scenarios that test whether the anti-access and area-denial threat to U.S. force projection is growing more severe.

Strengthening Strategic Stability with Russia
www.rand.org/t/PE234
This report analyzes trends in strategic stability between Russia and the United States, examines Russian views on the subject, and assesses current prospects for stemming the erosion of strategic stability between the two countries.

Stretching and Exploiting Thresholds for High-Order War
How Russia, China, and Iran Are Eroding American Influence Using Time-Tested Measures Short of War
www.rand.org/t/RR1003
Russia, China, and Iran use measures short of war to exploit and stretch U.S. thresholds for war to further their strategic ends. This report describes those measures, how nation-states use them, and why U.S. notions of thresholds might be outdated.

The Ukrainian Crisis and European Security
Implications for the United States and U.S. Army
www.rand.org/t/RR903
This report discusses the implications of Russia’s annexation of Crimea and attempt to destabilize eastern Ukraine for European security and the United States, particularly the U.S. Army.

Unconventional Options for the Defense of the Baltic States
The Swiss Approach
www.rand.org/t/PE179
This report examines how key concepts and elements of the decentralized resistance approach that was part of Swiss military strategy during the Cold War could also benefit the defense of the Baltic states.

The United States’ European Phased Adaptive Approach Missile Defense System
Defending Against Iranian Missile Threats Without Diluting the Russian Deterrent
www.rand.org/t/RR957
This report shows that the restructured European Phased Adaptive Approach (EPAA) system can defend against a range of current and future Iranian missile threats and does not pose a threat to Russian intercontinental ballistic missiles. Canceling Phase 4 of the EPAA system has opened a window for the United States and Russia to come together on additional bilateral nuclear arms reduction measures and missile defense cooperation.
North Korea is rapidly building a significant nuclear arsenal and the means to deliver those weapons. Open-source estimates suggest that North Korea might already have enough fissile material to build between 13 and 21 nuclear weapons; by 2020, the country could possess enough for 50 to 100. North Korea can currently deliver nuclear weapons by aircraft or ship and, perhaps soon, by long-range ballistic missiles. It has tested nuclear-capable missiles that could threaten targets across the Pacific Ocean, including the continental United States. Current estimates indicate that a number of these nuclear-tipped missiles—long-range, road-mobile, or submarine-launched—could be operational between 2020 and 2025.

U.S. military policy and strategy with regard to North Korea is particularly salient for the U.S. Army, because it is the largest contributor of American forces forward-stationed in South Korea. Military contingencies involving U.S. forces on the Korean peninsula could arise through several plausible scenarios. South Korea has avoided escalations in response to relatively small provocations by North Korea (see photo). But if South Korea perceives an imminent, major threat from the North, it might preemptively execute its conventional counterforce capabilities against North Korean nuclear and missile facilities, likely leading to counterescalation or even preemption by North Korea. Other paths to combat are also possible. The types of military operations that U.S. forces would undertake would vary by the type of contingency. But in all cases the requirement for ground forces is likely to be large and demanding, both in terms of capacity (force size) and capabilities (force structure). These requirements are further complicated because North Korea possesses a wide range of military capabilities—conventional, nuclear, chemical, and biological.

RAND has developed a deep body of research on North Korea’s nuclear and other military capabilities and their implications for U.S. policy. Current major streams of research focus on the regional security dynamics of the North Korean nuclear threat; the difficulty that South Korea and the United States would have in ending North Korea’s provocations, including artillery attacks; and the challenges of securing North Korean weapons of mass destruction in the event of a regime collapse.
Recent RAND Analyses on North Korea

America’s Security Deficit
Addressing the Imbalance Between Strategy and Resources in a Turbulent World
www.rand.org/t/RR1223
This report, the second in RAND's Strategic Rethink series, analyzes defense options available to the United States in responding to the reemergence of a belligerent Russia, the continued volatility exhibited by a nuclear-armed North Korea, growing Chinese military power and assertiveness, and other threats to U.S. security and interests.

