

Topical Essays

The Role of a Strong National Defense

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“[The United States Navy is] an infinitely more potent factor for peace than all the peace societies of every kind and sort.”

—President Theodore Roosevelt¹

Introduction

One of the few core responsibilities of the federal government mandated by the Constitution of the United States is “to provide for the common defence.”² Upon commissioning, every American military officer swears an oath to “support and defend” this Constitution.³ Accordingly, the core mission of the American military is to protect and defend our nation. This means deterring potential aggressors and, if deterrence fails, fighting and winning wars. Any consideration of the military’s role and American defense policy must start with that foundational principle.

Yet if the need for a strong military begins with the mission to fight and win wars, it does not end there. As the quote from Theodore Roosevelt at the beginning of this essay illustrates, American leaders have long appreciated that a formidable military can produce abundant diplomatic and economic dividends, even—especially—when not wielded in wartime. The United States’ military capability supported our nation’s rise to global greatness over the past century, but this was often because of the increased influence and credibility produced by this capability rather than the overt use of force. Along the way, there developed an American strategic tradition

that integrated military strength with diplomatic acumen, economic growth, and international influence.⁴ It is an historic tradition with an impressive heritage and continuing salience today.

Drawing on the historical record, there are many ways beyond the kinetic use of force that a strong national defense bolsters our national power and global influence. A robust defense budget and defense policy also strengthens our nation in manifest other ways. A well-equipped defense enhances our capabilities and influence across virtually all other elements of national power: our economy, our diplomacy, our alliances, and our credibility and influence in the world. Conversely, an under-resourced national defense threatens to diminish our national power across all of these other dimensions.

A strong national defense is thus indispensable for a peaceful, successful, and free America—even if a shot is never fired. The diplomatic successes in building and maintaining a stable and peaceful international order achieved by the United States over the past century have been enabled by America’s military dominance. Conversely, the calamitous defense budget cuts and corresponding rise of potential peer competitors in the present day are already undermining America’s diplomatic and economic influence.

A well-appointed military improves diplomacy with adversaries, strengthens our alliances, signals credibility and resolve, deters aggression, and enhances national morale. Yet this is not to

disregard the manifest other dividends that a strong military can pay. There are multiple pathways by which investments in military hard power produce economic benefits. For example, the military's role in protecting a stable international environment also creates predictable and secure conditions in which economic growth can flourish. The American security umbrella facilitated Western Europe's postwar reconstruction and economic revival, and Asia's half-century economic boom has been partly a function of America's treaty alliances in the region maintaining peace and stability, exemplified by the United States Navy's Seventh Fleet protecting an open maritime order, freedom of navigation, and secure sea lanes.

Additionally, while America's world-leading economy has largely been generated by free enterprise and private sector-led growth, innovations in defense technology can sometimes have economically beneficial civilian applications. There are numerous examples from the past 75 years of technological innovations that originated as defense projects but were eventually adapted for private-sector commercial use, including nuclear energy, jet propulsion, the Internet, global positioning systems, and unmanned aerial vehicles.

Peace Through Strength

One of President Ronald Reagan's favored mantras, still often cited today, was "peace through strength."⁵ Embedded in this slogan are a complex set of strategic assumptions: for example, that a strong military can be effective without being deployed in hostile action, that the acquisition of arms can be inversely proportionate to their use, that military strength pays diplomatic dividends, and that preparedness for war enables the preservation of peace. As described by United States Military Academy professor Gail Yoshitani, in Reagan's formulation of the "peace through strength" strategy:

[P]eace was not simply the absence of war. Instead, it was conceived as a world hospitable to American society and its liberal-democratic ideals in which the United States and its allies were free from the threat of nuclear war and had access to vital resources, such as oil, and vital transportation and communications routes. Reagan believed that such a peace was dependent upon US strength, which would come from rebuilding the nation's economic and military might.⁶

It was a strategic concept in the tradition of Theodore Roosevelt eight decades earlier. For Roosevelt as for Reagan and many other American leaders, "peace" meant more than just the absence of conflict. It encompassed the full flourishing of American interests and ideals and in turn was predicated on an equally expansive concept of national "strength" that included diplomatic, ideological, and economic as well as military quotients.

In recent years, the Obama Administration has introduced a new strategic concept that, while not in direct contradistinction to "peace through strength," seeks to recalibrate American national security policy by diminishing national defense and elevating international development. This concept is known as the "three Ds" of defense, diplomacy, and development. As described by then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in her January 22, 2009, inaugural remarks on her first day at the State Department, "There are three legs to the stool of American foreign policy: defense, diplomacy, and development."⁷ She elaborated on this the next year in a speech to the Center for Global Development, declaring that "development must become an equal pillar of our foreign policy, alongside defense and diplomacy... [T]he three Ds must be mutually reinforcing."⁸

While this concept appropriately recognizes that there is a relationship between sustainable development and improved peace and security, it skews the triad by making development co-equal with defense.⁹ Ironically, given that the Obama Administration intended the three Ds concept to elevate development policy, as implemented, it has instead had the opposite effect. It has left development still at the margins while diminishing defense policy, as evidenced by the draconian cuts in the defense budget over the past six years.

Moreover, in both constitutional and conceptual terms, a strong national defense needs to take primacy over development. A well-equipped military creates an enabling environment for improved development policy. Many of the most notable economic development successes of the past 75 years took place in the context of either an explicit American security umbrella or a more favorable security environment underwritten by American defense policy. The economic development successes of postwar Western Europe and post-Cold War Central and Eastern Europe, as well as the "Asian tigers" such as Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and Singapore, and the unprecedented growth and poverty alleviation in

China since Deng Xiaoping's 1979 economic reforms and India since Manmohan Singh's 1991 economic liberalization all took place in the context of an American troop presence, explicit American security guarantees, or (at least in the cases of China and India) a stable regional environment underwritten by American power projection.

This is not at all to disparage economic development or the work of development professionals, which should be a national priority on moral, humanitarian, and strategic grounds. Rather, it is only to observe that economic development efforts are most successful and most enduring when undertaken in a context of peace and stability, which is most often provided by a guarantor of security underwritten by military power.

The broader sweep of American history and international politics reinforces the perception that military power enables diplomatic and economic progress. This historical insight bears remembering in the present context. Each of the manifest national security policy challenges facing our nation in the current era—including growing Chinese assertiveness in the western Pacific, a revanchist Russia destabilizing the postwar European order, the collapse of the state system in the Middle East, resurgent jihadist groups exemplified by the Islamic State and various al-Qaeda franchises, Iran's nuclear ambitions and aspirations to regional hegemony, and North Korea's metastasizing nuclear capabilities—has its own complex internal and external causes, but all have been taking place in the context of global perceptions of a diminished and weakened American defense capability, which in turn has undermined American diplomatic and economic power and influence.

The setbacks for American foreign policy during the past several years provide a vivid empirical illustration both of the non-kinetic utility of military power and of the costs when it is diminished.

Insights from History: Strengthening Diplomacy and National Morale (Theodore Roosevelt)

If the 19th century was characterized by the United States expanding and consolidating its continental control and resolving its internal conflicts through the Civil War, the dawn of the 20th century marked America's turn outward and debut as an emerging global power. Not coincidentally, Theodore Roosevelt occupied the White House during these early years.

Roosevelt's foreign policy vision combined an assertive military buildup with deft diplomacy and credible displays of force with restraint in the actual use of force. His increased defense budget focused primarily on building up the Navy, based on Roosevelt's long-standing belief in the primacy of naval power for strategic force projection. As one of the premier scholars of his foreign policy has observed, Roosevelt embraced the axiom that "power and diplomacy work best when they work together."¹⁰

Of the abundant examples that could be drawn from Roosevelt's presidency, none illustrates this more vividly than his decision to sail 16 American battleships on a 14-month voyage around the world in 1908. Not since Chinese Admiral Zheng He sailed a massive fleet in the 15th century had the world seen such a show of naval force.¹¹ This voyage of the "Great White Fleet" was as unexpected as it was audacious. In the words of University of Texas–Austin historian H. W. Brands, "Nothing like this had ever been attempted. For the United States to be the first to accomplish it would be a cause for national pride.... Never before had so much naval power been gathered in one place, let alone sent on a grand tour around the globe."¹²

Roosevelt intuitively understood that an expanded global role for the United States depended in part on popular support from the American people, and this in turn depended on demonstrating to the nation what its Navy could accomplish. In Roosevelt's own words, "my prime purpose was to impress the American people; and this purpose was fully achieved."¹³ Here Roosevelt seemed to draw on the insights of his friend Alfred Thayer Mahan, the eminent naval strategist who believed that "national character" constituted one of the six elements of sea power.¹⁴

Thus emerges an underappreciated aspect of a strong national defense: its salubrious effect in bolstering national morale and civic unity. In sending the fleet on this circumnavigation of the globe, Roosevelt in one gesture reminded his fellow citizens of their nation's industrial might, technological prowess, audacity, and intrepid frontier spirit. He hoped also to galvanize public support for a sustained international leadership role for the United States.

Domestic public opinion was by no means the only audience that Roosevelt had in mind for this display of naval power. He also intended it to impress a watching world. The leaders of two nations in particular, Japan and Germany, were on Roosevelt's

mind. The former had long captured his attention with a mixture of admiration and concern. Roosevelt's recognition of Japan's growing power and ambitions had led him to mediate the Treaty of Portsmouth that ended the Russo–Japanese War in ways that recognized Japan's power and preserved many of its territorial gains. (For this, Roosevelt would become the first American to win the Nobel Peace Prize.) Likewise, his affinity for Japanese culture and industry inspired his support for the immigration of numerous Japanese to California, despite incurring much domestic criticism from Americans with nativist predilections.

At the same time, Roosevelt's wariness of Japan's aspirations to regional hegemony had caused him to include provisions in the Treaty of Portsmouth that circumscribed Japan's acquisitions and preserved Russia's viability as a check on further Japanese expansion. For some time, Roosevelt had been suspicious of Japan's potential expansionism, especially against American territories. In an eerily prescient move, several years earlier, while serving as President William McKinley's Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Roosevelt had tasked the Naval War College with addressing a scenario in which "Japan makes demands on Hawaiian Islands. This country intervenes. What force will be necessary to uphold the intervention, and how should it be employed?"¹⁵

Against this backdrop of ambivalence about Japan's growing power and uncertain intentions, Roosevelt targeted a strategic communication toward Tokyo. In Brands' words, the cruise "would also serve as a reminder to the Japanese, who not surprisingly felt rather proud of themselves, that the United States was a Pacific Power to be reckoned with." *Pace* those critics who contended that such visible displays of force would be destabilizing and potentially instigate conflict, "Roosevelt paid no mind to the argument that an audacious American move might provoke a war.... [H]e felt that weakness was far more provocative than strength. Consequently, the worse relations with Japan grew, the more necessary he deemed the voyage." As Roosevelt put it, "My own judgment is that the only thing that will prevent war is the Japanese feeling that we shall not be beaten, and this feeling we can only excite by keeping and making our navy efficient in the highest degree."¹⁶

Though it would be six more years until Germany's growing power and aggression contributed to the outbreak of World War I, Roosevelt was already

casting a wary eye at Kaiser Wilhelm's incipient bellicosity. In the midst of a relatively minor diplomatic dispute between Germany and the United States, Roosevelt wrote to the German leader describing the ongoing voyage: "I trust you have noticed that the American battleship fleet has completed its tour of South America on schedule time, and is now having its target practice off the Mexican coast."¹⁷ As Brands describes, "The president traced the itinerary—Australia, Japan, China, the Philippines, Suez—leaving unsaid that the German navy had never done anything like this. And he couldn't resist a final note: 'Their target practice has been excellent'."¹⁸

Roosevelt's pointed and pithy insinuation to the German ruler belied a more sophisticated appreciation of the relationship between military power, diplomatic success, and the preservation of peace. For all of his occasionally bellicose rhetoric, Roosevelt's presidency is distinguished by the remarkably peaceful expansion of American power and influence. As noted, he understood that a weakened military could provoke aggression and invite adventurism from hostile powers who would otherwise be deterred. Roosevelt knew that a formidable military and a commander in chief with a deft diplomatic touch would be a potent force in dissuading aggressors and preserving peace. It is such a combination of military power and diplomatic acumen that creates national strength.

Roosevelt frequently warned against what he saw as the misguided hopes of disarmament advocates who believed that munitions themselves were destabilizing. These calls for reduced defense budgets and outright disarmament were deluded, he believed, and would increase the risk of war rather than further the cause of peace. As he proclaimed in his annual message to Congress in 1905:

At present there could be no greater calamity than for the free peoples, the enlightened, independent, and peace-loving peoples, to disarm while yet leaving it open to any barbarism or despotism to remain armed. So long as the world is as unorganized as now the armies and navies of those peoples who on the whole stand for justice, offer not only the best, but the only possible, security for a just peace. For instance, if the United States alone, or in company only with the other nations that on the whole tend to act justly, disarmed, we might sometimes avoid bloodshed, but we would cease to be of weight in securing

the peace of justice—the real peace for which the most law-abiding and high-minded men must at times be willing to fight.¹⁹

Roosevelt’s insights of over a century ago have much to offer today. He famously and frequently invoked the African proverb, “speak softly and carry a big stick.”²⁰ During Roosevelt’s presidency, this was translated from a trite aphorism into a sophisticated strategic doctrine. A strong military can bolster national power and influence without ever *using* force. It can even reduce the likelihood of violence. Rather, the mere *display* of force can pay significant diplomatic dividends, deter potential aggression, and preserve the peace.

In turn, the effective display of force depends on perceptions of American credibility, and credibility rests on a combination of capability and intention. If other nations (and in some cases, non-state actors) perceive the United States as a credible power—possessing both a potent capability to use lethal force and the willingness to do so if necessary—our nation will have greater power to act on the global stage while facing fewer threats. Developing this capability is predicated on funding and maintaining a military that is without peer.

This strategic doctrine is one of Theodore Roosevelt’s enduring legacies in American history, and it is one which bears remembering and recovering today.

Insights from History: Signaling Resolve and Supporting Allies (Harry S. Truman)

At first glance, Presidents Theodore Roosevelt and Harry Truman have little in common. One was a Republican, the other a Democrat. One was an East Coast Harvard-educated blue blood from one of America’s most distinguished familial lineages, the other a Midwestern small-town haberdasher with only a high school education—the last American President without a college diploma. One was the architect of America’s debut at the high table of international politics, the other the befuddled inheritor of America’s new role as a global superpower and the architect of many institutions of the new international order.

Yet Roosevelt and Truman also shared much in common, including a belief in American exceptionalism, a commitment to the universality of liberty and preserving and extending free societies, and especially an appreciation for the role a strong military

plays in projecting power and influence, even without the use of lethal force. As with Roosevelt, most of Truman’s enduring national security accomplishments came through the adept employment of military power as a diplomatic and economic instrument of statecraft. Just as our nation still benefits from the international institutions and postwar order he helped to create, there is also much to learn from his integration of a strong defense into the larger structure of national power.

Upon taking the oath of office in April 1945, Truman was bequeathed a situation unprecedented in its complexity and challenges. In short order, he had to navigate:

- The decision to drop the atomic bomb on Japan;
- The end of World War II and the unconditional surrender settlements that would give the United States near-total control of the reconstruction of Germany and Japan;
- The crafting of a postwar international political and economic order that would preserve stability and promote prosperity and ordered liberty; and
- The emerging Cold War with the Soviet Union and its sundry satellite states that would loom over the next four decades of American national security policy as the United States sought to contain Soviet expansionism while preventing the belligerent exchange of nuclear warheads.

It was a tall order for even the most seasoned statesman, let alone a relatively untested and ill-equipped Senator from Missouri.

To appreciate Truman’s strategic innovations, one should recall the fraught and unprecedented international climate of the time. The United States and Soviet Union had fought together as allies in World War II, yet even as the war wound down in 1945, tensions between the two victors emerged over the contours of the postwar order. By the next year, it was becoming clear that Soviet dictator Josef Stalin regarded the United States as an adversary and had aggressive designs to dominate Eastern Europe and points beyond.

This left American leaders struggling to formulate a response amidst what appeared to be the unpalatable choices of either fighting the Soviet Union or acquiescing to the further expansion of

Communist tyranny. Yale historian John Lewis Gaddis aptly described it as “the despair of 1946 when war or appeasement appeared to be the only alternatives open to the United States.”²¹ Furthermore, with the end of the war, many feared the prospect of slipping back into the economic depression that had plagued the 1930s.

Into this environment of anxiety and policy uncertainty, George Kennan sent his renowned “Long Telegram” from Moscow, diagnosing Soviet intentions and advocating what became the strategy of containment. Instead of fight or flight, containment offered the option of resisting Soviet aggression without triggering a third world war. But while Kennan may have developed containment as a concept, it took Truman’s leadership and vision to operationalize and implement it in practice.

The success of containment depended largely, though by no means exclusively, on the non-kinetic use of military power. Kennan himself appreciated this. In a 1946 address at the National War College, the lifelong diplomat told his audience, “You have no idea how much it contributes to the politeness and pleasantness of diplomacy when you have a little quiet armed force in the background.” As Gaddis points out:

[T]he mere existence of such forces, [Kennan] wrote two years later, “is probably the most important single instrumentality in the conduct of U.S. foreign policy.” A Policy Planning Staff study done under Kennan’s direction in the summer of 1948 concluded that armed strength was essential as a means of making political positions credible, as a deterrent to attack, as a source of encouragement to allies, and, as a last resort, as a means of waging war successfully should war come.²²

Truman’s Cold War policy incorporated these insights. From the Marshall Plan, to the creation of NATO, to the passage of the National Security Act creating the Central Intelligence Agency and National Security Council, to the issuance of seminal strategy blueprints such as NSC-68,²³ the Truman Administration created a national and international set of institutions that leveraged military power into diplomatic and economic influence. Two Truman initiatives especially illustrate this concept: the Truman Doctrine providing aid to Greece and Turkey and the Berlin Airlift.

