FORCEFUL ENGAGEMENT

RETHINKING THE ROLE OF MILITARY POWER IN US GLOBAL POLICY

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INTRODUCTION

A key objective of the new administration will be to "rebalance" America's foreign and security policy "tool kit", giving greater prominence to diplomacy and other elements of "soft power". And it is easy to see why. The surge in US defense spending and military activity that began ten years ago, and then sharply accelerated after the 11 September 2001 attacks, has had disconcerting results—to say the least. But setting an effective alternative course for US policy will not be as easy to accomplish as some assume.

Since 1998, defense spending has risen by 90 percent in real terms, bringing the national defense budget close to $700 billion annually, which represents about 46 percent of global defense expenditure (in purchasing power terms). All told, there are approximately 440,000 US military personnel presently overseas, which is close to the number that was overseas during the last decade of the Cold War. About 200,000 are currently engaged in combat operations and more than 38,000 have been wounded in action or killed since 2001. Despite this prodigious and costly effort, the world today seems, on balance, to be less secure, stable, and friendly than eight years ago. Terrorist activity and anti-Americanism have increased. The nation's military activity has unsettled its alliances and prompted balancing behavior on the part of potential big power competitors: China and Russia. And there remains no real end in sight for America's consumptive commitments in Afghanistan and Iraq. Indeed, the scope of US military intervention is expanding.

What the operations in Iraq and Afghanistan have shown the world is that the United States, unimpeded by a peer competitor, cannot by its current methods reliably stabilize two impoverished nations comprising only one percent of the world's population—despite the investment of nearly 5,000 American lives and more than $850 bil-

lion. What General David Petreaus once asked of the Iraq war—"Tell me how this ends"—might be asked of the "war on terror" as a whole. The effort waxes and wanes, meandering into every corner of the earth, but shows no sure progress toward an end that might be called "victory."

No great wisdom is needed to suspect that a sea-change in method is due.

Giving greater play to diplomacy and "soft power" is advisable, but not sufficient. More fundamental is the need to roll back America's over-reliance on military instruments, which has proved both improvident and counter-productive. That the United States faces serious security challenges is not at question. Nor at question is the need for energetic global engagement. The problem is that the United States is using its armed forces and military power well beyond the limit of their utility. It is now experiencing not just diminishing returns, but negative ones. Thus, America finds itself paying more and more for less and less security.

America's overemphasis on military instruments has proved both improvident and counterproductive.

Military moderation is also essential to the revival of America's world reputation and leadership position. This, because what most divides the United States from those it proposes to lead is the issue of when, how, and how much to use force and the armed forces. This divide helped drive the Bush administration deeper into unilateralism. It was apparent during the 1990s as well, when the rise in anti-American sentiments first made headlines. Indeed, most post-Cold War US military interventions have involved considerable contention with key allies. Even when they join the United States on the battlefield, differences over the use of force re-emerge at the tactical level and with regard to "rules of engagement".

Refiguring the role of force and the armed forces in US policy will not come easily. The current balance is well-rooted ideologically, institutionally, and politically. Some US leaders see it as reflecting America's unique competitive advantage in the post-Cold War world and as pivotal to America's strategy for shaping the process of globalization. But the costly wreck that is recent policy constitutes a strong argument for a change. And the advent of a new administration in Washington provides an opportunity to go "back to the drawing board". Unlike the first post-Cold War administrations, the next one will have the benefit of hindsight—having seen clearly both the nature of today's security challenges and the downside of adopting an overly-militarized approach to addressing them.

Mapping a path out of the current policy *cul de sac* begins with the question, How did we get here?

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THE ADVENT OF PRIMACY

The end of the East-West Cold War, beginning with the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, put the United States at a strategic crossroads that remains relevant today. America entered the new era with a margin of military predominance greater than that enjoyed by any power since Rome in the Augustan age. Suggestive of the change, the US share of world military spending rose from 28 percent in 1986 to 34 percent in 1994. (Today it stands at approximately 46 percent, as noted above.)