The Challenge of North Korean Biological Weapons
www.rand.org/t/CT401
This testimony was presented before the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Intelligence, Emerging Threats and Capabilities on October 11, 2013.

Characterizing the North Korean Nuclear Missile Threat
www.rand.org/t/TR1268
This report examines the North Korean missile program to better characterize the threat that North Korea poses.

China and North Korea
Bolstering a Buffer or Hunkering Down in Northeast Asia?
www.rand.org/t/CT477
This testimony, presented before the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, examines the relationship between China and North Korea.

Confronting Emergent Nuclear-Armed Regional Adversaries
Prospects for Neutralization, Strategies for Escalation Management
www.rand.org/t/RR974
This report explores circumstances in which the United States might be able to neutralize a regional opponent’s nuclear capabilities. And the report finds that there is probably no case in which U.S. forces could neutralize an opponent’s nuclear capabilities with a high enough probability of success that U.S. leaders would allow the attempt.

Contain, Deter, Transform
A Winning Strategy on North Korea
www.rand.org/blog/2017/08/contain-deter-transform-a-winning-strategy-on-north.html
This commentary argues that the United States should adopt strategy of “contain, deter and transform” with respect to North Korea. It is a strategy that has worked before and an approach that holds out the hope of preserving U.S. interests while avoiding war.

Despite Promising Signs, China’s North Korea Policy Unchanged
This commentary looks beneath recent Chinese statements about China’s willingness to punish North Korea for threatening actions and explains why China’s policy toward North Korea remains essentially supportive.

Deterrence and Stability for the Korean Peninsula
www.rand.org/t/EP66368
This article outlines the challenges for deterrence that are salient to Korea today, particularly ways in which deterrence could fail, using historical cases. And the article discusses implications for Korea, highlighting the need to think through how South Korea should consider its new military capabilities and the need to strengthen U.S. extended deterrence.
Deterring North Korea from Using WMD in Future Conflicts and Crises
www.rand.org/t/EP50367
This article characterizes North Korea as a failing state that has used crises, and may yet try to use conflict, to strengthen the regime. The article addresses the nature of North Korea’s WMD threat, how that threat might be used, and the damage that could result. The study concludes by discussing how the United States and South Korea might deter North Korean WMD threats in conflicts and crises.

End the Korean War, Finally
www.rand.org/blog/2017/06/end-the-korean-war-finally.html
This commentary makes the case that a treaty ending the Korean War, which was halted without formal agreement in 1953, may be the key to dismantling North Korea’s nuclear program.

Preparing for the Possibility of a North Korean Collapse
www.rand.org/t/RR331
This report examines the potential negative consequences of a North Korean collapse and proposes actions and needed preparations that South Korea and the United States could take to avert these consequences. See related testimony delivered to the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission:
www.rand.org/t/CT404.

Preparing North Korean Elites for Unification
www.rand.org/t/RR1985
This report investigates what could be done to convince North Korean elites that unification would be good for them and identifies areas of concern that North Korean elites would likely have about the outcomes of unification.

The Sixty Years of the Korea-U.S. Security Alliance Past, Present, and Future
www.rand.org/t/EP50424
This article explores the evolution of the U.S.–South Korea security alliance and the North Korean challenges it must be prepared for, ranging from provocations, to major war, to collapse of the state.

Strategy-Policy Mismatch
How the U.S. Army Can Help Close Gaps in Countering Weapons of Mass Destruction
www.rand.org/t/RR541
This report analyzes requirements for missions to eliminate weapons of mass destruction (WMD)—namely, the necessary force size and force structure, with a focus on two case studies: (1) operations to secure loose WMD in the event that North Korea collapses and (2) a counterfactual scenario in which U.S. operations are ordered to eliminate the Syrian chemical weapons program in the wake of a Syrian regime collapse.