Truman’s 1947 address to Congress is best remembered for his declaration that “it must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures.”²⁴ Less appreciated is how the actual aid packages he developed for Greece and Turkey leveraged American military power to strengthen beleaguered allies and signal American resolve to Stalin. Unlike the Marshall Plan announced later that year, which provided economic reconstruction aid to Western Europe, the Greece and Turkey assistance packages also included a substantial military component to help the governments of the two Mediterranean nations defeat Communist insurgencies.

This had not been a foregone conclusion. Several of Truman’s advisers argued for limiting the packages to economic aid, but Truman sided with then-Under Secretary of State Dean Acheson’s arguments for including military hardware and advisers.²⁵ This reflected Truman’s belief in what political scientist Henry Nau calls “armed diplomacy”²⁶ and had far-reaching implications. For example, the aid to Turkey included establishment of the Joint American Military Mission to Aid Turkey (JAMMAT), an ambitious Defense Department initiative that transformed the Turkish military and established a template for eventual American military assistance programs with other allies.²⁷

The robust American military aid to Greece and Turkey would not have been possible without the expertise and military technology that the United States developed during World War II. In finishing the war as the most dominant military power on the planet, even in the midst of rapid demobilization, the U.S. still had considerable defense resources to employ in support of its friends, allies, and interests. Truman fused military hardware, economic aid, and vigorous diplomacy into a new tool to implement his Cold War strategy. In doing so, he also ushered in a new era in American power projection. The incorporation of military assistance into the program of aid to Greece and Turkey sent a strong signal of American resolve to the Soviet Union and its satellites while also shoring up important American allies during their periods of acute vulnerability.

The next year, an even more vexing challenge emerged when the Soviet Union made an audacious power grab and cut off Western access to West Berlin, the portion of the German capital isolated within the Communist-controlled occupation zone that

would eventually become East Germany. Eschewing either a diplomatic capitulation or a violent escalation, Truman instead ordered a massive airlift to provide food, medicine, and other living essentials to the beleaguered citizens of West Berlin. American military cargo planes operated these resupply flights around the clock for the next 11 months until an embarrassed Stalin backed down and lifted the blockade.

Again, this non-kinetic use of military power had the intended effect of signaling American resolve to Stalin while simultaneously reassuring and strengthening the allied city of West Berlin. This was no mere humanitarian gesture. As Henry Nau has observed, Truman’s “decision to erect Berlin as the outpost of Western freedom was monumental. It...placed American forces at risk to defend the ‘disputed’ borders of freedom in Europe” and “was a preeminent example of the preemptive use of force to deter aggression.”²⁸

While one might not normally consider cargo planes delivering food aid to civilians to be the “preemptive use of force,” Nau has it exactly right. Truman deployed American military resources in a formidable display of resolve, at considerable risk, to dissuade the Soviets from their attempted seizure of West Berlin. It was a turning point in the Cold War, as it revealed the Soviet Union’s malign intentions as well as the limits of Soviet adventurism. It galvanized American allies and led directly to the demands of several Western European nations to create what soon became the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Without a shot being fired, the American military achieved a significant diplomatic success and made a formidable display of American power.

Concluding Implications and the Contemporary Challenge

Theodore Roosevelt’s “big stick” diplomacy, Harry Truman’s Cold War projections of power, and Ronald Reagan’s “peace through strength” paradigm, while all revealing as historical vignettes, are also much more. They constitute some of the essential building blocks of the American strategic tradition of armed diplomacy—of using military power in non-kinetic ways to improve our negotiating outcomes, reassure allies, dissuade adversaries, and enhance our global credibility and influence.

This strategic tradition has served American interests well and has done much to protect our

national security and project our national power over the past century. It has become embedded in our national security institutions and, if properly resourced and utilized, can still be a primary source of national strength. Moreover, while originating in our nation’s past, this strategic tradition has also produced policy successes in recent decades. Consider just a few examples:

- The peaceful reunification of Germany and peaceful dissolution of the Iron Curtain as American diplomacy backed by military strength helped to end the Cold War without a shot being fired;
- The 1995 Dayton Accords ending the Bosnian wars, which followed the American-led bombing campaign and were made possible only because of the threat of additional force;
- Libya’s decision to relinquish its weapons of mass destruction program voluntarily in 2003 in the aftermath of the American display of power in the Iraq War;
- The United States military’s leading role in humanitarian assistance and disaster relief after the 2004 Asian tsunami, which also did much to improve America’s reputation in Muslim-majority nations like Indonesia;
- The upgrading of America’s relationship with India to a strategic partnership during the George W. Bush Administration, based in part on the appeal of America’s military power projection in the region and nuclear technology partnership; and
- The Pentagon’s relationship with the Egyptian military during the recent Egyptian revolutions, which was made possible by America’s decades-long military assistance program and exchanges and which preserved the only viable channel for diplomatic communications in the midst of chaos and changing Egyptian governments.

With such a demonstrable record of success and proven formula for how a well-resourced military strengthens our overall national security policy, the United States now stands at a crossroads. The precipitous defense budget cuts of recent years do not just erode American military strength; they also

undermine our diplomatic capabilities and our global influence and credibility. Conversely, a renewed commitment to adequate resourcing of the American military would not come at the cost of American diplomacy and economic policy, but rather would be to their benefit. In this sense, the defense budget is not a zero-sum allocation, but a “win-win” that enhances diplomatic and economic policy as well.

The United States in the 21st century remains a global superpower thanks to this strategic tradition of a strong and deftly wielded national defense. Rather than being squandered, it is an inheritance that should be embraced.

Endnotes:

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The Contemporary Spectrum of Conflict: Protracted, Gray Zone, Ambiguous, and Hybrid Modes of War

Frank G. Hoffman, PhD

Hew Strachan, the preeminent military historian at Oxford, stated in a lecture delivered in 2006 that one of our most serious problems today is that we do not know what war is. He put his finger on a critical shortfall in Western thinking about security:

If we are to identify whether war is changing, and—if it is—how those changes affect international relations, we need to know first what war is. One of the central challenges confronting international relations today is that we do not really know what is a war and what is not. The consequences of our confusion would seem absurd, were they not so profoundly dangerous.¹

The larger problem is that the U.S. has a strategic culture that does not appreciate history or strategy, nor does it devote sufficient attention to the breadth of adversaries facing it and the many different forms that human conflict can take. Many current critics of U.S. policy or strategy in the Middle East or Asia bemoan the aimless state of strategy and policy. While there are deficiencies in U.S. planning and strategy processes, the larger intellectual challenge is a blinkered conception of conflict that frequently quotes the great Prussian soldier Clausewitz without realizing the true essence of his theory and how it applies to the ever evolving, interactive phenomenon we call “war.” Moreover, the U.S. national security establishment too often fails to understand

opponents, their strategic cultures, and their own unique conceptions of victory and war.

Current perceptions about the risks of major war, our presumed preponderance of military power, a flawed understanding of irregular war, and our ingrained reliance on technological panaceas like precision-guided munitions (PGMs) and drone warfare make serious defense planning ever harder. This misunderstanding afflicts the military as much as it does political elites and the general public. At least three consequences can be expected from a flawed grasp of contemporary conflict:

- Unreasonable political and public expectations for quick wins at low cost,
- An overly simplistic grasp of the application of blunt military power and what it will supposedly achieve, and
- Naïve views of both adversaries and the context for conflict.

As our own recent history shows, however, the reality is much more complex. War is seldom so clear-cut, and “victory” is far more elusive in reality. The vast majority of conflicts are seldom as precise or as free of casualties or political frustrations as we tend to remember. We prefer Operation Desert Storm (1991) as a simple and satisfying war. It pitted good against evil, and its conclusion was decisive,

albeit not as decisive as World War II. But most conflicts are messy, relatively ill-defined in scope and by objective, with an array of actors, and unsatisfying in outcome.

The conflict spectrum includes a range of activities to which students and practitioners of war refer when attempting to characterize a given conflict by participants, methods, level of effort, types of forces, levels of organization or sophistication, etc. As should be expected in any attempt to define aspects of something as complex as war, there is ample debate over characterizations and definitions, whether one form of war is more or less complex than any other, or whether war can be so neatly categorized as to subdivide it along a spectrum in the first place. Debates over supposedly “new” and generational wars are common today in academic circles, and the prevalence of irregular wars is increasingly recognized.²

Generally speaking, large-scale conventional war is rather easy to understand. The term evokes images of tank battles, artillery barrages, planes bombing targets, and large masses of men clashing in battle as depicted in countless movies and books. Similarly, discussions of counterinsurgency (COIN) and stability operations often need little clarification given U.S. involvement in such operations for nearly 14 years in the larger Middle East and Central Asia regions.

Over the past decade, however, other terms have entered the lexicon of national security and defense analysts as they have attempted to describe conflicts that fall short of conventional war but are something substantively different from COIN and stability operations. What follows are descriptions of these other types in order to draw out and clarify the range variation of conflicts we face in the contemporary security environment.

Gray Zone Conflicts and Ambiguous Warfare

Recently, there has been a good deal of discussion about “gray zone” conflicts. This term appears in the 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) and has also been reflected in official Japanese government documents.³ The term captures deliberate multidimensional activities by a state actor just below the threshold of aggressive use of military forces. In such conflicts, adversaries employ an integrated suite of national and subnational instruments of power in an ambiguous war to gain specified strategic objectives without crossing the threshold of

overt conflict. Adversaries may employ proxy forces to increase the level of military power being used without losing deniability.

Examples of recent gray zone conflicts include China’s assertive behaviors in the South China Sea, sometimes referred to as “salami slicing tactics” by which they carefully erode the existing international order and attempt to change the norms of international behavior and assert their preferred reinterpretation of existing laws and rules of the road.⁴ China’s diplomatic assertions, information announcements, and deliberate use of fishery/maritime security forces to assert sovereignty in and around contested shoals and islands in the Pacific constitute a good case study in deliberately deniable acts of aggression. Russia appears to be following similar tactics in numerous countries, a form of “Simmering Borscht” by Russian officials seeking to extend Moscow’s sphere of influence without triggering an armed response by Western Europe or the United States.

Both cases clearly demonstrate that states that lack the capability to gain their strategic objectives with conventional means can find ways to erode the international order or to paralyze responses by other states through ambiguously aggressive actions. They also demonstrate that states that do possess the necessary conventional means may determine that their objectives can be achieved without resorting to conventional war and that this “gray zone” of war may actually suit their purposes better. These countries seem to recognize that U.S. strategic culture conceptualizes war and peace as two distinctive conditions—a perspective that is not held by other cultures.

Gray zone conflicts are aimed at a gap in our intellectual preparation of the battlespace and a seam in how we think about conflict. As noted by defense policy veteran Nadia Schadlow:

By failing to understand that the space between war and peace is not an empty one—but a landscape churning with political, economic, and security competitions that require constant attention—American foreign policy risks being reduced to a reactive and tactical emphasis on the military instrument by default.⁵

Senior U.K. officials have articulated the need to counter what they call ambiguous warfare. The relevance of this term can be seen in Russia’s seizure of

Crimea, as Moscow's planned actions were deliberately enacted to obscure attribution to Moscow and to paralyze or delay Western responses. But Russia's activities in eastern Ukraine, where over 7,000 fatalities and sizable battles have occurred, are anything but ambiguous: Russian forces, Spetsnaz advisers, armor, and artillery are employed there in direct support of Russian separatists. It is neither masked nor concealed.

The war in eastern Ukraine is not just a proxy war; it is a combination of advanced military assets with irregular forces, propaganda, and coercion of the civilian population. Vladimir Putin may elect to disavow these forces, promulgate new laws making any public notice of Russian casualties illegal, and cremate the bodies of his fallen soldiers to avoid revealing the depth and mounting costs of Russian involvement, but none of this makes the conflict anything other than a Russian operation.

Russia's larger set of activities against the West do not involve warfare as the U.S. has traditionally defined it. Moreover, "warfare" connotes a defense-centric response or a principal responsibility in solely military terms. Thus, "gray zone" or "ambiguous conflicts" are better terms that convey the complex nuances of such conflicts.

Irregular Wars

Irregular wars can be fought by states but generally involve non-state actors using sub-conventional capabilities including ambushes, raids, and minor attacks. Existing U.S. doctrine defines irregular warfare as a violent struggle among state and non-state actors for legitimacy and influence over the relevant populations.⁶ U.S. defense efforts in irregular warfare can include counterterrorism; unconventional warfare; foreign internal defense; counterinsurgency; and stability operations that, in the context of irregular warfare, involve establishing or reestablishing order in a fragile state or territory.⁷

Irregular warfare is characterized by indirect and asymmetric approaches that avoid direct and risky confrontations with strong forces. The goal for an irregular force is to erode its adversary's power, legitimacy, and will. Such conflicts are usually drawn out or protracted in time. They can include insurgencies, counterinsurgencies, terrorism, and counterterrorism. Modern cases of irregular warfare increasingly include activities that we traditionally characterize as criminal behavior, and transnational criminal organizations may be present in

such conflict. The level of violence in irregular wars can be low but can flare quickly with attacks or acts of terrorism.

These conflicts are well above the more indirect and less violent levels seen in gray zone conflicts but below the threshold of conventional war where armor, artillery and airpower assets are employed with greater degrees of integration and violence between combatants. The Islamic State or Daesh represents the high end of an irregular adversary, with high levels of adaptability and increasing lethality.⁸

Terrorism is a subset of irregular warfare. Terrorism is often a label assigned to certain types of armed groups rather than an accurate description of their mode of war. The official definition found in Title 22 of the U.S. Code provides that terrorism is "premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents."⁹ It could be a tactic of a revolutionary movement, or it could be the strategy of choice for a small cell of zealots.

There is widespread consensus in the security field that the democratization of lethal means of conflict will embolden small networks or even individuals to greater violence.¹⁰ Not much more than a decade ago, several forecasters projected a new age in ultra or catastrophic terrorism in which terrorists would attempt to kill thousands of Americans in a single day.¹¹ They were routinely ignored until 9/11. Politically motivated violence against innocent non-combatants has continued to evolve, with increasing numbers of large-scale attacks occurring in several ongoing conflicts, most of which are centered in civil wars. U.S. intelligence officials believe such conflicts (Nigeria, Libya, Yemen, Syria, and Iraq) constitute a major near-term threat to our interests.¹²

The past few years have seen a significant rise in terrorist attacks and fatalities.¹³ Much of this increase is connected to Islamic extremists.¹⁴ The U.S. government-sponsored National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) reported some 8,400 terrorist attacks in 2012, with 15,400 fatalities.¹⁵ The aggregate of fatalities is also increasing, as these attacks produced more than 17,800 deaths and 32,500 injuries in 2013.¹⁶

In 2014, the number of terrorist attacks jumped 35 percent, to 13,500, while the number of fatalities soared 81 percent, to 33,000.¹⁷ The majority of these attacks (60 percent) occurred in five countries

TABLE 1

Countries with the Most Terrorist Attacks in 2014

The number of terrorist attacks worldwide jumped 35 percent from 2013 to 2014, and fatalities rose 81 percent. The majority of these attacks (60 percent) occurred in just five countries.

	Total Attacks	Wounded	Fatalities	Average Killed per Attack
Iraq	3,370	14,956	6,378	3.07
Pakistan	1,821	4,989	2,315	0.99
Afghanistan	1,591	3,717	3,111	2.92
India	763	717	405	0.59
Nigeria	662	457	1,817	12.08
Syria	232	1,773	1,074	8.24
Worldwide	13,463	34,791	32,727	2.57

Source: U.S. State Department, "Country Reports on Terrorism 2014," p. 5, Table 2, <http://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/crt/2014/239416.htm> (accessed July 8, 2015).

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(Iraq, Pakistan, Afghanistan, India, and Nigeria), and almost 80 percent of fatalities from terrorist attacks also took place in five countries (Iraq, Nigeria, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Syria). Over 9,000 people were kidnapped, representing a 300 percent increase. The most significant increase was in large-scale attacks (those that kill over 100 people), which jumped tenfold from two to 20.¹⁸ (For the most violent states and global totals for 2014, see Table 1.)

Al-Qaeda's evolving but persistent threat is just one element in this projection.¹⁹ There is no doubt that the core of the old al-Qaeda has been transformed.²⁰ Some analysts contend that it has a better strategy, deeper bench, greater resilience or dexterity, more appeal, and higher amounts of sanctuary than imagined.²¹ As START Executive Director William Braniff has noted, "groups generally associated with al-Qa'ida remain the most lethal groups in the world."²² Worse, ISIS is competing with al-Qaeda for influence, assets, and recruits and is more nuanced in how it employs violence and combines terrorism, repression, and services.²³

Violence is not limited to the Middle East or South Asia. Boko Haram, for example, is considered responsible for over 10,000 deaths since 2001. It was designated a terrorist organization by the U.S. Department of State in 2013. Recent congressional reports have highlighted this group's linkages to al-Qaeda and potential for direct threats to American interests.²⁴ Its leader, Abu Bakr Shekau, pledged

allegiance to Islamic State emir Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi in March 2015.²⁵ Boko Haram's grisly campaign includes a suicide attack on a U.N. building in Abuja in 2011, repeated attacks that have killed dozens of students, and the kidnapping of 250 girls in 2014.²⁶

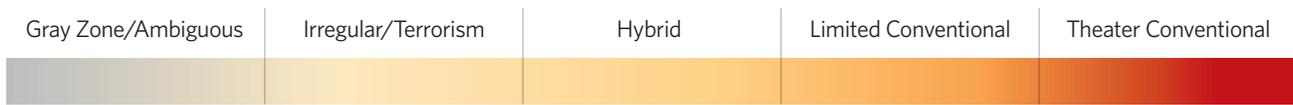
To help the reader, a construct for a spectrum of conflict is presented in Figure 1.