More relevant was the altered balance of power between the United States and potential adversary states. Again, defense expenditure can serve as a proxy measure. In 1986, America's adversaries—including Russia, China, and their allies—taken together spent 50 percent *more* on defense than did the United States. By 1994, this same group was spending 42 percent *less* than the United States. Although US defense spending actually declined during this period, aggregate spending by the adversary group fell faster and much further. The change affected not only the balance in standing military forces, but also in command of the arms trade and in capacities for military assistance, global military presence, and military research and development.

Notably, America's margin of superiority has grown larger since the mid-1990s, despite increased spending by Russia and China. Today, US defense expenditures—not including war costs—are more than twice as great as

Executive Summary

THE LIMITS OF FORCE

During the past ten years (and especially since the 2001 attacks) there has been a remarkable surge in US military spending and operations abroad. On balance, the costs have outweighed the benefits.

Despite initial successes in Afghanistan and Iraq, an over-reliance on military instruments has weakened America's armed forces, unsettled its alliances, spurred anti-Americanism, and prompted balancing behavior on the part of China and Russia. Global terrorist activity has increased, not decreased. And there is no real end in sight for US commitments in Iraq and Afghanistan. Instead, instability is spreading to other countries and so are US military operations.

The cost-benefit balance sheet indicates that the United States is using its armed forces and military power beyond the limit of their utility. Thus, the nation finds itself paying more and more for less and less security.

The new administration seeks to place greater emphasis on diplomacy. Even more fundamental, however, is the need to roll back America's over-reliance on military instruments. This is essential to the revival of America's reputation and leadership position. What most divides the United States from those it hopes to lead is the issue of when, how, and how much to use force and the armed forces.

THE LURE OF PRIMACY

For many American policy leaders, the advent of US military predominance in 1992 seemed to provide the leverage with which America might enhance its security, preserve its leadership position, and advance a new vision of world order. This implied a reorientation of the military from a reactive "defense and deterrence" stance to a more proactive one. Thus, the willingness to use force increased. So did the roles and missions of the US armed forces. And America's war objectives grew steadily more ambitious.

Beyond seeking to deter and defend against aggression, there has been since 1992 an increasing emphasis on using military instruments to try to actually "prevent the emergence" of threats and "shape" the strategic environment. In the past, these functions were largely the job of the State Department. But the Pentagon has been increasingly intruding on the provinces of State. And diplomatic functions have been increasingly militarized. Thus, "coercive diplomacy" today plays a bigger role relative to traditional "quid pro quo" diplomacy.

With the demise of the Soviet threat, Pentagon planners refocused defense preparation on a broad array of lesser threats and possible future ones. They lowered the bar on the plausibility of threat scenarios and brought "worst case" scenarios to the fore. This approach was supposed to help immunize the United States against unpleasant surprises. Instead, it dissipated America's resources and attention. Thus, when the 9/11 attacks came, America's defenses were mostly preoccupied with other concerns.

PREVENTION AND ENVIRONMENT SHAPING

The post-Cold War focus on potential worst case scenarios also increased the attraction of taking "preventive" military action. Such action implies treating adversaries (or potential adversaries) who do not pose an imminent threat of attack as though they do. Our recent experience—with Iraq, Iran, and North Korea—shows that this approach can make matters worse. The Iraq case also suggests that preventive military strategies overestimate our capacity to control war outcomes and underestimate the costs and consequences of going to war.

"Environment shaping" is another form of "preventive" military activity. This encompasses America's

(continued)

worldwide military presence and exercises, its alliances and military-to-military contacts, and its arms transfers and military assistance programs. These are supposed to strongly assert or "stake out" US interests. A key goal is to "dissuade" other nations from taking undesirable paths or competing with US power. This might be thought of as "preemptive containment" or "preemptive deterrence".

If pressed too far, efforts at armed dissuasion can be more provocative, than helpful. If dissuasive acts impinge on the internal affairs, sovereignty, core interests, or normal prerogatives of a target country, they are likely to prompt resistance. Likewise, if the United States seems to be claiming extraordinary privileges through dissuasive acts, others will strive to alter the power balance. In these ways, armed dissuasion can feed a process of global re-polarization and re-militarization.

PRECEPTS FOR A NEW DIRECTION

Setting a new course in policy begins with acknowledging that the surge in US military activism that followed the 9/11 attacks has gone too far and has become, on balance, counter-productive. National leadership must become more realistic about what can be reliably accomplished by military means and more sensitive to the costs and chaos that attend war.