A Surgical Strike Against North Korea? Not a Viable Option
This commentary explores the reasons a precision strike against North Korea’s ballistic missile sites would not be effective.
Protecting U.S. Interests in the Middle East

RESEARCH SUMMARY

Traditional U.S. interests in the Middle East persist, but the nature of threats to those interests has transformed, and new threats have emerged.

The United States has limited ability to change or influence the actions of aggressive adversaries and increasingly assertive and capable allies.

American political leaders and strategists should maintain realistic expectations about what success can look like in military interventions in the region and recognize that partners may limit the prospects for success of such interventions.

The U.S. Army should expect to be called on to help finish off ISIL’s physical caliphate, continue to build partner capacity, help deter Iran, and contribute to counterterrorism operations.

KEY POINTS

- Traditional U.S. interests in the Middle East persist, but the nature of threats to those interests has transformed, and new threats have emerged.
- The United States has limited ability to change or influence the actions of aggressive adversaries and increasingly assertive and capable allies.
- American political leaders and strategists should maintain realistic expectations about what success can look like in military interventions in the region and recognize that partners may limit the prospects for success of such interventions.
- The U.S. Army should expect to be called on to help finish off ISIL’s physical caliphate, continue to build partner capacity, help deter Iran, and contribute to counterterrorism operations.

Many strategists argue that the U.S. Army’s focus should shift away from the Middle East to North Korea or Russia, but the United States continues to face threats and security concerns in the Middle East that the Army may be called on to address. This brief summarizes an examination of U.S. interests there and the implications of those interests for the U.S. military and, in particular, the Army.

WHAT ARE U.S. INTERESTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST?

The traditional definition of U.S. interests in the Middle East has centered on ensuring the free flow of natural resources and maintaining relationships with key allies and protecting them from external threats, partly to ensure access for U.S. military operations. Such traditional interests persist, but the regional environment, the nature of the threats to these interests, and the identities of America’s closest partners in the Middle East have transformed since the days of the Cold War Twin Pillars policy, when Iran and Saudi Arabia were the bulwarks against Soviet influence and cornerstones of U.S. efforts to promote regional stability. Relationships among regional powers have also changed. Iran and Iraq, at loggerheads and embroiled in conflict in the 1980s, are now closely aligned. Similarly, cycles of rivalry tied to differing threat perceptions have made ties among the six Gulf states increasingly fragile. These relationships can and do complicate U.S. efforts to maintain stability and ensure access—pivotal to U.S. military operations—and are often far beyond Washington’s control.

Also, new threats have emerged that were not anticipated in the traditional expression of American interests in the greater Middle East. The rise of ISIL and the expansion of Kurdish influence have probed the depth of American interest in and commitment to maintaining the state structure in the region, as represented by physical borders drawn a century ago. And while the United States has long worried about the Gulf’s “checkbook diplomacy,” the nation now faces the reality of these partner states independently deploying military power, including in ways uncoordinated with their traditional security guarantor, the United States.

WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS FOR THE USE OF U.S. MILITARY POWER IN THE MIDDLE EAST?

The year 2017 is far removed from 1990, not just temporally but also in terms of the types of threats and opportunities that the region presents. Against the backdrop of a multipolar regional environment mired in civil wars and sectarian violence, interstate rivalries, and violent extremism in ungoverned spaces, the United States has a limited ability to change, rearrange, and influence the actions of aggressive adversaries and assertive allies. In this landscape, the presence of Army and other U.S. military forces, both in conflict operations and in security operations and other peacetime activities, can have modest but significant stabilizing effects—or the opposite.

This landscape has implications for military interventions. Based on analysis of past operations, some lessons should be borne in mind for future ones. First, political leaders and strategists need to have realistic expectations about what success looks like. Many observers, for instance, label the U.S. counterinsurgency in Iraq a failure. By certain standards, it clearly is. But judged in comparison with outcomes in similar contexts, it could be considered a qualified success. The histori-
A U.S. Army Reserve Chinook helicopter pilot deployed with Task Force Warha Division scans the Registan Desert in Helmand Province, Afghanistan, June 2017.

cal record suggests that partial successes are typical. Of course, whether such outcomes can justify the costs paid to achieve them is a different—and critical—question.