Hybrid Wars

Building on Marine General Charles Krulak's depiction of future wars as the "stepchild[ren] of Chechnya,"²⁷ U.S. Marine analysts identified trends suggesting deliberate efforts to blur and blend methods of war. This forecasted convergence evolved into a theory of hybrid threats.²⁸ The projection was borne out by the example of Hezbollah in Southern Lebanon a few years later and appears to be relevant to other conflicts as well.²⁹ Two Secretaries of Defense in the United States found the concept useful,³⁰ and numerous other military leaders, including Chiefs of Staff of the Army and several Joint leaders, recognized that current "bins" were not matching up with contemporary conflict.³¹ Hybrid threats are now part of the lexicon used by the senior levels of the U.S. military in the Quadrennial Defense Reviews, in national-level intelligence reports on the future character of war, and in various top-level documents of other countries.³² Some European military analysts, pushed by Russia's example, have also embraced the hybrid evolution as a feature of contemporary conflict.³³

FIGURE 1

Spectrum of Conflict in Unconventional Warfare



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The term “hybrid” reflects more than a cross-breeding or blurring of regular and irregular tactics. It was originally defined as involving “Any adversary that simultaneously and adaptively employs a fused mix of conventional weapons, irregular tactics, catastrophic terrorism, and criminal behavior in the battlespace to obtain desired political objectives.”³⁴ The crime, socially disruptive behavior, and mass terrorism aspects of hybrid warfare should not be overlooked, but the fusion of advanced capabilities with the fluidity of irregular tactics is key and has been borne out repeatedly over the past decade. Hybrid theory is also seen in Russian campaigns in Georgia and Ukraine.³⁵ In the Crimea, Russia demonstrated that it had learned from its performance in Georgia in 2008 and had sought more indirect and hybrid methods.³⁶ This was hardly new or “ambiguous,” but it was effective under very unique circumstances. This led the Secretary General of NATO in Brussels to employ the term as well.

Putin is certainly not reinventing warfare, but a new generation of leaders, spawned within the KGB, are clearly applying long-standing Russian concepts of protracted conflict that are not well understood by Americans.³⁷ The chief of Russia’s general staff noted in 2013 that “War and peace, are becoming more blurred. Methods of conflict have changed, and now involve the broad use of political, economic, informational, humanitarian and other non-military measures.”³⁸ What some call the “Gerasimov Doctrine” is consistent with the trends identified by U.S. military theorists and the intelligence community about hybrid threats. For this reason, hybrid warfare is now an explicit discussion point at NATO and major European think tanks.³⁹

It also applies to Iranian doctrine and exercises.⁴⁰ Hybrid threat theory is most often tied to ground conflicts, but Iranian naval force investments and exercises clearly demonstrate that high-tech, swarming, hybrid war at sea is possible.⁴¹ Iran’s mixture of fast

but lethal small boats, mini-submarines, mines, illegal seizures, advanced anti-ship cruise missiles, and threats to interdict vital oil lanes is very representative of a hybrid maritime threat.

Some analysts have recently conflated hybrid threats “with incremental approaches to remain below the threshold of intervention from the U.S. or our allies.”⁴² Such an extension of hybrid threat theory is understandable given the theory’s sourcing from Russian and Chinese writings, which deal with the fusion of various non-military tools (finance, propaganda, lawfare, etc.) with threats of force. However, as noted earlier, the “below the threshold” idea fits better with gray zone or ambiguous conflicts, which involve conflict activity short of violence. Hybrid threats ably combine various modes of fighting in time and space, with attendant violence in the middle of the conflict spectrum. Gray zone conflicts do not cross that threshold and use a different mix of methods, entirely short of bloodshed.

Unconventional Conflict

Some authors have advanced the concept that we need to reinvigorate U.S. capacity to engage in “warfare” with greater agility at lower levels short of war. Max Boot and Dave Maxwell have noted American deficiencies in responding to foreign sources of conflict that the United States used to deal with during the Cold War.⁴³ They have refreshed George Kennan’s arguments from the 1950s for the institutionalization of U.S. capacity for political warfare, which Kennan defined as:

the employment of all the means at a nation’s command, short of war, to achieve its national objectives. Such operations are both overt and covert. They range from such overt actions as political alliances, economic measures, and “white” propaganda to such covert operations as clandestine support of “friendly” foreign elements, “black”

psychological warfare and even encouragement of underground resistance in hostile states.⁴⁴

Kennan's definition of political warfare is misleading. His concept has little to do with warfare *per se*; it is largely about non-military efforts associated with subversion or counter-subversion. While these can have a political element to them, in terms of aiding political groups and factions, the range of efforts involved goes beyond the diplomatic and political sphere.

But there is little doubt that unconventional warfare and the types of techniques included in Kennan's definition of political warfare are relevant to the 21st century.⁴⁵ Unlike other forms of warfare in the proposed spectrum of conflict, unconventional warfare does not fit easily within a spectrum in terms of the scale of violence. Moreover, unconventional warfare can occur concurrently with other methods in both peace and war. Thus, it is depicted in Figure 1 as ranging across the entire spectrum, not just by the intensity of violence.

This concept would seem to have great merit as a response to both Russian and Chinese actions in gray zone conflicts, since neither state embraces the idea that war and peace are binary conditions. Both of them, as well as other strategic cultures, envision a more complex continuum of cooperation, competition, collaboration, and conflict. Moreover, many other nations do not organize their government institutions with the same black-and-white military and non-military distinctions as the U.S. maintains. There is evidence that some components of the U.S. military are devoting intellectual capital to this issue,⁴⁶ and Congress has shown interest in assessing U.S. capabilities in this domain. By its nature, a U.S. capacity for unconventional warfare would involve the ability to develop and execute a strategy that tightly integrated measures needed to counter the subversion, propaganda, and political actions of gray area conflict short of actual warfare.

Experience with the Russians, both during the Cold War and more recently, suggests that the admixture of political/economic/subversive activity remains an element of their operational art and one that we would be well advised to begin studying so that we can counter it.⁴⁷ For example, the information domain will be increasingly contested. Both states and non-state groups will exploit the Internet and other forms of social media across the conflict spectrum.⁴⁸ We can expect to see cyber insecurity and information warfare attacks as part of any

serious challenger's portfolio, with such tools rapidly evolving to the point where they should be considered a "combat arm" of the unconventional threat.⁴⁹

Limited Conventional War

To the right of hybrid conflicts on the spectrum, we next consider "limited" wars. These are generally fought between state actors using conventional military means but are bounded by such limiting considerations as geographic boundaries, types of targets, or disciplined use of force.

When considering objectives being pursued with military means, one man's limited war is admittedly another's total war. As an example, the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003 was conceived and executed within the limited category. Overthrowing Saddam Hussein's regime by conventional force of arms was an absolute objective, and Hussein's efforts to prevent its achievement made the war an unlimited event fought for survival, but the conduct of the war by the U.S. was highly disciplined in target selection, geographic setting, initial objectives, and the way in which military force was used.

Sir Lawrence Freedman has applied the term "limited conventional war" to describe the Ukrainian conflict,⁵⁰ but there are two problems with this classification in this instance.

First, as a concept emanating from Cold War-era discussions of the application of nuclear weapons, it addresses Moscow's objectives but says little about the details of Russia's strategy or methods. In fact, most wars are inherently limited by objective or means of fighting. Clausewitz's theoretical ideal of "absolute wars" is rarely pursued. Thus, the term has little intellectual value or granularity since it makes few useful distinctions other than stating the obvious: that Russia is not actively using the full range of its strategic arsenal. More particularly, it says little about Kiev's perspective, as the dismemberment of Ukraine is hardly a limited matter for that government.

Second, limited wars are generally conventional wars, conducted by state actors that are relatively open about operating short of their full military capacity in pursuit of limited aims. This is something that, because of Russia's deliberate ambiguity and opaqueness in its activities, is not terribly relevant or accurate with regard to the character of conflict in eastern Ukraine or the methods Russia is using to obtain its policy aims.

The challenge of characterizing any conflict aside, this remains a necessary and useful category

to describe conflicts between regional powers or by a major power along its borders, if only because it facilitates informed debate on corresponding policies, diplomatic and political responses, and one's own military efforts.

Major Theater War

After more than 20 years of peace support, stability, and counterinsurgency operations in Africa, the Balkans, and the Middle East, many in the security community have lost sight of the potential for major theater wars. In fact, a lot of pundits mistakenly believe that great-power competition and serious large-scale combat are things of the past. Sadly, they are wrong. There have been positive trends in reduced levels of interstate conflict for a generation, but several key conditions that buttressed that era of strategic stability are being eroded.

The prevailing American-led power structure has contributed to subdued levels of interstate conflict and war. However, that system and its attendant security are being challenged by major powers, abetted by a reduced U.S. presence in key regions and diplomatic affairs relative to the Cold War era and by some regional players who are building up or pursuing nuclear weapons and acquiring other destabilizing weapon systems. Alterations in the current power system by China's significant economic development and rapid military modernization, or by Russia's more militaristic approach to its security interests in Europe, the Arctic, and elsewhere, conceivably could produce circumstances in which great-power competition erupts into a war.⁵¹

Even academics favoring a less assertive foreign policy and a smaller U.S. military admit that “[h]istorically, transition periods marked by hegemonic decline and the simultaneous emergence of new great powers have been unstable and prone to war.”⁵² The emergence of rising powers generates armed conflict with the existing predominant powers.⁵³ Major conflict can also be generated by fears of declining powers that may be inclined to take far greater risks to preclude losing prestige or influence. Russia's actions during the past two years give some clues as to the potentiality for interstate war from a power that cannot resolve its lost capacity to sustain its status or that seeks to deflect public attention from a declining domestic condition.

Great-power conflict is never inevitable, but for evidence of a disturbing trend, it should be noted that while U.S. military budgets are being reduced

some 25 percent in real terms, aggregate military spending in Asia is on the rise and is now greater than total spending in Europe.⁵⁴ Moreover, spending by European allies of the U.S. is down sharply as they attempt to reestablish their economic growth while holding on to social safety nets.

Declines in the preponderance of U.S. power in the Asia-Pacific theater have reduced conventional deterrence, and China's military expansion could accelerate instability. The United States is challenged to demonstrate that it retains the ability to conduct military operations in the Asia-Pacific region and fulfill its treaty obligations to its allies. This requires a military capacity—one that is growing increasingly suspect—to achieve two critical U.S. objectives: maintaining freedom of the commons (air, sea, space, and cyberspace) and limiting the potential for large-scale regional conflict through deterrence. The goal, one strategist noted, “is to leave everyone in Asia believing that when it comes to solving regional problems, there are better answers than the force of arms.”⁵⁵

In addition to great-power competition, conflicts can be stoked by weak leaders exploiting sectarian tensions for personal political benefit or buttressing their legitimacy by appeals to nationalism. This can produce aggressive or irrational acts. Nationalist fervor can spin out of control, inflating fears or goals beyond cold calculations of national interest and political compromise, which in turn can lead to gross miscalculation and aggressive actions that increase the odds of conflict. The possibility that this might occur in Asia cannot be overlooked. Meanwhile, in Europe, Putin often exploits the deepest chords of Russian nationalism and Orthodox Christianity to buttress his melting political capital.⁵⁶

The combination of decreased American engagement and military capacity with the overt aggressiveness of two authoritarian states that do not hesitate to flout accepted norms of international behavior is not helpful. The U.S. is facing the increased potential for major conflict between large states that have advanced and potent military capabilities. Any comprehensive assessment of the overall force size, capabilities, and readiness levels of the U.S. military should raise concerns about the country's ability to handle such a major crisis, even noting that perceptions of American weakness can prompt militarized opportunism.

America has entered an era in which its technological advantage is rapidly being eroded and its

military superiority is increasingly being challenged. This has led to calls from the Pentagon to energize efforts to seek a leap-ahead technology to offset its lost technical dominance.⁵⁷

Given the high possibility of sustained small conflicts (gray, irregular, and hybrid), the potential incidence of limited and major conflict also increases, because any American Administration can find itself without adequate means to deter or defeat attacks from opportunists or aggressor states.⁵⁸ Moreover, readiness funding levels to cover the full range of training tasks needed for the spectrum of threats for which the military must be prepared are lacking.

The world has enjoyed a holiday from major-power war for quite some time. The aggregate effect of America's potent strategic deterrent, military preparedness, and robust alliances produced a long peace. All of these contextual conditions are now at risk as a consequence of sequestration and the West's reduced willingness and capacity to take active measures to sustain an international order that was carefully designed and sustained to preserve peace. As former Pentagon official Dov Zakheim has observed, "The whittling away of American preeminence that we have witnessed over the past decade was not foreordained. It was the product of conscious choices...."⁵⁹ We should consciously reset those choices to be better prepared for tomorrow's conflicts.

Conclusion

The U.S. national security community should avoid narrow categorizations. The black-and-white distinction between war and peace, or traditional war and irregular war, makes for nice, simple boxes, but the real world is not so easily categorized. In fact, some adversaries seek to exploit U.S. paradigms and the gaping institutional seams that they create.

Rather, we need to embrace the fact that future opponents have their own ideas about how to fight, and they tend to mix and match those ideas with deliberate combinations of modes of conflict. Hard-wired and quaint notions of declared wars between states with symmetrically equipped armies and navies facing each other on defined battlegrounds are no longer helpful. The U.S. must expand its definitions and concepts beyond its history, cultural biases, and organizational preferences. Ultimately, its security is predicated upon its national security community's being aware of the enduring continuities of war *and* possessing an adaptive ability to counter the many forms that warfare can take.

The United States faces adversaries capable of using strategies and techniques across the entire conflict spectrum. It must not give ground in gray zone conflicts if its interests are challenged. Europe and the Middle East today are a Petri dish of hybrid conflict,⁶⁰ and the Defense Department's current leadership team understands this evolving hybrid challenge.⁶¹ The U.S. needs to prepare for that, and reinvigorating its unconventional conflict capability will help.⁶² We should not lose sight of the reality that the "gold standard" for high-end conventional war is based on excellence in joint combined arms warfare.

Large-scale conflict between states is not a relic of history. The potential for interstate war still exists and is arguably increasing. It is the most demanding form of war with the most costly of consequences, and the U.S. is less prepared for it than it should be—a concern raised in the bipartisan Independent QDR Report, which found that the U.S. is seriously short-changing its national security interests.⁶³ Appreciating the broad range of challenges and threats we face is the first step toward recognizing a growing danger.

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Preempting Further Russian Aggression Against Europe

Martin Hurt

Introduction

The occupation and illegal annexation of Crimea and the subsequent war in eastern Ukraine indicate that Russia is both able and willing to use military force against neighboring nations. This should not come as a surprise considering Russia's invasion of Georgia in 2008.

A few years earlier, nine of Russia's neighbors decided to join the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) after the end of the Cold War to secure their paths toward free and democratic societies. As a result, NATO enlargements in 1999 and 2004 saw Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Romania, and Bulgaria join the alliance. These European nations are now part of the collective defense system in which the United States remains the most powerful member.

The alliance has held thus far, but in recent years, Russian President Vladimir Putin has challenged the post-Cold War world order. NATO members that share borders with Russia and have large ethnic Russian populations are under severe political, military, and economic pressure from Moscow. Ukraine, which is not a member of NATO or the European Union (EU), has Russian forces on its soil and has struggled to maintain its sovereignty, having lost Crimea and large swaths of its Eastern mainland territory to Russian-backed separatist groups.

Without U.S. leadership in this region, Europe is not likely to have the strength or resolve to resist further Russian aggression. Though similar incursions

within NATO members' territory are considered less likely, if European powers continue their implicit approval of Russia's aggressive actions, Eastern NATO members fear that their own territorial integrity is at risk.

Reassuring European Allies

When Russian forces occupied Crimea on February 27, 2014, NATO responded quickly by employing measures aimed at reassuring its easternmost member states. NATO strengthened its Baltic Air Policing mission, with the U.S. initially shifting some fighter and tanker aircraft from the United Kingdom to Lithuania to join aircraft already based there.¹ A month later, the North Atlantic Council (NAC) decided to strengthen NATO's collective defense and demonstrate the alliance's solidarity by deploying additional aircraft, ships, and land force units eastward, including to the Baltic Sea region. A week later, four mine countermeasure vessels and a naval auxiliary ship were deployed to the Baltic Sea.²

At the end of April, four companies of the U.S. 173rd Airborne Brigade (based in Vicenza, Italy) were sent to Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland to join national defense forces in conducting exercises and shoring up security in the region.³ NATO's Air Policing Mission also increased the number of aircraft involved and expanded geographically, with four Danish F-16s beginning patrols from Ämari Air Base in Estonia.⁴ The U.S. contributed the majority of the assets to this effort.⁵

America's presence in Central and Eastern Europe has been maintained through Operation Atlantic Resolve, involving exercises and training on land, in the air, and at sea while sustaining a rotational presence across Europe.⁶ As part of both the 2015 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) and the 2015 Defense Appropriations Act, the European Reassurance Initiative provides \$1 billion in funding to enable the Department of Defense to continue its efforts to reassure NATO allies and bolster the security and capacity of partners in the region.⁷ The units from the 173rd Airborne Brigade initially deployed to the Baltic States and Poland were eventually replaced with units from the 1st Cavalry Division and the 3rd Infantry Division.⁸ The 3rd Squadron, 2nd Cavalry Regiment, also undertook the "Dragoon Ride," a 1,100-mile convoy of over 600 soldiers and 120 military vehicles across six European countries in March 2015. This exercise was an attempt to demonstrate solidarity among the allied nations and a chance for the U.S. military to interact with local populations.⁹

The NAC's March 2014 decision to bolster collective defense forces was intended to reassure Eastern European member states and demonstrate to Russia that the alliance was resolved to defend itself. The U.S. government likewise created the European Reassurance Initiative to show its commitment to upholding NATO members' security and territorial integrity.¹⁰ These activities have been described as aiming "to offer reassurance to countries that are feeling nervous about President Vladimir Putin's intentions in the region."¹¹ The units that were sent to the Baltic States and Poland were therefore sent primarily to underscore solidarity among NATO members rather than to deter Russia by deploying significant combat units. Western decision-makers assumed that Russia would continue to be deterred solely by a capability-and-capacity comparison between the forces of Russia and the forces of NATO. The problem with this assumption is that the United States provides most of NATO's military capabilities and that few of them are in Europe.