Although military primacy has proved less useful than many had hoped, it has become a US security goal in its own right. This distorts US global policy and practice. More relevant than the power balance between the United States and its adversaries is the balance between US power and US objectives.

Military primacy is not sustainable, at any rate. The more it is exercised, the more it invites balancing behavior on the part of others. Notably, present global disparities in military power do not reflect the distribution of human and material resources. This means that other nations have considerable latent capacity to narrow the military gap between themselves and the United States, if they so choose.

ELEMENTS OF AN ALTERNATIVE

America's armed forces should focus more narrowly on containing, deterring, and defending against actual threats of violence to critical national interests. Peace and stability operations are important, but they should be undertaken only as multilateral affairs under the auspices of inclusive international institutions. Efforts at "environment shaping" and "threat prevention" are most appropriately the job of the State Department.

Attempts to "hedge against uncertainty" by preparing in all directions for all scenarios will leave America less ready to deal with what is actually emerging. A better way to manage uncertainty is to invest more in intelligence and homeland protection, improve America's capacity to quickly adapt its defenses as new circumstances arise, and ensure that the nation has the fundamental strength to absorb unexpected blows and "bounce back"—as it did after Pearl Harbor.

An alternative security policy would emphasize broad multilateral cooperation in containing and resolving regional crises, reducing conflict potentials, and redressing the sources of instability in the international system. And, it would recognize that the sources of instability today are not principally military, political, or ideological in character, but instead economic, demographic, and environmental.

The real measure of a renewed US diplomacy will be efforts to reach across current strategic divides—especially to Russia, China, and the Muslim world—and find common ground. Cooperation on water, food, energy, and health security, global warming, economic development, and the management of globalization could serve as a foundation for progress on more divisive issues. A re-emphasis on traditional "quid pro quo" diplomacy will pay higher dividends in resolving divisive issues than will the resort to coercive diplomacy and saber rattling.

those of Russia and China combined (in terms of purchasing power).

The end of the Cold War also prompted strategic realignments favoring the United States. As the Soviet bloc disintegrated, former Soviet satellites turned toward the West and then, in 1992, the Soviet Union itself dissolved into 15 separate countries. Former Soviet clients in Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and the Western Hemisphere found themselves substantially shorn of material support. Equally important, the contest of ideologies and social systems that had helped animate the Cold War ended. Both Russia and China adopted the posture of ordinary, self-interested great powers.

These circumstances presented a historic opportunity to increase global cooperation, advance the demilitarization of international affairs, and claim a permanent peace dividend. The end of the Cold War also brought to the fore a host of transnational problems—terrorism among them—that could be effectively addressed only through broad cooperation.

Grasping the promise that was born when the Wall came down proved from the start to be more difficult than many had hoped. One problem was that Russia, China, and other second-tier powers—including core US allies—were unwilling to simply accept American global leadership. On the American side, leaders were unwilling to accept the costs and risks of building out and relying on global institutions and cooperative regimes. The "transaction costs" of deeper cooperation—including implied limits on America's freedom of action—seemed too high to too many. And, of course, the United States was at odds with much of the world over the prospective role of military power.

THE PRIMACY PRINCIPLE

Many nations, including America's partners, have tended to depreciate the utility of American military predominance. This, because the circumstance that produced it—the Soviet collapse—also seemed to make it less relevant. The US strategic community, by contrast, has been mesmerized by primacy. As Richard Haass, the current president of the Council on Foreign Relations, put it: "The fundamental question that confronts American foreign policy is what to do with a surplus of power and the many and considerable advantages this surplus confers."

To many, America's new, sole-superpower status seemed to provide the leverage with which it might further enhance its security, extend its position of world leadership, and advance an American vision of world order—a "new rule set". Implicit in these aspirations was a reorientation of the military from a reactive "defense and deterrence" stance to a more proactive one.