Second, the nature of partners should limit U.S. expectations for success in interventions. The United States does not always have the luxury of choosing its allies. Political developments, security threats (such as terrorism), and humanitarian concerns often dictate choices in partners, and well-governed states do not tend to be where crises affecting U.S. national security usually occur. In the most-challenging partner nations, such as Afghanistan and Yemen, expectations about what intervention can accomplish should be limited, and decisions about whether to intervene should be based on realistic expectations.

WHAT SHOULD THE ARMY BE PREPARED TO DO IN THE MIDDLE EAST?

As the Army looks across the Middle East and North Africa, it can anticipate and should be prepared for its current involvement there to extend into the future. First, the Army will face short-term requirements—including some limited boots on the ground—to support the “by, with, and through” campaign to finish off ISIL’s physical caliphate. Army leadership of the Coalition Joint Task Force—Operation Inherent Resolve is projected to continue, which is critically important because the Army’s role may significantly increase while leading the fight to defeat the corporeal remnants of ISIL in Iraq and in Syria.

Second, the Army will continue to help build partner capability. This has long been a U.S. priority, and the Army has played a critical role in these efforts, operating in such places as Egypt and participating in the U.S. Military Training Mission in Saudi Arabia. Doing so assures partners that the United States remains committed to their security.

Third, the Army will play a role in U.S. efforts to deal with Iran, the lone major threat in the region. This involves deterring actions that challenge U.S. core interests in the Middle East (e.g., preventing Iran from developing a nuclear weapon capability and disrupting shipping through the Strait of Hormuz) and being prepared to respond militarily should deterrence fail. Army air and missile defenses and other anti-access systems loom large in this regard.

Finally, the Army should expect to continue being called on to assist in counterterrorism operations in the region long after the defeat of ISIL. U.S. special operations forces are likely to play an outsized role in this fight, but the Army’s general-purpose force units will be important as well. Particularly crucial will be their role in building partner forces that can take the fight to extremist groups on the ground. Conducting multiple concurrent, limited-liability operations at any given time in the region will depend most heavily on airpower and ground training teams. This will create substantial enduring demand for advise-and-assist brigades, as well as two- and three-star headquarters, infantry, and military police to provide security and quick reaction forces and theater logistics structure.

In short, the Army will need to man, train, equip, and posture its forces to deal with such missions and will need to play a leadership role in future debates about military intervention and the potential roles of U.S. land power in the Middle East.
Recent RAND Analyses on the Middle East

Assessment of the Politico-Military Campaign to Counter ISIL and Options for Adaptation
www.rand.org/t/RR1290
This report assesses the campaign against ISIL, focusing on the military and political lines of effort.

Beating the Islamic State
Selecting a New Strategy for Iraq and Syria
www.rand.org/t/RR1562
This report assesses the current U.S. strategy for defeating the Islamic State and presents alternative strategic approaches.

Building Armies, Building Nations
Toward a New Approach to Security Force Assistance
www.rand.org/t/RR1832
This report proposes an alternative approach to Security Force Assistance derived from an interpretation of nation-building and legitimacy formation grounded in history.

Counterinsurgency Scorecard Update
Afghanistan in Early 2015 Relative to Insurgencies Since World War II
www.rand.org/t/RR1273
This report updates prior RAND research that examined 71 insurgencies begun and completed worldwide between World War II and 2010 to analyze correlates of success in counterinsurgency.

Empowering ISIS Opponents on Twitter
www.rand.org/t/PE227
This Perspective presents options for operationalizing recent RAND findings about ISIS opponents and supporters on Twitter.