Another factor that undermines NATO's credibility has been its member states' continued failure to make defense a priority. For example:

- Despite the political commitments made at the NATO Wales Summit in September 2014 to halt any decline in defense expenditure, six out of

the 14 states examined by the European Leadership Network in early 2015 will cut defense expenditure.¹²

- The U.S. Army is reducing the number of assets and personnel permanently assigned to its only European-based Combat Aviation Brigade (CAB), adopting instead "continuous rotational" deployments. The 12th CAB in Germany will lose 24 Boeing AH-64 Apaches; 30 Sikorsky UH-60 Black Hawks (plus nine HH-60 medical evacuation platforms); three Boeing CH-47 Chinook helicopters; and the Bell OH-58D Kiowa Warrior scout fleet, which is being divested from the U.S. Army. In addition to these aircraft reductions, the 12th CAB will lose 1,900 personnel.¹³ This step likely undermines the effectiveness of Operation Atlantic Resolve.
- The so-called Minsk II agreement among Ukraine, Russia, France, and Germany in early 2015 has indirectly legitimated Russia's aggression against Ukraine and removed the occupation of Crimea from the European community's agenda. Statements made by European politicians during the Minsk negotiations betrayed a belief that a deal—even one likely to be repeatedly violated—was so vital that its deleterious impact on deterrence was an acceptable price to pay. According to German Defense Minister Ursula von der Leyen, the delivery of weapons to the government in Kyiv would not help to end the conflict.¹⁴ Thus, while Russia has deployed its forces to Crimea and eastern Ukraine and is also sending weapons, supplies, and contractors to their proxies, the West still hesitates to deliver lethal weapons to the democratically elected government in Kyiv.

Russia One Step Ahead of the West

Russia has repeatedly surprised European nations by launching unannounced "snap exercises." The term "snap exercises" (sometimes called "snap inspections") refers to major military exercises ordered with little or no notice.¹⁵ The Russian military has claimed that the purpose of such exercises is to test the readiness of its forces, but observers have argued that they are meant to impress the West with Russia's military strength. In 2014 and 2015, Russia raised concerns among its neighbors by conducting a series of "snap exercises" of a magnitude not previously seen.

- An exercise on December 5–10, 2014, focused on the units in Kaliningrad oblast and involved 9,000 servicemen, 250 tanks and armored personnel carriers (APCs), over 100 artillery units, 55 warships and the Iskander ballistic missile system.¹⁶ According to one expert, it is believed to have included practice for a surprise attack against a Baltic Sea nation with a brigade-size airborne unit from the Russian 76th Guards Air Assault Division from Pskov, near the Estonian border.¹⁷ The exercise also included sorties by nuclear-capable Tu-95 Bear strategic bombers and Tu-22M Backfire long-range bombers.
- On February 16, 2015, Russia’s Defense Ministry started a “snap inspection” of its paratrooper units in western Russia.¹⁸ In the Pskov region, close to the Estonian border, an exercise involved some 2,000 troops and 500 units of military equipment.¹⁹
- In March 2015, without previous warning, Russia conducted a five-day exercise involving 45,000 troops, 3,000 vehicles, 110 aircraft, 15 submarines, and 40 surface vessels.²⁰ The Russian Northern Fleet was brought to full combat readiness.²¹

The early warning capabilities of NATO member states including the United States have not been successful in forecasting these exercises and operations. General Philip Breedlove, Commander, U.S. European Command (EUCOM), and Supreme Allied Commander, Europe, told the Senate Armed Services Committee in April 2015 that:

Russian military operations over the past year, in Ukraine and in the region more broadly, have underscored that there are critical gaps in our collection and analysis. Some Russian military exercises have caught us by surprise, and our textured feel for Russian involvement on the ground in Ukraine has been quite limited.²²

Additionally, Lieutenant General Ben Hodges, Commander, U.S. Army in Europe (USAREUR), was impressed by the speed with which Russia can move 30,000 troops and 1,000 tanks.²³

On the political level, NATO member states have employed a reactive approach vis-à-vis Russia. This is best reflected in the Readiness Action Plan approved by allied leaders at NATO’s Wales Summit

in September 2014. In addition to the previously cited assurance measures, the plan includes adaptation measures aimed at raising readiness, enhancing responsiveness by increasing the size of the NATO Response Force (NRF), and creating a brigade-size Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF), as well as conducting more exercises.²⁴ The importance of the Readiness Action Plan should not be underestimated, but it also should not be overemphasized. The details of the classified plan were subject to a lengthy drafting process and should therefore be seen as a compromise between the member states that share a border with Russia and other members that, at least at the time, had more difficulty appreciating the extent of the Russian threat.

One of the assumptions upon which the Readiness Action Plan relies is the ability of NATO’s North Atlantic Council to forecast Russian military action, take necessary decisions, and actually deploy the VJTF *before* Russia uses its Anti-Access/Area Denial (A2/AD) capabilities in the Baltic Sea region, primarily in Kaliningrad.²⁵ This is a complicated task for several reasons:

1. *The reluctance among Western decision-makers to consider the use of military force.* Western political leaders have repeatedly demonstrated that they consider an escalation of a tense situation to be something negative *per se*, even if the aim of such escalation would be to change the behavior of an aggressor. Numerous examples were seen in 2014 when the heads of state of the United States, Germany, and France were eager to warn against any steps that would escalate the situation in eastern Ukraine.²⁶ Among the other excuses often used to justify Western passivity is the need to maintain a constructive dialogue with Russia through shuttle diplomacy.²⁷ Would the same political leaders really instruct their ambassadors in NATO to deploy the VJTF before a military conflict and thus risk escalating the situation?
2. *Russia’s A2/AD capabilities.* If Russia’s behavior does in fact rise to a level that would trigger NATO deployment of the VJTF, Russia would not likely refrain from using its A2/AD capabilities. Russia continues to invest in programs that increasingly can limit or deny NATO forces access to some of the alliance’s easternmost member states. There should be little illusion that Russia’s leaders will cease these programs.

3. *The small size of the VJTF.* The VJTF, a brigade-size unit, would be useful in a scenario in which Russia would deploy only a fraction of its forces against a NATO member state, similar to the hybrid war scenario demonstrated in Ukraine before August 2014. In the case of a large-scale scenario involving units that have been tested through unannounced “snap exercises,” only the entire 30,000-strong NATO Response Force would offer the required size.

Thus, NATO’s Readiness Action Plan is too focused on response and contemplates only symbolic effort to preempt Russian aggression against NATO member states. The reassurance measures implemented by the U.S. and other NATO members work only up to a certain point. If Russia is not deterred, then the Kremlin might be tempted to use military force against one of the Baltic States to prove that Article 5 of the Washington Treaty will not be invoked.

What Next?

One might be tempted to conclude that if Western leaders continue to cut defense spending and more U.S. forces are withdrawn from Europe while Russia’s modernization program is advancing, then the comparative strength of Russia’s military vis-à-vis NATO in Europe will inevitably increase. If Western decision-makers aim to de-escalate a potential conflict, then the right thing to do from Russia’s viewpoint would be to escalate by using military force whenever the gains would exceed the cost of doing so. In the short term, even if NATO responded militarily, the alliance could muster only a small number of forces in Europe. Additional U.S. forces would need to be transported to Europe from the United States, similar to what was planned in the event of a Soviet attack on Europe during the Cold War.

In the 1980s, however, around a quarter of a million U.S. troops were stationed in West Germany, ready to take the first Soviet blow. Today, there are 150 troops in each of the Baltic States plus Poland. The current U.S. force posture in Europe reflects the environment after the attacks of September 11, 2001, when Russia was seen as a partner, not as a potential adversary. Operation Atlantic Resolve has no strategic impact on Russia’s behavior.

Through its incursions into Georgia and Ukraine, Russia has demonstrated that it considers the use of military force to be an acceptable method for

achieving its strategic goals. Experts believe that a military conflict between Russia and NATO members could occur in two different ways.

In the first scenario, it is possible that Russia could exploit Russian-speaking minorities living primarily in Estonia and Latvia by raising the level of dissatisfaction through disinformation and launch a so-called hybrid war. For years, the Kremlin has targeted the Russian speakers in the Baltic States with tailor-made propaganda. Political instability would weaken the national governments and eventually lead to a situation in which “local separatists” consisting of activists, criminals, and members of volunteer movements opposed what they would characterize as fascist regimes in Tallinn and Riga. If national law enforcement failed to reinstate constitutional order, national governments would turn to their NATO allies and ask that collective defense mechanisms be invoked. It would not be farfetched to believe that more than one member state would hesitate before agreeing to deploy its NATO forces to restore law and order.

Thus, the primary aim of military action against the West would not be to gain territory, but to demonstrate that NATO and the European Union are not able to protect their member states. If NATO member states did not invoke Article 5, the alliance would essentially cease to exist.

However, even though a similar Russian strategy was successful in eastern Ukraine, most people do not believe that it could easily be replicated in Estonia and Latvia, for several reasons.

First, Ukrainian authorities were infiltrated by Russian security and intelligence officials. The Ukrainian armed forces were not only severely mismanaged and underfunded; they were also deliberately weakened in order to remove a tool that would have provided the Ukrainian political leadership with more options to resist Russian aggression.

Second, the Baltic States have been able to transform themselves away from their Soviet past into modern democracies that are now part of the European Union and NATO. As a result, they are less vulnerable to Russian influence.

Another possible scenario is a Russian “snap exercise” unexpectedly turning into an attack on one or more of the Baltic States. To consolidate its gains, Russia would attempt to deny other NATO members access to the Baltic Sea, seal off the land corridor to the Baltic States, and possibly even use tactical nuclear weapons against Poland as was demonstrated in

a 2009 military exercise code named “Zapad-99.”²⁸ Regardless of whether NATO invoked Article 5 in this scenario, its members’ weakness could have emboldened Russia to take these actions.

The company-sized units of approximately 150 personnel each that have rotated through Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland since April 2014 do little to deter Russia. If Russia used military force, these units would have very limited capability to defend these NATO member nations and protect themselves.

One only has to study the example from Srebrenica, a little Bosnian city with a population of 15,000 that today is well-known because of the massacre that Bosnian Serb forces organized in 1994.²⁹ The city was protected by a Dutch battalion of 400 personnel under United Nations command, equipped with armored personnel carriers and TOW anti-tank missiles, and with access to close air support. Nevertheless, the unit proved unable to protect the city and the civilians. Members of the Dutch unit were taken hostage and stripped to their underwear. Bosnian Serb soldiers equipped themselves with uniforms and vehicles they had stolen from surrendering Dutch troops. The events that followed, with more than 8,000 Bosnian Muslim men and boys being executed by Bosnian Serb forces, have come to mark the failure of the United Nations to prepare or react.³⁰ A similar development involving the relatively small forces that have been deployed as part of Operation Atlantic Resolve would have a devastating effect on the credibility of NATO and its member states.

Recapturing the territories of a NATO member state occupied by Russian forces would be costly and most likely would involve Kremlin threats to use nuclear weapons. In the worst possible case, Russia might actually use nuclear weapons to discourage allies from recapturing occupied territories. Therefore, the obvious solution would be to use proactive measures and discourage the Kremlin from attacking rather than being forced to react to a Russian attack. This could be achieved only through credible deterrence that included deploying substantial NATO forces in the Baltic States.

The NATO–Russia Founding Act vs. the Washington Treaty

The overall objective of NATO’s force posture should be to deter potential aggressors from attacking a member state. So far, however, leaders of some

NATO member states, primarily German Chancellor Angela Merkel, have ruled out a permanent NATO troop presence in Eastern Europe, referring to the NATO–Russia Founding Act, signed in May 1997.³¹

The first sentence of the Founding Act declares that NATO and Russia “will build together a lasting and inclusive peace in the Euro-Atlantic area on the principles of democracy and cooperative security.”³² The Act provides many examples of language that were symptomatic of the political climate in the late 1990s but did not foresee the current reality, such as: “NATO reiterates that in the current and foreseeable security environment, the Alliance will carry out its collective defence and other missions by ensuring the necessary interoperability, integration, and capability for reinforcement rather than by additional permanent stationing of substantial combat forces.” The document also committed that “Russia will exercise similar restraint in its conventional force deployments in Europe.”³³

By using military force against Georgia and Ukraine, the Kremlin has clearly not followed the Founding Act. Russia’s aggressive behavior against the Transatlantic Community, involving threats to use nuclear weapons against Denmark and Sweden, large-scale “snap exercises,” and border violations, should bring this wishful thinking about Russia’s intentions to an end. Instead, it is time to focus on NATO’s core task: collective defense. NATO asserts that “[t]he principle of collective defence is at the very heart of NATO’s founding treaty.”³⁴ The organization describes this responsibility in Article 5 of that treaty:

The parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all and consequently they agree that, if such an armed attack occurs, each of them, in exercise of the right of individual or collective self-defence recognized by Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, will assist the Party or Parties so attacked by taking forthwith, individually and in concert with the other Parties, such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force, to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area.³⁵

NATO cannot falter on this primary responsibility, even under pressure from its large, adversarial neighbor to the East. Considerations or influence

from third parties cannot be more important than the security of NATO's member states. NATO officials reasserted this during their most recent debate about new membership. In the fall of 2014, former NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen stated that no third party should have a de facto veto over enlargement policy and that "each country will continue to be judged on its merits."³⁶ Should a country like Georgia meet the benchmarks for NATO membership, Russian objections should not deny that country the opportunity to join. The same can be said for permanent basing in NATO's eastern member states, which Russia has sought to prevent.³⁷

NATO's new Central and Eastern European (CEE) member states have contributed actively to alliance and coalition operations and by so doing have demonstrated their will to defend NATO's principles and collective security. Participating in hazardous operations inevitably involves sacrifices. According to available information, eight CEE countries have suffered losses in Afghanistan, totaling 94 killed in action as of April 22, 2015.³⁸ In Iraq, between 2004 and 2007, seven countries in the region suffered an additional 50 fatalities. Estonia suffered one of the highest per-capita casualty rates among all of the countries participating in the ISAF mission in Afghanistan.³⁹ These member states reasonably also expect to be supported by fellow NATO members when their security is under threat.

Conclusion

Russia has demonstrated in Georgia and Ukraine that it is able and willing to use military force against neighboring nations. This should come as no surprise, but the West has employed a passive and reactive approach vis-à-vis Russia. Instead of deterring the Kremlin, NATO has placed more emphasis on reassuring the easternmost member states. Rather than preempting further Russian aggression by backing up deterrence with real military capabilities, the alliance has decided to spend much effort on boosting the NATO Response Force—in itself

a reactive rather than proactive force. Russia has proved that it is able to surprise the West with its large-scale unannounced "snap exercises," and NATO's reactive approach increases the risk that Russia will decide to mount additional challenges to the alliance.

American and European leaders have been reluctant to provide significant support to Ukraine in its war with Russia. Ukraine has become the main battleground for Russia's war against the West. Americans and Europeans may not want to acknowledge this conflict, but it is important that they stop signaling weakness that will further embolden Russia.

Shifting factors on the ground in Eastern Europe will continue to affect Moscow's calculus. NATO can influence Russia's continued push into Eastern Europe by exercising a few options that could go a long way toward deterring further expansion. For example:

- Providing Ukraine with lethal weapons to defend its own territory could push back the separatist movements, at least in the western part of that country, while also signaling that NATO members are taking an active stance against Russia.
- NATO could also establish more robust proactive deterrence measures, such as permanent bases or a greater commitment to preexisting security forces, in its Central and Eastern European member states.

It is unlikely that Russia will make an incursion into a NATO member's territory in the immediate future, either directly or through support of a separatist group. However, NATO's continued acceptance of Moscow's provocations will only further embolden Putin. Ultimately, it will be far easier to defend NATO territory than it will be to liberate it. Sending a strong message that the alliance is serious about territorial integrity will help to ensure that Russia never violates it.

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Intelligence and National Defense

David R. Shedd

Every successful military plan and operation relies on intelligence. Whether it is a simple field report from a scout about an enemy position or the methodical development of the mosaic of intelligence gathered from myriad sources over years that resulted in the successful raid of Osama bin Laden's Abbottabad compound, intelligence plays a vital role in our national defense. The diversity and rapidly changing nature of the threats we face as a nation underscore the need for sound intelligence in the hands of those who are charged with making decisions about our security.

This is not a new phenomenon. Intelligence has played a role in national defense since well before the United States was founded. Timely intelligence, however, is the beginning of the surprising and often difficult decisions that are made in war, where force is often critical.¹ Since earliest recorded history, accounts of people using espionage to try to understand the intentions of the adversary abound.