The exercise of primacy does not necessarily entail military activism, of course. The United States also possesses abundant "soft power." But, as "soft power" advocate Joseph Nye (and others) have observed: it is only in the military dimension that the world can be thought to be unipolar. Moreover: military power is the policy instrument that the United States has in greatest supply. The US national defense budget is 15 times as large as the budget for international affairs. And Defense commands 200 times as many people as State.

By 1997, military primacy had been codified as the foundation of US post-Cold War security policy. The *Quadrennial Defense Review* and *National Security Strategy* documents of that year together asserted that US world leadership was essential to the nation's security and that leadership, in turn, depended on maintaining America's distinct global military predominance. Thus, primacy became a security end in its own right and the cornerstone of US global policy. In 2000, Defense Secretary William Cohen publically declared the post-Cold War peace dividend to be over. (How much had America saved? Measured in 2008 dollars, the United States spent $760 billion less on defense during 1991-2000 than it had during the last decade of the Cold War.)

To paraphrase former UK Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher: many US leaders treated US military primacy as though it *were* the peace dividend. A persisting problem, however, is that military primacy does not translate auto-

matically into strategic gains. It conveys a unique competitive advantage *only* if national leaders can put it to effective use. Otherwise, much of America's post-Cold War military would amount to nothing more than costly surplus. Former Secretary of State Madeline Albright succinctly captured the problem in a 1993 conversation about the Balkans conflict with then-Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, General Colin Powell. Powell had said the options for effective military action in the Balkans conflict were limited. Albright reportedly shot back, "What's the point of having this superb military, if we can't use it?"

PUTTING PRIMACY TO WORK

Throughout the 1990s, the US national security establishment set to work refiguring how America might effectively put military primacy to work. In doing so, they developed a set of practices and perspectives that continue to frame security policy today. Surveying US policy developments during the post-Cold War period:

- Three successive US administrations have lowered the threshold on using force, undertaking nine significant wars and forceful military interventions in 14 years. (By comparison, the United States undertook only six, small or modest-size combat operations during the period 1975-1989.)
- The ways in which national leadership imagine using force and our armed forces have multiplied, and
- America's objectives in war have grown steadily more ambitious. These now include the aim of fighting multiple overlapping wars, achieving fast decisive results, overturning regimes, and sustaining protracted large-scale occupations.

Beyond the traditional objectives of deterring and defending against aggression, there has been an increasing emphasis on trying to use force and forceful pressure to actually "prevent the emergence" of threats and, more generally, to stabilize and "shape" the strategic environment (as the 1997 US *Quadrennial Defense Review* put it.)

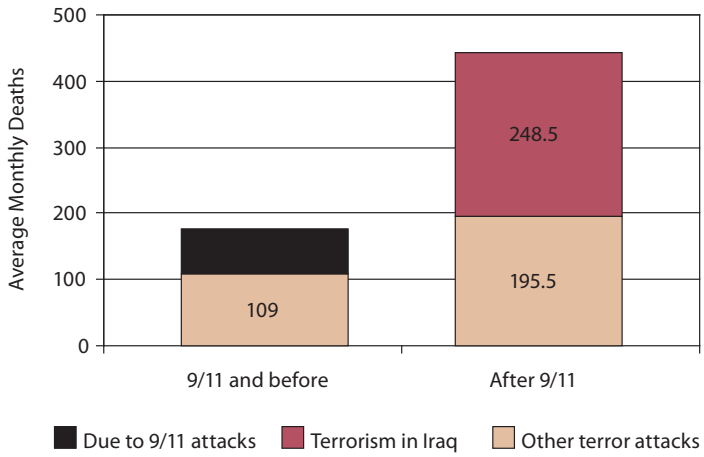
In the past, threat prevention and "environment shaping" were largely in the purview of the State Department. But a feature of our post-Cold War practice has been the increasing intrusion of the Department of Defense (DOD) on the provinces of State. Parallel to this, diplomatic functions have been increasingly militarized. Thus, today coercive diplomacy plays a bigger role relative to traditional "quid pro quo" diplomacy. Similarly, "offensive counter-proliferation"—that is, arms control by means of bombardment or even regime change—has grown in importance.

DOD has even exerted more influence over US programs in support of democratization and development—and this influence is growing. The *2006 Quadrennial Defense Review* strongly advocated for greater Pentagon authority in managing US security partnerships and conducting development assistance programs. Already the Pentagon oversees 22 percent of US official development funds—up from 3.5 percent in 1998.