Examining ISIS Support and Opposition Networks on Twitter
www.rand.org/t/RR1328
This report draws on publicly available Twitter data to examine this ongoing debate about ISIS on Arabic Twitter and to better understand the networks of ISIS supporters and opponents on Twitter.

Foundations of the Islamic State
Management, Money, and Terror in Iraq, 2005–2010
www.rand.org/t/RR1192
This report draws from more than 140 recently declassified documents to examine the organization, territorial designs, management, personnel policies, and finances of the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Qa‘ida in Iraq, both predecessors of the Islamic State.

From Cast Lead to Protective Edge
Lessons from Israel’s Wars in Gaza
www.rand.org/t/RR1888
This report analyzes how Israel’s advanced military fought a determined, adaptive, hybrid adversary from 2009 to 2014 in Gaza.

How Insurgencies End
www.rand.org/t/MG965
This report tests conventional wisdom about how insurgencies end against the evidence from 89 case studies of insurgencies.

The Islamic State We Knew
Insights Before the Resurgence and Their Implications
www.rand.org/t/RR1267
This report presents the information known by the end of 2011 about the Islamic State’s origins, finances, organization, methods of establishing control over territory, and response to airpower.

Making Victory Count After Defeating ISIS
Stabilization Challenges in Mosul and Beyond
www.rand.org/t/RR2076
This report investigates humanitarian and stabilization needs in Iraq, through a case study of Mosul, and offers recommendations for immediate actions for stabilization after military operations to liberate Mosul from ISIS.

North Africa’s Menace
AQIM’s Evolution and the U.S. Policy Response
www.rand.org/t/RR415
This report assesses the threat from the North African terrorist organization Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM).
This report analyzes the 30 insurgencies that began and ended between 1978 and 2008 to answer the question: When a country is threatened by an insurgency, what efforts give its government the best chance of prevailing?

This Perspective is the first in a series that presents a peace plan for Syria focused on the steps necessary to secure and sustain a cease-fire for the extended period that is likely to be needed for the Syrian parties to actually agree on new governing arrangements.

This Perspective, the second in a series, argues for practical steps aimed at reducing the fighting in Syria to provide more time for a national transition process.

In this third Perspective in a series addressing Syria's conflict, RAND researchers examine how recent developments in Syria and the region reinforce the prospects for a national cease-fire based on agreed zones of control backed by external powers.

In this fourth Perspective in a series addressing Syria's conflict, RAND researchers argue that an approach to reconstruction offered on a community-by-community basis could be part of the solution.

This report examines the status and evolution of al Qa'ida and other Salafi-jihadist groups by analyzing thousands of primary-source documents.

This Perspective offers recommendations for U.S. policy for a post-conflict transition in Syria that prevents state collapse, reduces the potential for the recurrence of war, and defeats terrorist groups that have taken hold in the country.

This report assesses the threat that the Islamic State poses to the United States and examines four possible strategies to counter the group: disengagement, containment, rollback “light” (with a reliance on local forces backed by U.S. special operations forces, CIA and other intelligence assets, and airpower), and rollback “heavy” (adding the employment of American conventional forces in ground combat).

This Perspective seeks to identify the important elements of Russian interests in the Middle East beyond Syria, to define the nature of Russian engagement in the region, and to describe the contours of a Russian strategy in the Middle East.

This Perspective explores the reasons behind the announcement of Saudi Arabia's military alliance to combat terrorism, the likelihood of such an alliance being realized, what it might mean for the Middle East, and how the United States should respond to the initiative.

This Perspective offers a strategy to counter ISIL as a transregional threat, with a focus on steps to confront the violent jihadist threat over the long term.

This Perspective examines threats to U.S. interests in the Middle East and factors associated with success and failure in U.S. military interventions, and it offers recommendations for the Army as it prepares for future involvement in the region.

This report explores why some youth in the West Bank reject violent extremism.