- Early Egyptian pharaohs employed agents of espionage to ferret out disloyal subjects and to locate tribes that could be conquered and enslaved. From 1,000 B.C. onwards, Egyptian espionage operations focused on foreign intelligence about the political and military strength of rivals Greece and Rome.²
- The legendary story of the Trojan Horse, a wooden structure given to the city of Troy as a gift but which contained several hundred Greek soldiers

seeking safe entrance into the heavily fortified rival city, became the symbol of Grecian intelligence prowess.³

- The Romans used intelligence to conquer the people of the Italian Peninsula. They used scouts on regular assignments against the Samnites and Gauls, and because of advance intelligence, they could often catch their enemies by launching surprise attacks and rout their camps.⁴

During the 20th century's two world wars, intelligence played a vital role in allowing the United States military and its allies to prevail. Examples that immediately come to mind include Operation Mincemeat, the World War II British-led operation to deceive the Nazis into thinking that Allied forces were planning to attack southern Europe by way of Greece or Sardinia rather than Sicily, as the Nazis had assumed.⁵ Another example of the critical role of intelligence was the Allied forces' successful exploitation of the Enigma machine used by the Nazis to encrypt their military transmissions during the war.⁶ There were thousands of other intelligence successes, including intelligence-led operations behind enemy lines by the Central Intelligence Agency's predecessor, the Office of Strategic Services (OSS).

Of course, as one would expect, there also have been intelligence failures with profound ramifications. One notable and recent such failure resulted

in a faulty case for the invasion of Iraq in March 2003. Notwithstanding many grievances by the U.S. and the international community with the Iraqi despotism of Saddam Hussein, the case for war was based fundamentally on what turned out to be erroneous intelligence assessments concerning the threat posed by Iraq's weapons of mass destruction (WMD). Post-invasion, it was determined that no meaningful WMD program was in place in Iraq at the time of invasion.⁷ The WMD Commission highlighted this failure in their transmittal letter to President George W. Bush in the spring of 2005:

We conclude that the Intelligence Community was dead wrong in almost all of its pre-war judgments about Iraq's weapons of mass destruction. This was a major intelligence failure. Its principal causes were the Intelligence Community's inability to collect good information about Iraq's WMD programs, serious errors in analyzing what information it could gather, and a failure to make clear just how much of its analysis was based on assumptions, rather than good evidence. On a matter of this importance, we simply cannot afford failures of this magnitude.⁸

Each of the topical essays in The Heritage Foundation's 2015 *Index of U.S. Military Strength*, which range from broad subjects like "What Is National Security?" to "The Importance of Special Operations Forces Today and Going Forward," works from the premise that a robust U.S. intelligence capability is critical to our nation's defense. But what is intelligence, what role does it play in our national defense, and why is it important?

The classic definition of intelligence captured by Mark Lowenthal encompasses information, process, organization, and products. This essay will largely focus on information as intelligence.⁹ What are the component parts of the intelligence enterprise, and what roles does each component play in providing for the common defense? What is the current status of the Defense Intelligence Enterprise, its current demands, and its ability to handle a growing demand for both tactical and strategic intelligence?

The purpose of this essay is to present in one place an overview of intelligence as it relates to national defense, and in particular to military affairs, and to answer several questions including:

- How is intelligence acquired, processed, integrated and disseminated?
- What current problems and limitations exist in the intelligence enterprise, and what solutions or adjustments are necessary?
- How has the broad spectrum of threats facing our country affected intelligence collection efforts?
- What more can or should be done?

We will explain how to think about intelligence, factors that affect its current status, and how the Intelligence Community (IC) is changing with the world of military planning and operations so that senior policymakers, the Congress, and Combatant Commanders can take better advantage of the special role of intelligence in our nation's defense.

What Is Intelligence, and Why Is It So Critical?

Intelligence is "the ability to learn or understand or to deal with new or trying situations."¹⁰ In the context of military operations, it is "information concerning an enemy or possible enemy or an area."¹¹

A 2012 Joint Chiefs of Staff publication states that "commanders use intelligence to anticipate the battle, visualize and understand the full spectrum of the operational environment, and influence the outcome of operations."¹² Intelligence "enables commanders at all levels to focus their combat power and to provide full-dimensional force protection across the range of military operations."¹³

Intelligence potentially gives our men and women in uniform—our warfighters—information dominance and operational advantage over our adversaries. And the list of potential adversaries is growing. Concurrently, our comparative military advantage is starting to wane,¹⁴ but even as American military power declines, the demands made on the military are increasing.¹⁵ For example, the former Commandant of the Marine Corps, General James Amos, recently said that in view of projected U.S. defense budget cuts on the one hand and the explosion of international crises and threats to U.S. interests on the other, he expected his service and the Joint Force, at a minimum, to be asked "to do the same with less."¹⁶ The same cautionary note pertains to the Intelligence Community: As demand increases for a decreasing force, the remaining

resources will be asked to do more even in a declining resource environment.

That might be acceptable for a country other than the United States, but as Daniel Gouré wrote in the 2015 *Index*, United States power and presence are the foundation on which the present international order is built.¹⁷ Put another way, the U.S. military is the linchpin of the global security system.¹⁸

Today, that system is under increasing pressure from a variety of state and non-state actors. We are facing threats from old and new adversaries with tried and proven techniques as well as new techniques such as the potential and growing ability to attack information technology systems that are a critical part of virtually every economic and security sector in the United States.

Intelligence collection is more difficult in today's world because access is increasingly reduced to the secrets we must know. Denial and deception by our adversaries are sophisticated. Intelligence revelations by Edward Snowden and other leaked information have undercut our ability to obtain secrets by revealing intelligence methods and have undermined trust among America's allies. Russia's Vladimir Putin relies on traditional Russian military power to intimidate a neighbor such as Ukraine while using cyber to promote disinformation. China is modernizing its weapons systems and military forces at a startling pace. The non-state actors from Islamic extremists to drug cartels and organized crime organizations have at their disposal a wide array of technology that facilitates communication.

All levels of decision makers from the President to the warfighter should expect to receive accurate and timely intelligence to inform their plans and decisions notwithstanding the challenges the Intelligence Community faces from trying to acquire secrets about these countries and/or organizations. Intelligence customers should expect nothing but the best output from intelligence professionals.

In the National Military Strategy published in June 2015, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff wrote: "We now face multiple, simultaneous security challenges from traditional state actors and trans-regional networks of sub-state groups—all taking advantage of rapid technological change. Future conflicts will come more rapidly, last longer, and take place on a much more technically challenging battlefield."¹⁹ The same document mentions with concern such nations as Russia, China, and North Korea and such non-state actors as al-Qaeda and the Islamic State.

The most current National Intelligence Strategy, published in 2014, highlights that "the United States faces a complex and evolving security environment with extremely dangerous, pervasive, and elusive threats."²⁰ It goes on to describe the global environment wherein "power is becoming more diffuse. New alignments and informal networks—outside of traditional power blocs and national governments—will increasingly have significant impact in economic, social, and political affairs."²¹ The grassroots voices from "[p]rivate, public, governmental, commercial, and ideological players" will grow in influence as a result of social media outlets,²² and "[t]he projected rise of a global middle class and its growing expectations will fuel economic and political change."²³ Resolving such complex security challenges will require U.S. intelligence attention to a broader array of actors.

The elements of the U.S. national intelligence organizations are focused on key nation-states that continue to pursue agendas that challenge U.S. interests around the globe. China's strategic intentions with regard to its ambitious military modernization remain opaque and therefore present a concern. Russia is likely to continue to reassert power and influence in ways that undermine U.S. interests. "North Korea's pursuit of nuclear and ballistic missile capabilities and its international intransigence" also command attention.²⁴ The Intelligence Strategy further highlights that:

Iran's nuclear efforts remain a key concern, in addition to its missile programs, support for terrorism, regime dynamics, and other developing military capabilities. The potential for greater instability in the Middle East and North Africa will require continued [U.S. intelligence] vigilance.... Violent extremist groups and transnational criminal networks threaten U.S. security and challenge the U.S. both in the homeland and abroad. Al-Qa'ida, its affiliates, and adherents, continue to plot against U.S. and Western interests, and seek to use weapons of mass destruction if possible.²⁵

Intelligence remains essential to understanding and responding to these diverse threats that have a direct bearing on our national defense.

The United States Intelligence Community

"The U.S. Intelligence Community is a coalition of 17 agencies and organizations" that comprise the American intelligence apparatus.²⁶ The IC is led by

the Director of National Intelligence (DNI), a position created in 2004 under the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act (IRTPA),²⁷ and operates in a unified manner to ensure that intergovernmental intelligence activities are undertaken in a coordinated and tightly integrated manner for the purpose of gathering and analyzing the intelligence necessary to conduct foreign relations and to protect the national security of the United States.²⁸

Representations of many of these IC elements collect and produce analysis outside of Washington at Combatant Commands, the Service Centers, and U.S. embassies. Ensuring that the Washington-based intelligence capabilities are well integrated in the field is critical so that all elements operate as an enterprise irrespective of location.

One way to think of the Intelligence Community is to single out the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) as a stand-alone element setting the strategic direction for the IC but not having an operational role. The six program management IC organizations are listed and described below under a separate heading. With the exception of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, which reports to the Attorney General, and the CIA, which reports to the DNI, the other four program managers are agencies fully dedicated to the intelligence mission and are under the authority, direction, and control of the Secretary of Defense. The IC has five departmental intelligence elements with boutique intelligence missions, also described below. Finally, the five military services, including the Coast Guard, have intelligence offices that support their respective services.

Office of the Director of National Intelligence

The Office of the Director of National Intelligence serves as the head of the 17 agencies that comprise the Intelligence Community. The purpose of the DNI is to “lead intelligence integration” and “forge an IC that delivers the most insightful intelligence possible.”²⁹ The 9/11 terrorist attacks on the United States prompted the President and Congress to reform the IC, and in 2004, the position of DNI was created as part of the IRTPA. The DNI is subject to the authority of the President of the United States and serves as a chief adviser on intelligence matters related to national security.³⁰

Program Management Agencies

Central Intelligence Agency. In 1947, President Harry Truman signed the National Security Act,

which led to the creation of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) on July 26, 1947. The attack on Pearl Harbor and subsequent urgencies of World War II prompted the United States to create a group to conduct foreign intelligence operations. Over the years, the CIA has evolved and expanded its role as an intelligence organization with operatives in countries around the globe.

The CIA remains the primary external intelligence agency operating outside of the United States. It is organized into five components: the Directorate of Operations, the Directorate of Analysis, the Directorate of Science and Technology, the Directorate of Support, and the recently created Directorate of Digital Innovation. Using both human and signals intelligence sources, the CIA “collects, analyzes, and disseminates intelligence gathered on foreign nations.”³¹ According to its mission statement, the Agency’s “information, insights, and actions consistently provide tactical and strategic advantage for the United States.”³²

From 1947, when the National Security Act was enacted, until passage of the IRTPA in December 2004, the CIA was led by the Director of Central Intelligence (DCI).³³ In April 2005, when the first Director of National Intelligence took office, many of the IRTPA reforms went into effect. These reforms turned the Director of Central Intelligence into the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency to emphasize that the D/CIA is responsible for running the CIA while the DNI directs the entire Intelligence Community.³⁴ The D/CIA reports to the DNI.³⁵

Defense Intelligence Agency. Operating under the jurisdiction of the Department of Defense (DOD) but also as a member of the Intelligence Community under the purview of the DNI, the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) is the major producer of information related to foreign military intelligence. As a combat support agency within the DOD, the DIA collects and analyzes intelligence on foreign militaries, conducts surveillance and reconnaissance operations, and provides crucial information to warfighters, defense policymakers, and force planners.³⁶

The DIA is organized into four directorates: the Directorate of Operations, Directorate for Analysis, Directorate for Science and Technology, and Directorate for Mission Services. There also are five centers. Four cover regions around the globe: the Americas Center, Asia/Pacific Center, Europe/Eurasia Center, and Middle East/Africa Center. The fifth,

the Defense Combating Terrorism Center, is focused on transnational terrorism threats and support for counterterrorism operations by the warfighter.

National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency. Initially formed in 1972 as the Defense Mapping Agency (DMA) and later renamed the National Imagery and Mapping Agency (NIMA), the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA) serves a dual role as DOD combat support and U.S. Intelligence Community agency, as do all of the department's intelligence elements. Cartographers, analysts, and other NGA personnel gather imagery and furnish geospatial analytical products applicable to national security, military operations, and humanitarian aid efforts.³⁷

National Reconnaissance Office. The National Reconnaissance Office (NRO) is responsible for the development and operation of U.S. reconnaissance satellites. As a combat support agency, the NRO provides these reconnaissance capabilities to other agencies, such as the CIA or DOD. The NRO's products are of great importance to national security because they can be used to "warn of potential trouble spots around the world, help plan military operations, and monitor the environment."³⁸

National Security Agency/Central Security Service. The National Security Agency (NSA) is at the forefront of communications and information technology, serving as a critical enabler of sensitive intelligence collection. As a combat support agency:

The National Security Agency/Central Security Service (NSA/CSS) leads the U.S. Government in cryptology that encompasses both Signals Intelligence (SIGINT) and Information Assurance (IA) products and services, and enables Computer Network Operations (CNO) in order to gain a decision advantage for the Nation and our allies under all circumstances.³⁹

Aside from lending support to other Intelligence Community agencies, the NSA also aids military customers, national policymakers, counterterrorism and counterintelligence communities, and key international allies.⁴⁰

Federal Bureau of Investigation. Intelligence has been an important function of the FBI, especially over the past few decades in supporting law enforcement activities. The FBI's updated intelligence role is now codified in Executive Order 12333 as amended by Executive Order 13470 on July 30,

2008. Under the supervision of the Attorney General, the bureau's role is to:

1. Collect (including through clandestine means), analyze, produce, and disseminate foreign intelligence and counterintelligence to support national and departmental missions, in accordance with procedural guidelines approved by the Attorney General, after consultation with the Director [of National Intelligence];
2. Conduct counterintelligence activities; and
3. Conduct foreign intelligence and counterintelligence liaison relationships with intelligence, security, and law enforcement services of foreign governments or international organizations....⁴¹

These changes in the FBI's intelligence role emerged from the 9/11 Commission report and the IIRTPA of 2004, which sought to close the gap between foreign and domestic intelligence collection and intelligence sharing. The FBI has organized itself since then to meet the intelligence-collection and intelligence-analysis mission. In 2014, FBI Director James Comey created the FBI's Intelligence Branch to "lead the integration of intelligence and operations across the organization."⁴² The Intelligence Branch is now responsible for "all intelligence strategy, resources, policies, and functions."⁴³

Departmental Intelligence Elements

Department of Energy. The primary focus of the Department of Energy's Office of Intelligence and Counterintelligence is to protect, enable, and represent the vast scientific brain trust resident in DOE laboratories and plants.⁴⁴ While the DOE's Office of Intelligence and Counterintelligence does not have the authority to conduct the collection of foreign intelligence, it often assists with analysis of the information gathered by other intelligence agencies. The Department of Energy and its Office of Intelligence and Counterintelligence specialize in the following areas of intelligence concern: nuclear weapons, nuclear proliferation, nuclear energy, and energy security.

Department of Homeland Security. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) was created in 2002 in response to the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Within the DHS, the Office of Intelligence and Analysis (I&A) collects and analyzes intelligence and information in an effort to identify and assess current and

future threats to the U.S. Through the National Network of Fusion Centers, the DHS disseminates I&A intelligence and information to federal, state, and local authorities.⁴⁵ I&A focuses on four major areas: promoting understanding of threats through intelligence analysis, collecting open-source information and intelligence pertinent to homeland security, sharing information necessary for action, and managing intelligence for the homeland security enterprise.⁴⁶

Department of State. The Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR) serves as the Department of State's intelligence arm, collecting relevant intelligence and information and providing the Secretary of State with analysis of significant global events. Through all-source intelligence, diplomatic reporting, public opinion polling, and interaction with U.S. and foreign scholars, the INR seeks to inform the State Department of global events or trends that affect U.S. foreign policy.⁴⁷ In addition to serving as the Secretary of State's primary intelligence adviser, the INR also supports other policymakers, ambassadors, and embassy staff.⁴⁸

Department of the Treasury. The Office of Terrorism and Financial Intelligence (TFI) is the agency within the Department of the Treasury that is responsible for intelligence operations. The TFI develops and implements U.S. government strategies aimed at "safeguarding the financial system against illicit use and combating rogue nations, terrorist facilitators, weapons of mass destruction proliferators, money launderers, drug kingpins, and other national security threats."⁴⁹ The Office of Intelligence and Analysis (OIA), created under the TFI in 2004, "advances national security and protects financial integrity by informing Treasury decisions with timely, relevant, and accurate intelligence and analysis."⁵⁰

Drug Enforcement Administration. Under the jurisdiction of the Department of Justice, the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) is tasked with enforcing current federal laws and regulations on controlled substances. While the DEA has gathered intelligence since the 1970s, the Office of National Security Intelligence (ONSI) was created in 2006 and works with other members of the U.S. Intelligence Community "to enhance the U.S.'s efforts to reduce the supply of drugs, protect national security, and combat global terrorism."⁵¹

Military Service Components

Air Force Intelligence. "The U.S. Air Force Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance

(USAF ISR) Enterprise is America's primary source of finished intelligence derived from airborne, space, and cyberspace sensors."⁵² Originally founded in 1948 as the Air Intelligence Agency, the USAF ISR collects and analyzes data on foreign countries and forces around the world, expediting critical information to troops on the ground. Examples of USAF ISR intelligence include (but are not limited to) electronic surveillance, photographic surveillance, and weather and mapping data.