THE USE OF FORCE—A LAST RESORT?

One legacy of the 20th century's great conflicts was the emergence of a general societal presumption against war: the simple idea that war should be an instrument of last

MONTHLY TERRORISM FATALITIES BEFORE & AFTER 9/11
1998-2006



The chart shows average monthly fatalities worldwide due to terrorism for two periods: the 44.5 months preceding (and including) 11 September 2001 and the 59 months following it—that is, January 1998 through 11 August 2006. These limits were set by the data available from the source, which was funded by the Department of Homeland Security.

Source: MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base (Oklahoma City, OK: National Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism, 2006).

and infrequent resort, mostly restricted to defense against aggression. The reasons are both moral and pragmatic, having to do with the inherent unpredictability of war and its human cost. The "last resort" principle embodies an implicit recognition that war constitutes a zone of profound and chaotic effects. Thus, it holds, we mostly should not go to war unless it is forced upon us.

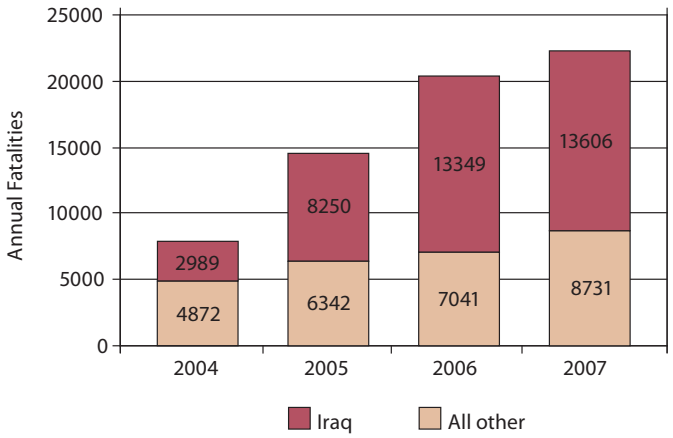
The "last resort" principle has been in retreat in US policy since the end of the East-West conflict. President George H.W. Bush first enunciated the shift in a 1993 address at West Point. Therein, he set aside the common "last resort" principle for a more permissive formulation. Rather than *last,* force might be the *preferred* option when other approaches were not *thought* to be as likely to work or to work as well. It is precisely this type of complacent utilitarianism that the last resort principle takes to be inappropriate, given the chaotic and extreme nature of war.

A nation's "war threshold" reflects a number of considerations: For what purposes should a nation resort to military force and threats? What are the diplomatic prerequisites to using force? How soon in a developing clash of interests should force be brought into play? The threshold also pertains to the level of civilian casualties, collateral damage, and general mayhem that a nation is willing to risk.

Lowering the threshold on force can mean that the relationship between going to war and national self-defense becomes more attenuated. It can mean that the limits on "pre-emptive" uses of force become looser—or that forceful coercion becomes diplomacy's routine companion. It can mean that the "rules of engagement" within war become more permissive or that firepower comes to play a greater role in stability operations. It can mean a greater willingness to "go it alone" in prosecuting a war or undertaking it with just a small circle of friends in coalition. In sum: all those considerations that normally act to limit the frequency, extent, and intensity of war become less compelling.

Certainly, the advent of clear US military predominance has figured in the willingness to lower the threshold on using force. Additionally, the dissolution of the Soviet sphere greatly reduced the likelihood that small wars would escalate to large. Especially important is the fact that regional conflicts no longer carry a substantial risk of escalation to global nuclear war.

FATALITIES DUE TO TERRORISM WORLDWIDE 2004-2007



The chart depicts fatalities caused by terrorism worldwide, divided into Iraq and non-Iraq or "other" segments. The time frame was determined by the limits of information publically available for full years on the National Counterterrorism Center's Worldwide Incidents Tracking System. The data is not comparable to that presented in the previous terrorism graph (p. 6) because the two sources use different criteria and methods in tracking terrorism.

Source: National Counterterrorism Center, Worldwide Incidents Tracking System, Office of the Director of National Intelligence.