This report examines the role that land-based, multi-domain anti-access/area denial forces can play in deterring or defeating aggression, focusing on aggression by China, as well as the use of such forces against Russia and Iran.
Conflict with China Revisited

**KEY POINTS**

- Barring unforeseen technological developments, the United States will not be able to confidently rely much longer on the direct defense of its regional interests.
- In dealing with China, the United States will likely be forced to shift from deterrence by denial to deterrence by punishment.
- The United States may be able to reduce or, for a time, delay reliance on escalatory responses by shifting to less vulnerable platforms and by further dispersing its bases and force flows.
- The United States can encourage and assist its regional allies and partners to increase the range and capabilities of their own air and sea defenses.
- Given these findings, the United States should move sooner rather than later—before its position in the region diminishes further—to constructively engage China across the range of potential flash points.

In 2011, RAND researchers considered the possibility of war with China. In looking forward over the next several decades, the report concluded that Sino-American conflict could arise around Korea, Taiwan, Japan, the South China Sea, cyberspace, or India—in that order of likelihood. The report did not suggest that military conflict between China and the United States was inevitable, or even likely, but instead that the possibility was real enough to require prudent policies and effective deterrent measures. At the time of that writing, China was already challenging American military superiority on its immediate periphery, making the direct defense of American allies in China’s proximity progressively more difficult. Those measures were expected to become more demanding as Chinese capabilities grew. For the United States, this would mean assuming greater risks in the future to achieve the same objectives as in the past.

This summary highlights results of an update of that analysis, focusing on new assessments of the same six theaters of conflict and exploring the operational implications these clashes might present, the resultant requirements for defense and deterrence, and the nonmilitary means for limiting or forestalling such hostilities.

**HOW HAS THE POSSIBILITY OF CONFLICT WITH CHINA CHANGED?**

Sino-U.S. military conflict is still not probable in any of the theaters of conflict, but the margin of confidence is somewhat lower than it was six years ago. This judgment of likelihood was and is still based on the view that the United States would both avoid unnecessary provocations and retain the capacity to deter Chinese behavior that could lead to a clash. But developments over the past six years somewhat weaken this conviction. President Barack Obama announced a pivot of American attention to East Asia, but the United States has remained bogged down in the Middle East and has had to increase commitments in Europe in response to Russian aggression. More recently, President Donald Trump rejected the centerpiece of Obama’s pivot to Asia, the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade pact. Among the theaters in contention, a conflict in the South China Sea is now more likely than before, moving just behind Korea and ahead of Taiwan.

In terms of deterrence, the range and capabilities of Chinese air and sea defenses have continued to grow, making forward American basing more vulnerable and the direct defense of American interests in the region potentially more costly. With the passage of time and the improvement of Chinese capabilities, the United States will likely find itself forced to shift from deterrence by denial, based on direct defense of its interests and allies in the Western Pacific, to deterrence by punishment, based on the threat of horizontal escalation (expanding the geographic scope of the conflict) or vertical escalation (increasing in the intensity of the conflict, such as by using different weapons or by attacking new categories of targets). Such escalation comes with the attendant risks of counterescalation. Although the United States can maintain escalation dominance for some time, China will develop escalation options of its own, including antisatellite and offensive cyberwar capabilities. Chinese strategic nuclear force improvement and the limited American stakes in several of the plausible conflicts for Sino-American conflict will reduce the credibility of threatened American escalation—especially of any threatened first use of
nuclear weapons. While neither the United States nor China is likely to employ nuclear weapons, even an initially localized conflict could quickly spread into the economic, cyber, and space realms, doing considerable damage to both sides.