Army Intelligence. U.S. Army Intelligence, or G-2, is organized into five major military intelligence (MI) disciplines in the Army: Imagery Intelligence, Signals Intelligence, Human Intelligence, Measurement and Signature Intelligence, and Counterintelligence and Security Countermeasures. While Army intelligence dates back to the earliest days of the U.S. Army, the chief uniting force, the U.S. Army's Intelligence and Security Command (INSCOM), was formally established in 1977. The purpose of U.S. Army Intelligence is to enable effective Army planning and operations. Its role includes "policy formulation, planning, programming, budgeting, management, staff supervision, evaluation, and providing oversight for intelligence activities for the Department of the Army."⁵³

Coast Guard Intelligence. Coast Guard Intelligence (CGI) is the military intelligence branch of the U.S. Coast Guard. In addition to this role, CGI also serves an investigative function. Created in 1915, CGI has been altered continuously so that it can best fit the needs of the Coast Guard. Today, under the Department of Homeland Security, CGI seeks to produce "information on maritime and port security, search and rescue, and counter-narcotics."⁵⁴

Marine Corps Intelligence. The Marine Corps' intelligence component, the Marine Corps Intelligence Activity (MCIA), exists to supply battlefield commanders with the necessary tactical and operational intelligence to carry out their respective functions. The intelligence department of the Marine Corps "has service staff responsibility for geospatial intelligence, advanced geospatial intelligence, signals intelligence, human intelligence, [and] counterintelligence, and ensures there is a single synchronized strategy for the development of the Marine Corps Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance Enterprise."⁵⁵

Navy Intelligence. The U.S. Navy's intelligence element has been in place since 1882. The Office of Naval Intelligence (ONI) is the oldest component

of the U.S. Intelligence Community and is headquartered at the National Maritime Intelligence Center in Suitland, Maryland. According to the U.S. Navy, “ONI produces relevant maritime intelligence and moves that intelligence rapidly to key strategic, operational, and tactical decision makers.”⁵⁶

Intelligence and the Warfighter

The IC’s 17 elements operate essentially as a loosely federated system under DNI, departmental, and (in the case of the CIA) presidential authorities. Until enactment of the 2004 IRTPA, changes in the IC were evolutionary. The changes brought about by the IRTPA, which included establishing the Office of the Director of National Intelligence and limiting the Director of Central Intelligence to running the CIA, were dramatic. The advent of the FBI as a full IC member among the federation of elements also introduced a major change.

The changes have been less pronounced for the combat support agencies—the National Security Agency, Defense Intelligence Agency, National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency, and National Reconnaissance Office—and for the uniformed services’ intelligence elements within the Department of Defense (DOD). When the IRTPA was being debated, then-Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld placed significant limits on the level of reform of all DOD intelligence elements that he would find acceptable, which Congress and the President codified into law to ensure unified command over, and intelligence support for, the Department of Defense.⁵⁷

The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have provided ample opportunity for the Intelligence Community and especially the combat support agencies to provide intelligence to the warfighter. That intelligence today often combines human intelligence (HUMINT), signals intelligence (SIGINT) and geospatial imagery (GEOINT) to enable our soldiers, airmen, sailors, and marines to achieve success against the enemy. That intelligence, thanks to modern technology, may reach the warfighter simultaneously as it reaches the commander in chief.

The operation that resulted in the death of al-Qaeda’s leader in Iraq, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, in early June 2006 illustrates the intelligence support on the ground that has enabled battlefield successes. U.S. military spokesman Major General William Caldwell stated, “We had absolutely no doubt whatsoever that Zarqawi was in the house,” adding that the success required “a painstaking intelligence effort” in which

“we were able to start tracking [al-Zarqawi’s associate], monitor his movements and establish when he was doing his linkup with al-Zarqawi.” According to Caldwell, “It truly was a very long, painstaking, deliberate exploitation of intelligence, information gathering, human sources, electronics, signal intelligence that was done over...many, many weeks.”⁵⁸

Intelligence Acquisition, Processing, Integration, and Dissemination

The intelligence process that results in a product is often referred to as the “intelligence cycle.” The intelligence cycle is a six-step process that covers everything from the acquisition of intelligence to its dissemination to end users. (See Figure 2, “The Intelligence Cycle.”) The cycle is fed by information collected from many sources: clandestine and overt human sources, signals and cyber-based intelligence, imagery, open sources, and technical means such as telemetry.

Acquisition of the information is based on a system of requirements generated primarily by the users of intelligence. The information that results, often referred to as raw or unevaluated information, is then used to prepare a finished analytical product for use by policymakers, our warfighters, and other consumers such as Congress. The best analytical products prepared by the intelligence professional will draw from all available sources of information.

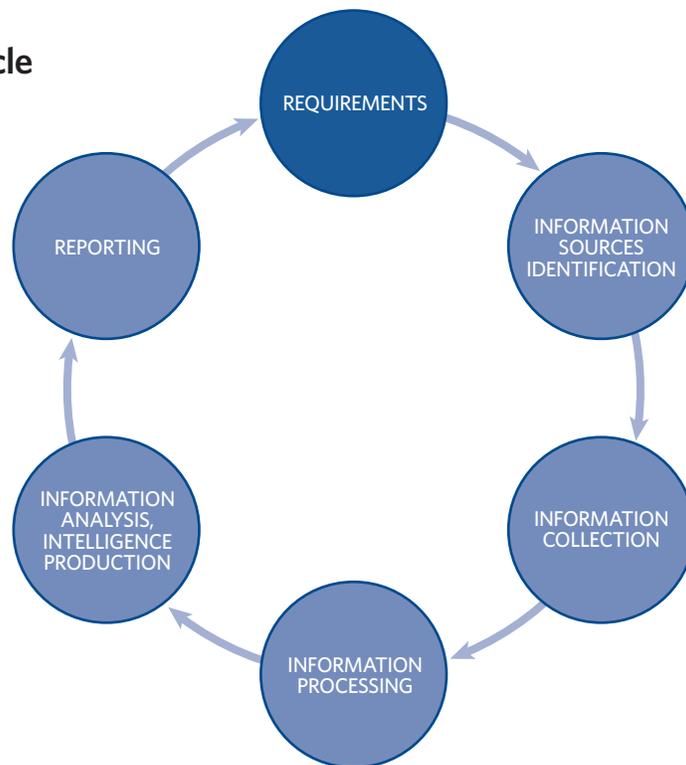
To provide the best support for its consumers, the IC is working to ensure that the process is strengthened through tighter integration. The means for achieving enhanced integration are critical in attaining increased efficiencies in leveraging the various intelligence disciplines to meet common objectives for the users of intelligence.

The Intelligence Community’s 17 elements serve as the backbone of the American intelligence system. Each element inside and outside of the defense-based intelligence organizations contributes specific collection and analytical expertise that serves to inform the security community’s understanding of the threats and adversaries or to meet the unique requirements associated with the military services. There has been a significant change in the trends for the intelligence mission over the past 15 years. The attacks on the U.S. homeland on September 11, 2001, created an important shift in how intelligence resources are allocated today, both for collection and for analysis.

As noted thematically by DNI James Clapper in the Intelligence Community’s 2015 Worldwide

FIGURE 2

The Intelligence Cycle



Source: Kudelski Security, "The Intelligence Cycle," <https://www.kudelskisecurity.com/services/advanced-threat-intelligence.html#working-together> (accessed August 21, 2015).

 heritage.org

Threat Assessment, cyber threats are on the rise, as are conflicts around the globe that are marked by diversity, as seen through the resurgence of Russia's destabilizing efforts, Iran's use of proxies to foment instability in the Middle East, and North Korea's ever-present threat to use nuclear weapons. At the same time, Islamic extremism is on the rise and far from contained to one geographic area.⁵⁹

To achieve a better understanding of the hidden plans and intentions of these and other adversaries, it is imperative that all of the nation's intelligence capabilities and, by extension, investments are made in a manner that focuses on U.S. defense capabilities and decision making and ultimately ensures that the U.S. retains superior military capabilities compared to other countries and is able to prevail in any conflict.

Problems, Limitations, and Solutions

The threats to U.S. national security are increasingly diverse and complex. Traditionally, when facing a crisis, American decision makers would see the crisis spike but then soon settle down. Today, we see a different and disturbing trend concerning "hot

spots." The national security challenges appear to be chronic and at times acute, with no foreseeable end to a crisis-riddled world.

Nonetheless, the policymaker and the warfighter will continue to rely on accurate and timely intelligence that can guide their decisions, from responding to threat warnings to implementing a plan of action in response to threats as they materialize. IC customers, including the uniformed operators, have come to expect information that moves rapidly through the intelligence cycle. They deserve nothing less despite a number of significant challenges and limitations that confront U.S. intelligence.

Specifically, American intelligence faces several significant problems and limitations in building and then maintaining intelligence capabilities and capacity in the 21st century. Among these critical problems and limitations are:

- Rapidly changing technology, such as multiple options for communication information, that enables adversaries to challenge and potentially defeat U.S. collection capabilities in the air and space, on the ground, and at sea;

- The significantly greater difficulty of collecting human intelligence, given the advent of biometrics and other personal identifying capabilities and the increased array and diversity of targets;
- The increasing difficulty of processing and deriving value from vast amounts of data collected;
- Resolving privacy and civil liberties matters associated with accessing and processing “content data” involving U.S. citizens in social media outlets; and
- The expanded use of industrial base encryption, which could severely limit intelligence access to the plans and intentions associated with those who wish us harm.

There are no simple or quick solutions to the challenges facing U.S. intelligence, but the problems are not insurmountable. Several key actions can contribute to finding long-term solutions to these challenges. They start with ensuring that the best and brightest intelligence professionals are hired, retained, and then given all of the specialized training and technology necessary to equip them for success. Further integration of officers with a wide variety of skills among the IC elements—physically and/or virtually—against specific mission objectives is likewise essential.

Additionally, continued sharing of information is vital with appropriate “insider threat” protections in place.⁶⁰ Human intelligence operations will need to adapt continually to stay ahead of the threats posed by adversaries’ use of technology. Policies promulgated by the DNI are required to address the mounting uncertainty among intelligence professionals about how to handle U.S. person information acquired by means of open sources. For the IC to be successful, it must be agile and integrated with other agencies and partners and must have a firm grasp of the operational environment.⁶¹

One of the lessons learned from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan is that integrating intelligence into operations increases the likelihood of a successful military plan and operation.⁶² Experience on the ground in the war zones underscored the importance of having the intelligence professional working alongside the operator for at least two critical reasons:

- The operators learned they could feed requirements into a collection process that was better refined by working with the intelligence professional.
- The delivery time for potentially highly perishable material was much faster when the intelligence officer worked directly with the operator to apply that intelligence to specific operations.

Challenges remain, however, in ensuring collaboration against emerging threats such as those presented by an adversary’s use of cyberspace. Both non-state actors and governments are improving their offensive and defensive cyber capabilities and enhancing their ability to use social media to communicate and promote their agendas (or causes) and justify aggressive behavior while operating with impunity outside of borders.⁶³

Enhancing intelligence collection and analysis to serve the Intelligence Community’s wide array of customers is an ongoing process. Determining where investments in intelligence need to be made remains critical to improving the IC’s intelligence capacity and capabilities to address not only current intelligence demands, but also those that will evolve as adversaries change their methods to thwart defense capabilities. Along with the changing nature of the threats, the role that intelligence must play in shaping U.S. defense strategy and investments takes on greater significance in the face of fiscal austerity as defense spending contracts.

Within the Department of Defense, the effort to unify the defense intelligence components falls to the Undersecretary of Defense for Intelligence (USD/I) and is known as the Pentagon’s Defense Intelligence Enterprise (DIE). (See text box, “Defense Intelligence Enterprise.”) The DIE is governed by policies directed by the USD/I.⁶⁴

Collaboration among the various DIE elements has improved, especially because of the growing demand from intelligence customers for products that provide a multi-disciplinary quality and are not necessarily produced by personnel located in one organization or facility. Continuing resistance from DIE elements to drafting and publishing joint analytical products leads to some duplication of effort, and access to relevant information by all DIE components remains a challenge.

The DIE emerged in 2003 from the establishment of the office of the USD/I in the DOD under Secretary

DEFENSE INTELLIGENCE ENTERPRISE

The Enterprise is composed of intelligence, counterintelligence, and security components of the Defense Department's Joint Staff, Combatant Commands, Military Departments, and other Department elements, as well as those organizations under the authority, direction, and control of the Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence.

Source: U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency, 2012–2017 Defense Intelligence Agency Strategy: One Mission. One Team. One Agency, p. 3, <http://www.dia.mil/Portals/27/Documents/About/2012-2017-DIA-Strategic-Plan.pdf> (accessed August 20, 2015).

of Defense Rumsfeld.⁶⁵ Former USD/I Dr. Michael Vickers has noted that:

[The intent of defense-focused intelligence transformation] is not just to deal with the challenges we face and to make sure we sustain the intelligence advantage for our policymakers and operators decades into the future.... [I]t's also to inform and enable some of the new strategic and operational approaches that will be required to deal with these challenges.⁶⁶

The DIE has focused on identifying ways to resource, develop, and process critical intelligence requirements most effectively in support of operations that can and ultimately must make the knowledge derived from the collectors instantly available to operators and analysts.

While dollars and cents are not everything, good intelligence does cost money. Congress funds America's intelligence activities through two separate programs: the National Intelligence Program (NIP),⁶⁷ which the DNI oversees, and the Military Intelligence Program (MIP), which the Secretary of Defense executes with the DNI's advice.⁶⁸ For much of the past decade, the DOD has focused on fighting terrorism and countering violent insurgencies and has been funded for expanded and sustained operations in this area, but fiscal conditions have changed. Both the defense and intelligence budgets are falling. Consider the changes in fiscal year budget requests as reflected in Chart 1.

Though the FY 2015 intelligence budget appropriation has not yet been disclosed,⁶⁹ the

Administration's FY 2016 budget request, submitted on February 2, 2015, included a request of \$53.9 billion for the National Intelligence Program.⁷⁰ The Department of Defense requested \$17.9 billion for the Military Intelligence Program in FY 2016.⁷¹ (See Chart 1.)

In absolute terms, it is difficult to ascertain the exact dollar value of intelligence. What is easier to understand is that cutting funding for intelligence at a time when threats are increasing in number and complexity will result inevitably in a commensurate decrease in the IC's ability to meet the growing demands from the intelligence customer. Against that backdrop, the declining budgets have given rise to a debate about whether less funding for intelligence will increase the risk to the nation after the decade of spending growth that followed 9/11.⁷² In response to this debate, two points should be considered.

First, the commitment to intelligence funding is an indicator of commitment to maintaining and/or building intelligence capabilities and capacity to meet both current and future challenges. There is no direct and uniform connection between more money spent and better knowledge gained. A well-trained analyst, a well-placed asset, a conscientious technologist, or a watchful FBI agent can contribute more to our national security in some circumstances than a costly satellite or imagery device.

Furthermore, an integrated workforce can amount to more than the mere sum of its parts, and by leveraging the various components of the Intelligence Community together, more can be achieved with less than ever before. However, gaining insight into the intent and workings of competitors and enemies should not become critically dependent on a few conscientious or watchful analysts. Too much is at stake to trade capacity for luck.

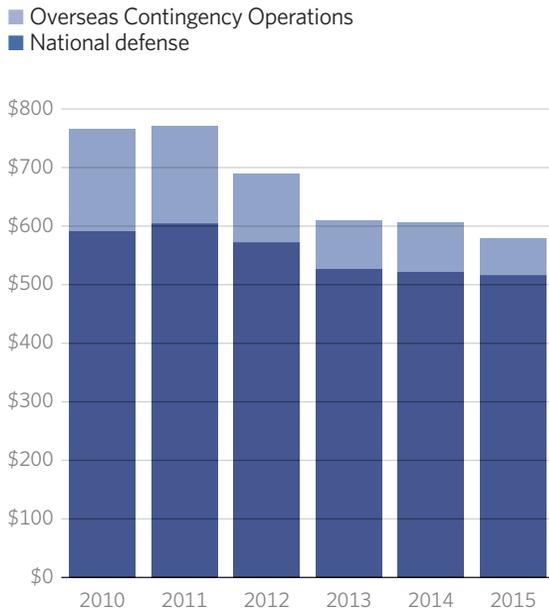
Second, that being said, some intelligence capabilities do require significant investment. For instance, building the next generation of defense intelligence capabilities requires investment in research and development, and grooming the next generation of intelligence officers means spending now to train and nurture their talents. Will a budget reduction mean the end of American intelligence dominance? Probably not, but that does not mean we should not be concerned that further cuts might be applied in a helter-skelter fashion that is penny-wise and pound-foolish.

CHART 1

National Defense and Intelligence Spending on the Decline

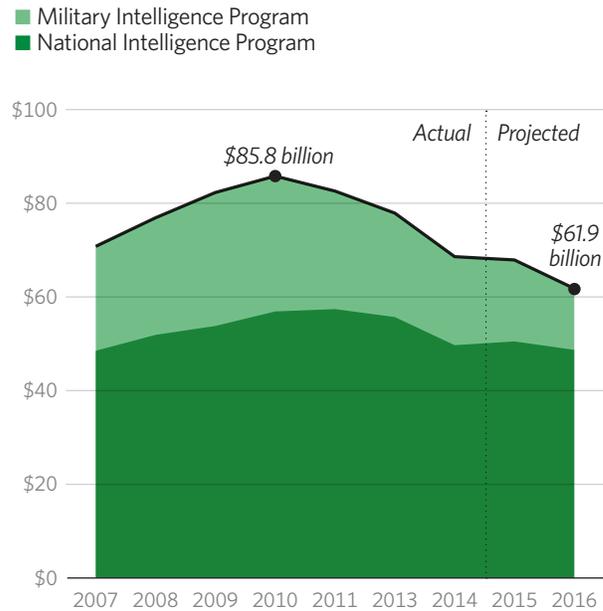
National defense spending has dropped by more than \$100 billion in the past five years.

SPENDING IN BILLIONS OF 2014 DOLLARS



As a result, the two programs funding intelligence activities have also seen sharp spending cuts.