REFIGURING THREAT

At the same time that official thinking about the use of force was changing, defense planners (especially at Rand Corporation) began exploring new ways of calibrating threats and managing the security environment. These ideas became important enablers of increased military activism.

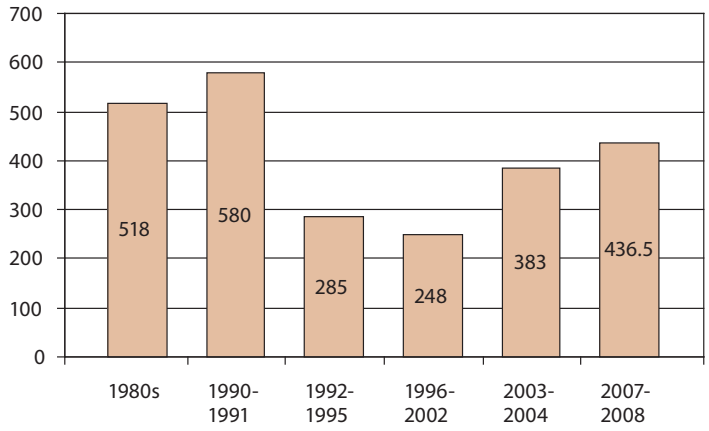
In 1991, General Colin Powell, who was then Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs, had observed that the Pentagon was "running out of demons." But as the scale of "clear and present" dangers receded, the Pentagon refocused defense preparation and action on unknown and prospective threats. Emphasizing "uncertainty," planners relaxed their assumptions about America's future interests and about the identity of potential foes, their capabilities, and their objectives. Planners lowered the bar on the plausibility of threat scenarios, brought "worst case" possibilities to the fore, and boosted their estimates of what these might require of our armed forces. Paradoxically,

as the scale and stakes of security challenges declined, the Pentagon adopted more ambitious military objectives, seeking to deploy force ever faster and win wars more quickly and in more than one theater simultaneously.

One aim was to be prepared to deal quickly and decisively with a very broad range of possible "surprises". None of these were remotely as serious or immediate as the challenge that had once been posed by the Soviet bloc. And almost none involved attacks on the US homeland. But hedging against the whole set of them worldwide substantially boosted putative defense requirements.

Unfortunately, rather than immunizing the United States against unpleasant surprises, the effort to defeat uncertainty only dissipated America's resources and attention. Thus, when Al Qaeda terrorists attacked the United States in 2001, America's intelligence agencies and armed forces were mostly preoccupied with other concerns. Bioterrorism, missile defense, North Korea, and Chinese military power dominated security discourse in the months before 11 September. This effectively distracted from eight years of strategic warning—beginning with the 1993 World Trade Center attack—and eight months of more immediate warnings regarding Al Qaeda's interest in attacking the US homeland. A few years later, the armed forces were similarly unprepared for the eventuality of protracted counter-insurgency campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq.

US MILITARY PERSONNEL OVERSEAS, ACTIVE & RESERVES (AVERAGE FOR PERIODS IN 000 OF PERSONNEL)



Sources: Defense Manpower Data Center, Office of the Secretary of Defense; and the Congressional Research Service

These recent failures point to a simple truth: Attempts to hedge against uncertainty by preparing in all directions for all scenarios will leave a nation's defenses less sensitive to and prepared for what is actually emerging. In fact, the emphasis on "uncertainty" during the past decade has allowed each military service and branch to find some justification for continuing to do and buy what it has been doing and buying for years. Thus, despite years of talk about "transformation", the US military entered the new century looking not much different than it did in 1990, *albeit* smaller.