**WHAT CAN DETER CHINA NOW AND IN THE FUTURE?**

Some direct military options for deterrence exist, but forms of dissuasion, resistance, and persuasion other than military options are needed. The United States may be able to reduce or delay its reliance on escalatory responses by shifting to less vulnerable platforms—longer-range precision strike drones and vessels to carry longer-range drones and submarines—and by further dispersing bases and force flows. However, barring unforeseen technological developments, it will not be possible for the United States to indefinitely rely on the direct defense of its regional interests. One means of improving the prospects for direct defense and reducing the risk of escalation is for the United States to continue to build partner capacity to enable the capabilities and buttress the resolve of China’s neighbors and U.S. allies—Japan, South Korea, and Australia—as well as other existing and prospective partners that are highly suspicious and concerned about China’s growing power and assertiveness. Such a strategy is designed to raise the costs of Chinese use of force and to check Chinese assertiveness at the expense of regional stability and U.S. interests. However, this approach can run the risk of being seen as a U.S. attempt to encircle or align the region against China, which could produce greater Chinese hostility.

One nonmilitary option for deterrence is economic warfare. The fact that the economies of China and the United States are so linked with each other and with the rest of the world produces a mutual dependency that can be an immensely powerful deterrent—in effect, a form of mutually assured economic destruction. At the moment, the balance of economic advantage rests with the United States, but even the winner in such a contest will wish that it had been avoided.

Finally, unless China commits naked and large-scale aggression—which is not indicated by its current pattern of use of force—the United States will likely want to pursue another nonmilitary option: focusing on deescalating localized clashes and removing bones of contention. Therefore, the United States should move sooner rather than later—before its power position in the region diminishes further—to constructively engage China across a range of potential flash points. Such engagement might include more-energetic efforts to promote the resolution of conflicting maritime claims in the South China Sea; encouragement of improved cross-Strait relations between Beijing and Taipei; and more-extensive consultations with Beijing on Korea issues, including possibilities for denuclearizing North Korea, formally ending the Korean War, and Sino-America collaboration in the event of a North Korean regime collapse. The United States should also maintain a dense network of diplomatic relationships with China while strengthening channels for crisis communications, including regular leader-to-leader and military-to-military contacts.

This summary is based on PE-248-A, Conflict with China Revisited: Prospects, Consequences, and Strategies for Deterrence, by James Dobbins, Andrew Scobell, Edmund J. Burke, David C. Gompert, Derek Grossman, Eric Heginbotham, and Howard J. Shatz, 2017. For questions about this analysis, contact James Dobbins, dobbins@rand.org. www.rand.org/t/PE248
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This report analyzes Taiwan’s options for allocating resources for air defense, describes the air defense problem that China poses, and characterizes current and potential capabilities and levels of funding to improve Taiwan’s air defense.

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Chinese Political and Military Thinking Regarding Taiwan and East and South China Seas
www.rand.org/t/CT470
This testimony was presented before the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission on April 13, 2017.
Conflict with China
Prospects, Consequences, and Strategies for Deterrence
www.rand.org/t/OP344
This paper presents scenarios to illustrate possible sources of military conflict with China over the next 30 years.

Conflict with China Revisited
Prospects, Consequences, and Strategies for Deterrence
www.rand.org/t/PE248
Although armed conflict between the United States and China is not likely, the possibility is real enough to require prudent policies and effective deterrent measures.

The Creation of the PLA Strategic Support Force and Its Implications for Chinese Military Space Operations
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National Security and Military Strategies, Deterrence Concepts, and Combat Capabilities
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This report describes China’s national and security strategies and its approach to war and escalation control, summarizes its military capability developments, and reviews its concepts for deterrence in strategic and conventional domains.

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Countering Adversaries Without Going to War
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The study approach should be well designed and executed.

The study should demonstrate understanding of related studies.

The data and information should be the best available.

Assumptions should be explicit and justified.

The findings should advance knowledge and bear on important policy issues.

The implications and recommendations should be logical, warranted by the findings, and explained thoroughly, with appropriate caveats.

The documentation should be accurate, understandable, clearly structured, and temperate in tone.

The study should be compelling, useful, and relevant to stakeholders and decisionmakers.

The study should be objective, independent, and balanced.

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