SPENDING IN BILLIONS OF 2014 DOLLARS



Source: U.S. Government Publishing Office, "Budget of the United States Government," <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/browse/collectionGPO.action?collectionCode=BUDGET> (accessed August 14, 2015), and FAS Intelligence Resource Program, "Intelligence Budget Data," <http://fas.org/irp/budget/> (accessed August 21, 2015).



Achieving a More Effective Defense Intelligence Enterprise

In order to improve what is already a significant U.S. defense capability supported by extraordinary intelligence capabilities, American intelligence should continue on the path of enhancing the integration of intelligence obtained from all sources and by all IC elements. Further, it will be increasingly important that integrated intelligence be tailored to answer strategic as well as tactical questions for customers and provide timely support to warfighter and President alike. To accomplish this, the Enterprise must have the ability to draw from all forms of collection sources that range from clandestinely acquired intelligence to open-source information.

To improve U.S. defense intelligence capabilities, components of the Defense Intelligence Enterprise should focus their attention on three key areas:

- Ensuring that information technology (IT) investments provide secure global IT solutions applied to large holdings of data that make information easily and securely accessible across the Defense Intelligence Enterprise. Breaking down barriers to information sharing across various defense components where data are currently restricted for bureaucratic reasons remains a significant issue. The users of intelligence need timely discovery and exploitation of the intelligence in a secure but collaborative environment.

As the Pentagon thinks about the IT enterprise, it must account not only for traditional foreign partners, but also for newly emerging intelligence country partners. The IC elements that collect and disseminate sensitive information must also be assured that the information is protected from insiders and others who seek to compromise

intelligence. This assurance can be achieved only by means of real-time audit capabilities with respect to the handling of sensitive information.

- *Applying scarce resources to training in order to match the challenges of the intelligence workforce.* Investments in cyber, foreign language, and analytical training to address modern challenges are critical to take full advantage of technological improvements. We need a more networked and integrated workforce of analysts and collectors working side-by-side.

The large number of Washington-based analysts and intelligence professionals who shape the collection requirements must be significantly better interconnected with the smaller cadre of experts at the Combatant Commands and the military Service Centers—the Army’s National Ground Intelligence Center, the Air Force’s National Air and Space Intelligence Center, the Navy’s Office of Naval Intelligence, and the Marines’ Center for Intelligence Analysis—in order to reap the benefits of deep subject expertise. Conversely, an integrated and collaborative workforce will ensure that military planners and operators who are under pressure to meet tactical and operational requirements have access to their peers in Washington who can help by providing strategic context for tactical intelligence and real-world events that operators face every day.

- *Combining the intelligence budget allocations for the National and Military Intelligence Programs to improve the efficiency of the allocation of resources to intelligence capabilities.* Combining both budgets will also provide for increased flexibility in resource allocation while minimizing redundancy of intelligence resources against dynamically changing threats.

Achieving this combination of funding will require reforms among overlapping congressional oversight committees as well as agreements between the Secretary of Defense and the DNI on setting joint investment priorities. As it pertains to defense intelligence investments, properly

assessing the value of the intelligence output is critical to maintaining and improving the ability of our military forces to win the war.

Conclusion

Intelligence has always played an important role in our national defense. The demand for accurate intelligence delivered on a timely basis will only increase as the complexity of the threats facing the U.S. and its allies grows.

To be effective, both in today’s environment and for the foreseeable future, our defense capabilities will require that intelligence be integrated into all levels of operational planning. We can expect that the demand for more precise intelligence on our adversaries will grow. The needs by each of the uniformed services and the Combatant Commands will require that the defense and non-defense intelligence components of the Intelligence Community align their resources, capabilities, and mission goals to the point where information sharing and integration become common practice.

The goal of the entire intelligence enterprise should always be to create new knowledge, including actionable knowledge that aids decision makers in preventing conflicts where possible or winning the conflict should conflict be necessary. At the same time, the entire American Defense Intelligence Enterprise requires more integration of its multi-disciplinary capabilities such as the collection platforms and analytic expertise that reside in various agencies and organizations.

Defense intelligence for and by the military services and the Combatant Commands will place a high premium on the ability to access real-time information ranging from HUMINT to SIGINT, GEOINT, and open-source information. This expanded interconnected intelligence process will free expert analysts to focus on more complex higher-order analysis. A secure IT network linking all relevant intelligence sources and operators will be a crucial enabler. The end result will be a more timely, efficient, flexible, and effective Defense Intelligence Enterprise that draws on information from all elements of the Intelligence Community and makes our nation more secure for current and future traditional and non-conventional military operations.

Endnotes:

1. See, for example, John Keegan, *Intelligence in War: Knowledge of the Enemy, From Napoleon to Al-Qaeda* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003).
2. Adrienne Wilmoth Lerner, "Espionage and Intelligence, Early Historical Foundations," *Encyclopedia of Espionage, Intelligence, and Security*, 2015, <http://www.faqs.org/espionage/Ep-Fo/Espionage-and-Intelligence-Early-Historical-Foundations.html> (accessed July 22, 2015).
3. Ibid.
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America's Reserve and National Guard Components: Key Contributors to U.S. Military Strength

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Throughout our history, the Reserve and National Guard components of the U.S. military have made essential contributions to the nation's defense. The Reserve and Guard make up roughly 38 percent of total U.S. uniformed manpower, and their organizations provide critical combat power and support. Though traditionally supporting combat operations in a strategic reserve capacity, more recently, they have supported undersized Active component forces in long-term engagements such as those in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Militia service is as old as the United States. Before independence, local communities formed their own security forces, composed of citizens who would rally in times of emergency, to protect their towns from external threats. After independence, the individual states remained in the habit of raising forces—militias—as needed, providing units to complement those of the federal forces as was the case during the U.S. Civil War.

The relationships between the National Guard, the full-time Active federal forces, and the Active component's Reserve elements have changed over time as the needs of the country have changed. For much of its history, the U.S. maintained a small Active component that was expanded by draft or mobilized reserves during times of war. Following the Vietnam War, the shift to an all-volunteer force and the heightening of tensions with the Soviet Union led to sustainment of a large standing military that changed the relationship between Active

and Reserve/Guard elements, with Active elements kept in a ready status that would enable them to respond immediately to any Soviet aggression while the Reserve and Guard elements served as a strategic reserve.

Given the critical role played by National Guard and Reserve organizations, an understanding of the statutory foundations of these components, their nature, and issues surrounding their structure, size, and employment is essential to any assessment of the ability of the U.S. armed forces to provide for the common defense in today's complex world.

The decline in the size of the active-duty force caused by reduced budgets has sparked tension among the Active, Guard, and Reserve components over their respective missions and corresponding resources. Lacking the ability to fund the existing arrangement of Active, Reserve, and Guard forces adequately, service chiefs have had to reallocate funding, forcing reconsideration of what each component needs to have and for what purpose.

Statutory Foundations

The responsibilities of the executive and legislative branches for the National Guard and Reserve components stem from Articles I and II of the U.S. Constitution.

For the legislative branch, Article I, Section 8 states: "The Congress shall have Power...To raise and support Armies...To provide and maintain a Navy...To make rules for the Government and

Regulation of the land and naval Forces...To provide for calling forth the Militia to execute the Laws of the Union, suppress Insurrections and repel Invasions” and “To provide for organizing, arming, and disciplining, the Militia, and for governing such Part of them as may be employed in the Service of the United States, reserving to the States respectively, the Appointment of the Officers, and the Authority of training the Militia according to the discipline prescribed by Congress....”¹ For the executive branch, Article II, Section 2, states: “The President shall be Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy of the United States, and of the Militia of the several States, when called into the actual Service of the United States....”² The Constitution (Article I) also prohibits states from keeping troops or ships of war in time of peace, or engaging in war (absent invasion or imminent danger), without the consent of Congress.

Title 10 of the U.S. Code, which focuses on the armed forces, further defines the purpose of the Reserve components:

The purpose of each reserve component is to provide trained units and qualified persons available for active duty in the armed forces, in time of war or national emergency, and at such other times as the national security may require, to fill the needs of the armed forces whenever more units and persons are needed than are in the regular components.³

Title 10 also describes the policy for ordering the components to active service:

Whenever Congress determines that more units and organizations are needed for the national security than are in the regular components of the ground and air forces, the Army National Guard of the United States and the Air National Guard of the United States, or such parts of them as are needed, together with units of other reserve components necessary for a balanced force, shall be ordered to active duty and retained as long as so needed.⁴

These constitutional and legislative measures establish and characterize full-time, federally controlled Active forces, supporting Reserve forces, and state-maintained National Guard forces that work together to protect the country, but these

components vary in governing authorities and the role they play in national security.

The Seven Reserve Components

The Department of Defense (DOD) Total Force Policy defines the components of the U.S. armed forces as:

- **Active Component (AC) Military.** The AC military are those full-time military men and women who serve in units that engage enemy forces, provide support in the combat theater, provide other support, or who are in special accounts (transients, students, etc.). These men and women are on call 24 hours a day and receive full-time military pay.⁵
- **Reserve Component (RC) Military.** The RC military is composed of both Reserve and Guard forces. The Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force Reserves each consist of three specific categories: Ready Reserve, Standby Reserve, and Retired Reserve.⁶ This essay’s focus is solely on the Ready Reserve.

Title 10 of the U.S. Code further defines the reserve components of the armed forces as the Army National Guard of the United States, Army Reserve, Navy Reserve, Marine Corps Reserve, Air National Guard of the United States, Air Force Reserve, and Coast Guard Reserve.⁷ Together, these Reserve and Guard components constitute 38 percent of the total uniformed force and a majority of Army forces. (See Table 2.)

Specific Roles and Responsibilities of the Reserve and National Guard Components

Reserve Components. The Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard Reserves have only federal missions and are subordinate directly to the leadership of their respective services under Title 10 of the U.S. Code (which enumerates federal U.S. armed forces law). They tend to be closely integrated with the Active components of their respective services. Some Active component organizations have individual Reserve members or Reserve units directly assigned to them.⁸

National Guard. National Guard elements differ from Reserve elements in substantial ways, primarily in that the Guard has both state and federal missions, reflecting its origin as state militias. Title 32

TABLE 2

Manpower by Service Component

IN THOUSANDS

	Active	National Guard	Reserve	Reserve Component (percent)
Army	490.0	350.2	202.0	53%
Navy	323.6	-	47.3	13%
Air Force	310.9	105.0	67.1	36%
Marines	184.1	-	39.2	18%
Total Force	1,308.6	455.2	355.6	38%

Source: U.S. Department of Defense, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Readiness and Force Management, Total Force Planning and Requirements Directorate, *Defense Manpower Requirements Report, Fiscal Year 2015*, June 2014, p. 2, Table 1-1, <http://prhome.defense.gov/Portals/52/Documents/RFM/TFPRQ/docs/F15%20DMRR.pdf> (accessed August 14, 2015).

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of the U.S. Code describes the relationship between the federal government and the state National Guard units recognized as elements of the Army and Air National Guards of the U.S.:

In accordance with the traditional military policy of the United States, it is essential that the strength and organization of the Army National Guard and the Air National Guard as an integral part of the first line defenses of the United States be maintained and assured at all times. Whenever Congress determines that more units and organizations are needed for the national security than are in the regular components of the ground and air forces, the Army National Guard of the United States and the Air National Guard of the United States, or such parts of them as are needed, together with such units of other reserve components as are necessary for a balanced force, shall be ordered to active Federal duty and retained as long as so needed.⁹

All of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the U.S. territories of Puerto Rico, Guam, and U.S. Virgin Islands have National Guard organizations responsible, when functioning under state law in state status, to their governors or chief executives for executing state missions such as disaster response or support to civil authorities during a crisis.¹⁰ The de facto operational commander of these organizations while they are under state control is the state adjutant general (TAG), usually a major general, who is the senior military official in his or her state, territory, or district.

At the federal level, the National Guard Bureau, which is a joint activity of the Department of Defense,

serves as the channel of communications between the states and the Departments of the Army and the Air Force on Guard matters. The Chief of the National Guard Bureau is a four-star general. The Chief is the principal adviser on National Guard Affairs to the DOD, Army, and Air Force leadership.¹¹

According to the National Guard Adjutants General Association, the National Guard represents the world's 11th largest army, fifth largest air force, and 38 percent of the total U.S. military force structure "and has over 458,000 personnel serving in 3,600 communities throughout the country."¹² While this is accurate in aggregate numbers, the Guard is in reality a collection of militia-type units, each answering separately to its respective state, district, or territorial chief executive. The Guard is not constituted as a singular service or force, although issues unique to the Guard in its structure, equipping, and role when mobilized for federal service under Title 10 of the U.S. Code are handled by the National Guard Bureau. That said, with congressional delegations from all of the states and territories paying close attention to their Army and Air National Guard organizations, the National Guard has a powerful representational presence in Washington.

The Army National Guard and Army Reserve

Army National Guard. The 354,200 members of the Army National Guard provide significant forces for national defense. These include:

- Eight division headquarters;
- Six general officer-level operational commands (including sustainment as well as air and missile defense);

TABLE 3

**Army
Major Units**

	Active	Reserve	Reserve Component (percent)
Divisions*	10	8	44%
Brigade Combat Teams (BCTs)	32	28	47%

* Divisions are command-and-control headquarters to which BCTs are assigned.

Source: U.S. Department of Defense, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Readiness and Force Management, Total Force Planning and Requirements Directorate, *Defense Manpower Requirements Report, Fiscal Year 2015*, June 2014, p. 4, Table 1-3, <http://prhome.defense.gov/Portals/52/Documents/RFM/TFPRQ/docs/F15%20DMRR.pdf> (accessed August 14, 2015).

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- 126 operational brigades and groups, including 28 Brigade Combat Teams (BCTs) (a mix of Infantry, Armor, and Stryker BCTs);
- 48 multi-functional support brigades (including combat aviation, surveillance, and sustainment brigades);
- 48 functional support brigades and groups (including military police, engineer, and regional support); and
- Two Special Forces Groups.¹³

The U.S. Army has relied heavily on the Army National Guard to meet its requirements in Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere. Since September 11, 2001, the Army National Guard has mobilized over 500,000 soldiers for federal missions. At one point in 2005, over half of the combat brigades deployed in Iraq came from the Army National Guard.¹⁴

Army Reserve. Unlike the Army National Guard, the Army Reserve has no combat units of its own. The Army Reserve constitutes some 20 percent of the Total Army force. Its 205,000 soldiers and 12,600 civilians provide 75 percent of key support units and capabilities such as logistics, medical, engineering, military information support, and civil affairs.¹⁵ It also includes structures such as voluntary public-private partnerships that amplify the total force's capabilities,¹⁶ as well as certain unique capabilities not found elsewhere in the military such as chemical companies able to detect biological weapons.¹⁷

The Army has relied heavily on the Army Reserve since September 11, 2001. Since then, more than 280,000 Army Reserve soldiers have been mobilized to support the active Army in global operations. The Army Reserve's 2015 posture statement reports

approximately 16,058 Army Reserve members on active duty, including nearly 2,600 in Afghanistan.¹⁸

The Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve

Air National Guard. The 105,400 Air National Guard members in 50 states, three territories and the District of Columbia provide 89 Wings and 188 geographically separated units. Their 1,145 aircraft constitute nearly 31 percent of the Air Force's total strike fighter capability, 38 percent of the Air Force's total airlift capability, and 40 percent of the Air Force's total air refueling tanker fleet.¹⁹

Like the Army, the Air Force has depended heavily on its Air Guard component since September 11, 2001. The Air National Guard performs 30 percent of the worldwide Air Force missions each day, including the majority of continental air defense.²⁰ Under the North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD), "the Continental U.S. NORAD Region (CONR) provides airspace surveillance and control and directs air sovereignty activities for the continental United States (CONUS)."²¹ This organization leads Operation Noble Eagle, which provides around-the-clock defense from airborne threats over U.S. territory.

The First Air Force, also known as Air Forces Northern (AFNORTH), fulfills the largest portion of this mission, of which the Air National Guard is the primary component. The First Air Force was established during the Cold War to defend U.S. territory from Soviet aerial attack. After September 11, 2001, this unit's mission gained new purpose as airborne threats from non-state actors became a reality. According to an FY 2014 budget explanation:

The primary [Operation Noble Eagle] cost driver is the mobilization cost of National Guard and Reserve Component personnel. These mobilized

TABLE 4

**Air Force
Major Units**

	Active	Guard/ Reserve	Reserve Component (percent)
Air Offense Squadrons	9	3	25%
Air Force Squadrons	31	31	50%
Airlift Squadrons	21	39	65%
Air Refueling Squadrons	14	26	65%
Reconnaissance	21	5	19%
Space Squadrons	33	17	34%

Source: U.S. Department of Defense, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Readiness and Force Management, Total Force Planning and Requirements Directorate, *Defense Manpower Requirements Report, Fiscal Year 2015*, June 2014, p. 4, Table 1-3, <http://prhome.defense.gov/Portals/52/Documents/RFM/TFPRQ/docs/F15%20DMRR.pdf> (accessed August 14, 2015).