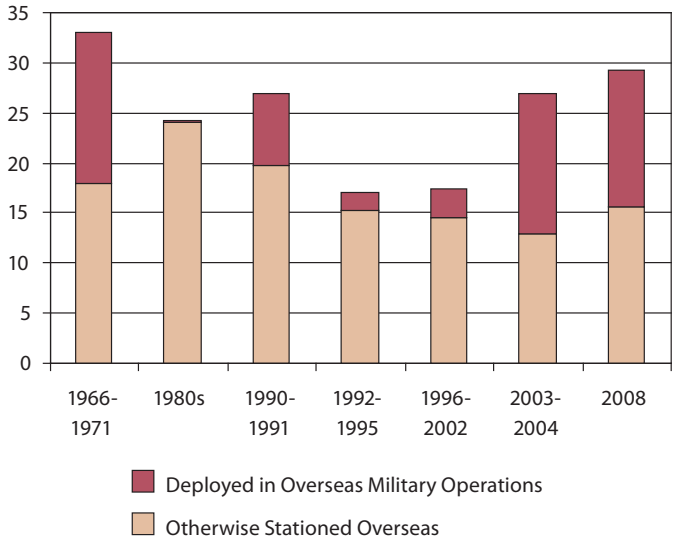
It is hubris that leads policy makers and planners to think that America can decisively trump surprise and attain complete security. A better approach to managing uncertainty is to invest more in intelligence, improve America's capacity to quickly adapt its defenses to new circumstances as they arise, better protect those national assets that are most critical, and ensure that the nation has the fundamental strength to absorb unexpected blows and "bounce back"—as it did after Pearl Harbor.

PREVENTION OR PROVOCATION?

The post-Cold War focus on potential worst case scenarios also increased the attraction of "jumping the gun"—that is, taking action early. "Acting early" can refer to several stratagems—preemption, prevention, or preclusion—each more risk-averse than the one preceding. Preemption involves taking action to spoil an attack that is in its preparatory stages. Prevention, by contrast, involves acting forcefully now against an adversary who officials believe will attempt a serious, unavoidable aggression at some point in future years. Preclusion goes a step further, seeking to remove the possibility of a future aggression even when this eventuality does not seem certain or undeterrable.

To appreciate the difference among these stratagems, it helps to dissect the notion of "threat". A "real and present" threat of aggression minimally comprises a serious clash of interests and the intention, capability, and opportunity to do harm. When some of these elements are missing, there is still risk, but not an immediate threat of the type once posed by the Soviet Union. Even when all the constituent elements of "threat" converge to form a real and present danger, deterrence can

PERCENT OF ACTIVE COMPONENT US MILITARY PERSONNEL OVERSEAS



One measure of stress on the US military is the percentage of personnel stationed and deployed overseas. Each bar reflects average percentages of total active-component US military for the period it represents. The "stationed overseas" category comprises personnel serving at semi-permanent bases and in routine, non-combat missions. For these units, many of the functions of everyday life and military support and training can be maintained. By contrast, the "deployed in foreign military operations" category comprises the percent of personnel who are engaged in temporary operations that involve combat or an immediate possibility of combat. The stress these operations place on troops and equipment is exceptional.

Source: Defense Manpower Data Center, Office of the Secretary of Defense; and the Congressional Research Service

often hold it in check—as it did during the Cold War—while diplomacy and other instruments work to defuse it. But it is the risks inherent in this path that the United States is today less willing to bear—despite (or perhaps because of) its distinct military predominance.

Preventive and preclusive military operations imply treating adversaries (or potential adversaries) who do not pose an imminent threat of attack as though they do. Such actions target not aggression, *per se*, nor even the imminent danger of aggression but, instead, *the capability to aggress*—be it existing, emergent, or suspected.

Prevention and preclusion also can target actors who security officials believe are predisposed, due to the nature of their governments or belief systems, to do America significant harm at some point in the future, although they presently lack the capability. Successive US administrations have marked such recalcitrant state actors as "rogue states" or "axis of evil" states—designations that tend to invite efforts at regime change. Similarly, the failure of some nations and social movements to integrate with the sphere of market democracy is seen as posing a military security problem of growing significance.

While the second Bush administration clearly crossed a threshold in attacking Iraq, the notion of applying US military power more proactively than during the Cold War was already well-established before George W. Bush took office. Key precursors and enablers of current policy ideas—such as offensive counter-proliferation, the "rogue state doctrine", and regime change—were already evident in US policy toward Iraq and elsewhere during the late 1990s. Some of these ideas may survive the Bush administration—although in transmuted form as part of the new enthusiasm for armed nation-building.