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personnel provide force protection to key facilities within the United States and provide an increased air defense capability to protect critical infrastructure facilities and U.S. cities from unconventional attack.²²

As of January 2015, there were nine aligned Air National Guard fighter wings included in AFNORTH, flying a combination of F-15 and F-16 aircraft.²³

Air Force Reserve. The 70,000 airmen of the Air Force Reserve, organized into the Air Force Reserve Command, operate the full range of Air Force aircraft and other equipment in support of all Air Force missions.²⁴ Specifically:

[Reservists] support nuclear deterrence operations, air, space and cyberspace superiority, command and control, global integrated intelligence surveillance reconnaissance, global precision attack, special operations, rapid global mobility and personnel recovery. They also perform space operations, aircraft flight testing, aerial port operations, civil engineer, security forces, military training, communications, mobility support, transportation and services missions.²⁵

This Reserve component flies and maintains “fighter, bomber, airlift, aerial refueling, aerial spray, personnel recovery, weather, airborne warning and control, and reconnaissance aircraft.”²⁶ “On any given day in 2013,” according to the Chief of the Air Force Reserve, “approximately 5,000 Air Force Reservists were actively serving in support of deployments, contingency taskings, exercises and operational missions.”²⁷

The Air Force Reserve Command is organized into three subcategories: the 4th Air Force, the 10th Air Force, and the 22nd Air Force. The majority of these forces provide a significant amount of the Active Air Force’s airlift needs, with around half of Air Force Reserve personnel involved in airlift in some way.²⁸

The Active Air Force has relied heavily on the Air Force Reserve for combat operations. For example, during the combat phase of Operation Iraqi Freedom (March 19–May 1, 2003), “Air Force Reserve aircraft and crews flew nearly 162,000 hours and deployed 70 unit-equipped aircraft in theater while aeromedical personnel provided 45 percent of the Air Force’s aeromedical crews that performed 3,108 patient movements.”²⁹

The Navy Reserve

The Navy Reserve has an end strength of 57,300.³⁰ Many Navy Reservists are in the Ready Reserve, which “provides a pool of trained servicemembers who are ready to step in and serve whenever and wherever needed.”³¹ The Ready Reserve force is made up of the Selected Reserve (SELRES) and the Individual Ready Reserve (IRR).³²

The SELRES is the largest component of the Navy Reserve and includes two subgroups:

- **Drilling Reservists/Units**—“Reservists who are available for recall to Active Duty status” and who “serve as the Navy’s primary source of immediate manpower.”³³
- **Full-Time Support**—“Reservists who perform full-time Active Duty service that relates to the

TABLE 5

Navy Major Units

	Active	Reserve	Reserve Component (percent)
Amphibious Assault Ships	30	-	0%
Attack Submarines	54	-	0%
Guided Missile Submarines	4	-	0%
Patrol Ships/Mine Warfare Ships	22	-	0%
Surface Combatants	101	-	0%
Carrier Squadrons	78	3	4%
ASW and FAD Squadrons	35	3	8%
Special Mission Squadrons	4	4	50%
Fixed Wing Airlift Squadrons	2	12	86%
Rotary Wing Heavy Lift Squadrons	2	-	0%

Source: U.S. Department of Defense, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Readiness and Force Management, Total Force Planning and Requirements Directorate, *Defense Manpower Requirements Report, Fiscal Year 2015*, June 2014, p. 4, Table 1-3, <http://prhome.defense.gov/Portals/52/Documents/RFM/TFPRQ/docs/F15%20DMRR.pdf> (accessed August 14, 2015).

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training and administration of the Navy Reserve program.”³⁴ These personnel, who are full-time but do not move as frequently to different geographic locations as their active-duty counterparts do, facilitate continuity and institutional knowledge at Reserve training facilities.

The IRR “consists of individuals who have had training or have previously served in an Active Duty component or in the Selected Reserve.”³⁵ There are two categories of IRR personnel:

- **Inactive status**—Reservists who have no obligation to the military and are not required to train. They subsequently receive no benefits from the military.
- **Active status**—Reservists who “may be eligible to receive pay or benefits for voluntarily performing specific types of Active Duty service.”³⁶

The Navy also maintains a Standby Reserve, composed of reservists who have transferred out of the Ready Reserve but are identified as potentially able “to fill manpower needs in specific skill areas”; Retired Reserve-Inactive members, who are receiving military retirement benefits;³⁷ and the Naval Air Forces Reserve, which includes one Logistics Support Wing, one Tactical Support Wing, and a number of helicopter and maritime patrol squadrons.³⁸

In 2014, the Navy Reserve provided over 2 million man-days of operational support to the Navy, Marine Corps, and Joint Force, including 2,947 Reserve sailors deployed around the globe.³⁹

The Marine Corps Reserve

The Marine Corps has a division, air wing, logistics group, and senior force headquarters—almost a quarter of its force structure—in its 39,200-member Marine Corps Forces Reserve component.⁴⁰ The Marine Corps Forces Reserve is geographically dispersed throughout 47 states, Washington, D.C., and Puerto Rico.

The Marine Corps has relied heavily on its Reserve component to support combat operations since September 2001. More than 23,000 Marine Reserves—units and individual augmentees—were mobilized for Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF). At the peak of mobilization in May 2003, 21,316 Reserves—52 percent of the entire Selected Marine Corps Reserves—were on active duty, primarily supporting operations in Iraq and elsewhere in the Middle East.⁴¹

The Marine Corps Reserve includes the 4th Marine Division, the 4th Marine Aircraft Wing, the 4th Marine Logistics Group, the Force Headquarters Group, and a Headquarters Battalion.⁴² The 4th Marine Division includes one assault amphibian battalion, one combat engineer battalion, one light armored reconnaissance battalion, one reconnaissance battalion, one tank battalion, three regiments,

two reconnaissance companies, and one training company.⁴³ The 4th Marine Aircraft Wing includes two Marine Aircraft Groups:

- Marine Aircraft Group 41 flies a fighter squadron (F/A-18C); a medium tiltrotor squadron (MV-22B); an aerial refueler transport squadron (KC-130T); and associated logistics and support.
- Marine Aircraft Group 49 flies one heavy helicopter squadron (CH-53E); one light attack helicopter squadron (AH-1W); one medium helicopter squadron (CH-46E); one aerial refueler squadron (KC-130T); and associated logistics and support.⁴⁴

Coast Guard Reserve

The Coast Guard is a military organization with law enforcement authority, maintained within the Department of Homeland Security since 2003. While small in number, the Coast Guard is responsible for key missions such as port security—both in the U.S. and in support of overseas operations—as well as drug interdictions, aids to navigation, and search and rescue. Its “nearly 40,000” active component members are supported by (among others) roughly 7,500 members of the Coast Guard Reserve.⁴⁵

The Coast Guard Reserve is similar to the Navy Reserve in that its members are assigned to Active component Coast Guard units and stand ready to reinforce them when mobilized. The Coast Guard Reserve also plays a key role in all of the maritime dimensions of homeland security.⁴⁶

Historical Context

Since the Revolutionary War, the National Guard and Reserve (or their predecessors, the state militias) have provided critical support for national defense. Until the Cold War, the United States maintained a small standing regular force. Threats to national security interests were relatively small, and a large standing army was not considered necessary or even desirable. On occasions when very large ground forces were needed, such as the American Civil War and World Wars I and II, National Guard and Reserve forces provided the essential bolstering of combat power until the draft and the training establishments could provide sufficient units to the Regular forces of the Active component.

After the outbreak of the Korean War, the U.S. created relatively large Guard and Reserve forces to

support the Active component in deterring Soviet Bloc aggression and defending U.S. and allied global interests during the Cold War. Unsurprisingly, this era was not without its issues related to the mission, size, readiness, cost, and equipment of the Reserve component. Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara created a “firestorm” in Congress when he attempted to integrate the Guard and Reserve into the Active component.⁴⁷ However, despite shortages of personnel, equipment, and funding, the Reserve component accomplished its missions reasonably well, including a massive mobilization during the 1961 Berlin Crisis.⁴⁸

The Vietnam War, however, was a watershed event that shattered the relationship between the Active and Reserve components. In 1964, given the small size of the Active component following its post-Korean War drawdown and the wealth of combat experience among servicemembers in the Guard and Reserve who had served in World War II and/or Korea, the services relied heavily on the Reserve components. The U.S.-supported government of South Vietnam was rapidly collapsing under a Viet Cong onslaught supported by North Vietnam, and the U.S. moved to prepare large, regular U.S. forces for ground combat. Unsurprisingly, national-level military leaders expected to rely heavily on the Reserve component for this major combat operation.

President Lyndon Johnson, however, had other ideas.⁴⁹ As noted by retired Army Lieutenant Colonel Lewis Sorley, President Johnson’s decision not to mobilize the nation for war had devastating consequences for the relations between the Active and Reserve components and for the combat effectiveness of both:

The President addressed the Nation on July 28 [1965], one of the most fateful junctures in the long war, saying that he planned to send 50,000 more troops to Vietnam...and that more would be sent as needed. Insiders waited expectantly to hear that he was authorizing mobilization to support the deployments but instead were astounded to learn that it would be done without the Reserve.

This constituted a crisis of the first magnitude for those charged with preparing and dispatching the deploying forces. The Army in particular, more reliant on its Reserves than the other services, was now in a bind. Instead of being

able to supplement active units, it was now faced with replicating those forces, newly created and requiring equipment, training, and large numbers of additional young officers and noncommissioned officers.

General Harold Johnson, Army Chief of Staff from June 1964 to June 1968, recalled that the President's refusal to call up Reserve forces constituted one of the most difficult crises in those turbulent years. The general learned of the decision in a July 24 meeting with McNamara and the service chiefs. All were stunned. "Mr. McNamara," said Johnson, "I can assure you of one thing, and that is that without a call-up of the Reserves the quality of the Army is going to erode and we're going to suffer very badly."

...As a consequence, "the active force was required to undertake a massive expansion and bloody expeditionary campaign without the access to Reserve forces that every contingency plan had postulated, and the Reserve forces—to the dismay of long-time committed members—became havens for those seeking to avoid active military service in that war."

...The effects General Johnson predicted were soon felt. In late 1966 he observed that the level of experience in the Army was steadily diminishing. ... "By 1 July 1967," he forecast from the force expansion already planned, "more than 40 percent of our officers and more than 70 percent of our enlisted men will have less than 2 years of service." ...⁵⁰

The Vietnam War and its aftermath had a profound impact on U.S. senior military leadership in many ways and on the relationship between the Active and Reserve components. General Creighton Abrams, who as Vice Chief of Staff of the Army had overseen the preparation of Army forces for deployment to Vietnam and who had served as commander of all forces in that engagement, became Army Chief of Staff in 1972 and began to restore the combat effectiveness of an Army that had seen its morale crumble during the Vietnam War. To enhance readiness and expand the size of the force available for large-scale operations, he and then-Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird created the Total Army concept that integrated the Active and Reserve components much more closely.

Some have argued that one reason for this approach was to make it impossible for the Army to go to war again without the Guard and Reserve. Some also claimed that the resulting "Abrams Doctrine" would limit the ability of future Presidents and Congresses to commit the U.S. to war without first garnering the public support required to mobilize and commit the Reserve components. However, the historical record does not substantiate this claim.⁵¹

The Abrams Doctrine led the Army to integrate the components to the degree that a third of the force structure of most Army divisions stationed in the continental U.S. was made up of National Guard units. To provide the President with the necessary access to the Guard and Reserve absent a declaration of war or declared national emergency, Congress created the Presidential Reserve Callup Authority in 1976.⁵²

The Total Army concept was tested in the response to Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait in 1990 during Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm. While over 37,000 Guard and Reserve soldiers performed combat, combat support, and combat service support missions during the conflict, three Active divisions with "Roundout Brigades" deployed without them. These brigades were activated just before offensive operations began, but due to concerns about their readiness for immediate combat employment, they were first sent to the National Training Center in California to train and be evaluated. Afterward, a GAO report found that the Guard and Reserve forces supporting the Army were not at the appropriate level of readiness.⁵³

The next major change in the relationship between the Active and Reserve components occurred after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. As the engagements in Iraq and Afghanistan turned from conventional operations needed to overthrow Saddam Hussein and the Taliban, respectively, to prolonged counterinsurgency and nation-building operations, the relatively small Active component ground forces became increasingly strained to sustain the high numbers of forces needed in the field.

Greatly downsized from its Desert Storm levels, the Army was able to expand its force structure only modestly. Restricting sustained operations to just the Active component meant that its small but highly trained force would be deployed indefinitely, likely exacting a toll on its morale and ability to retain

skilled personnel. Or it could once again turn to its Reserve and National Guard elements to expand its capacity for sustained operations.

With time to train and properly prepare before deployment, Army National Guard brigades began to assume their place in a rotation schedule for operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. “At one point in 2005, half of the combat brigades in Iraq were Army National Guard—a percentage of commitment as part of the overall Army effort not seen since the first years of World War II.”⁵⁴ With combat rotations scheduled well in advance, Reserve component units were given the same time and training resources to prepare for deployment that Active component units received.⁵⁵

Air Force operations were similarly supported by large, sustained mobilization of Air Force Reserve and Air National Guard units that handled strategic lift, aerial refueling, and surveillance duties, among others, alongside their Active component counterparts. In similar manner, the Marine Corps sustained its deployment cycles to Iraq and Afghanistan through heavy reliance on its Marine Forces Reserve units.

Major Issues Concerning the Reserve and National Guard Components

The current budgetary uncertainty surrounding all of America’s armed forces has generated several contentious issues related to the Guard and Reserve that, left unresolved, might well compromise their future effectiveness. These issues relate to the appropriate balance between the Active and Reserve components and include their respective roles and missions, size, structure, and equipment. All of these in turn weigh on the relationships between the Active and Reserve components.

Balancing Resources. The Budget Control Act of 2011 and the subsequent caps on defense spending have placed all of the armed forces under tremendous pressure as they deal with an increased demand for operational and “presence” missions in spite of shrinking forces and resources. One struggle between the Active and Reserve components is in striking the right balance in allocating resources that include funding, access to training facilities and resources, and apportionment of manpower.⁵⁶

Having worked alongside Active component forces for over a decade in Iraq and Afghanistan, some in the Guard and Reserve have made the case that they can assume more missions in the future and

can do so for less money than active-duty forces consume.⁵⁷ The Active component has countered that given their restricted training time,⁵⁸ Guard and Reserve units cannot maintain the same high readiness levels required for many critical missions, particularly concerning complex joint and combined arms operations.

Both arguments have merit. Reserve component forces are less expensive than Active component forces when not activated, because the costs of sustaining Guard and Reserve personnel (salaries, schools, housing, medical care, etc.) are borne in large part by the civilian economy. Even when activated, they are somewhat less expensive over the long term because of differentials in retirement benefits. Because they train less frequently, they also consume less fuel, ammunition, and other supplies and require less maintenance for their equipment when not activated.

It is also true that the Active component maintains a higher level of readiness. Active component units train throughout the year, honing their ability to execute both tactical actions and higher-level operations that, due to their complexity, place great demands on senior-level staffs. Guard and Reserve performance in Iraq and Afghanistan was as good as it was not only because of the dedication of the members involved, but also because they were given the time and resources required to train to the same tactical standards as Active component forces before they deployed.⁵⁹

Balancing Roles. Traditionally, the Guard and Reserve components have served as a national *strategic* reserve force, a national asset that can be mobilized in times of significant crisis to provide expanded military capacity to the Joint Force. In the recent engagements in Iraq and Afghanistan, however, they have often served as an *operational* reserve, filling the manpower needs of an overly taxed Active component. “As an operational reserve,” writes Dr. Daniel Gouré of the Lexington Institute, “Guard forces participated routinely and regularly in ongoing military missions. Entire Guard brigade combat teams (BCTs) were deployed to both conflicts, [and] Guard officers commanded entire multi-national Corps in Iraq.”⁶⁰

To their credit, the Guard and Reserve components filled this role well, but it has made them more closely resemble the Active component. The time required to prepare and train to deploy, and the overseas deployments themselves, have exceeded what

had previously been expected of individuals not serving full-time in the Active military component.

The difficulty of achieving balance in resources and in the roles and missions assigned to Active, Guard, and Reserve elements has drawn focused attention at the highest levels of government. In 2013, Congress created a National Commission on the Structure of the Air Force to “determine whether, and how, the structure should be modified to best fulfill current and anticipated mission requirements...in a manner consistent with available resources.”⁶¹ The commission submitted its report on January 30, 2014, recommending in part that the Air Force should “entrust as many missions as possible to its Reserve Component forces”⁶² while realizing that “there is an irreducible minimum below which the Air Force cannot prudently cut Active Component end strength without jeopardizing war-fighting capabilities, institutional health, and the ability to generate future forces.”⁶³

In 2015, Congress also convened a National Commission on the Future of the Army to undertake a comprehensive study of the “structure of the Army and policy assumptions related to [its] size and force mixture” in order to assess “the size and force structure of the Army’s active and reserve components.”⁶⁴ The commission is scheduled to submit its report to the President and Congress by February 1, 2016.⁶⁵ Although initially considered as a mechanism to resolve a dispute between the Active and Reserve components over the allocation of helicopter assets, the commission was charged with taking a broader view of the role played by each element in providing essential capabilities that constitute a majority of America’s ground combat power.

A Critical Component of National Security

Our armed forces must be prepared to support an effective national military strategy across the full range of potential threats that the nation faces in the current and uncertain future threat environment. This calls for Guard and Reserve component forces to be postured for action in ways that best suit their organizational nature, their access to resources, and the demands of evolving operational and strategic requirements. In general, the Reserve component, composed of Guard and Reserve forces, best supports the country by serving as the nation’s insurance policy in the event that the Active component finds itself in major combat operations rather than by substituting for the Active component in smaller contingencies due to an undersized Active force.

The Reserve and National Guard elements of the U.S. military provide critical support to the common defense of the nation every day. Whether flying supply and logistics support missions, acting as the federal government’s first response force at home, or supporting active-duty forces during combat engagements overseas, these components have enabled and enhanced the U.S. military’s overall capabilities and capacities.

The men and women who compose the Reserve components are a testament to the desire, willingness, and ability of our countrymen to serve the security interests of our nation while also contributing to the wealth, resiliency, vitality, and stability of our nation on a daily basis in their various capacities as private citizens when not soldiering. Our Reserve and National Guard forces are national assets that must be resourced and supported in a manner that is commensurate with their critical functions in preservation of the nation’s security.

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