Does prevention work? Our recent experience shows that treating potential threats as though they are imminent ones can exacerbate tensions and precipitate the outcome that "prevention" is meant to preclude. Thus, in addressing the nuclear programs of both North Korea and Iran, America's coercive efforts spurred, rather than retarded, undesirable behavior. In the Iraq case, too, a confrontational approach in the run-up to the 2003 war fed the regime's "bunker-mentality", making war more likely, not less. Generally, the declaration of "regime change" objectives and the frequent resort to saber-rattling undermine diplomacy and help to precipitate and harden anti-American attitudes and coalitions.

The Iraq case also suggests that preventive uses of military force rest on unrealistic assumptions about our capacity to control outcomes and a serious underestimation of the potential costs and consequences of going to war. Additionally, the operations in Iraq and Afghanistan illustrate the limits of military occupation as a means of advancing stability and democracy. In both cases, the dominant role of armed foreigners (and their too frequent resort to firepower) have fed and sustained rejectionist movements and sentiments.

USING MILITARY POWER TO SHAPE THE WORLD

The most costly peacetime function of the US military in the post-Cold War era is something the 1997 US *Defense Review* called "environment shaping". This encompasses America's worldwide military presence, its alliances and military-to-military contacts, and its arms transfers and military assistance programs. A putative goal of this activity is to nudge nations that are at a "strategic crossroads" to develop in a preferred direction. So, this too is a form of preventive action. First among those nations that Washington sees at a crossroads are China, Russia, India, and Pakistan.

"Nudging" is supposed to occur by means of "armed dissuasion"—a process that involves using military assets and activity to "stake out" or strongly assert US interests in a specific situation or outcome. We might think of this as "preemptive deterrence" or "preemptive containment." The spread of US military bases and partnerships toward the borders of Russia and the increased US naval presence in Asia are supposed to serve a dissuasive function. They are supposed to communicate implicitly that an undesirable competition or confrontation may ensue if Russia or China undertakes a proscribed course of action.

Another key objective of dissuasion has been to discourage other countries from initiating arms competitions with the United States and, in this way, preserve American military primacy. How? By creating and maintaining "substantial margins of advantage across key functional areas of military competition"—as Secretary Cheney put it in his 2002 report to Congress. The conceit is to preempt arms races by winning them in advance and, thus, make competition seem hopeless. And so, US military modernization efforts proceed full-bore, despite the absence of anything resembling peer competition.

Linking military modernization to the dissuasion of military competition also alters the status of arms control in US policy. The only negotiated agreements that are congruent with the drive for dissuasive power are those that codify or otherwise preserve a distinct US superiority.

Does armed dissuasion work? One test of the increased emphasis on militarized environment shaping is relations with Russia and China. Unfortunately, both nations seem less willing today, not more, to accept a "rule set" written in Washington, or to integrate within a global order led by the United States. Both also have responded energetically to the advance of US bases, alliances, missile defense, and military modernization. We cannot assume that US efforts at "preemptive containment" and "preemptive deterrence" are the principal drivers of this behavior, but it is worth re-considering how these practices might be counter-productive.

Whether armed dissuasion is provocative or not depends on what behaviors it targets and what rules it seeks to set. Generally speaking: if dissuasive acts impinge on the internal affairs, sovereignty, core interests, or normal prerogatives of a target country, they are more likely to prompt resistance than compliance. The United States might effectively dissuade Chinese naval activism in the Caribbean, for instance—but not in the South China Sea.

Likewise, if the United States seems to be claiming extraordinary rights or privileges through dissuasive acts, the targeted nations will either resist complying or strive to alter the power balance between themselves and America. This seems to be precisely what China and Russia are attempting to do as the US network of bases and partnerships gradually surrounds them.

Smaller states can respond to shaping efforts by seeking shelter under the strategic umbrella of larger ones. In this way, efforts at militarized "environment shaping" may be adding impetus to a process of global repolarization and remilitarization. This process is apparent in the formation and expansion of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), which includes as full members China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. The SCO has afforded observer status to India, Iran, Mongolia, and Pakistan. Among its policy priorities are limitations on US efforts to secure new, enduring military bases in Central Asia.

IS PRIMACY WORTH THE CANDLE?

For more than a dozen years, US policy has been ruled by the "primacy principle". This is the notion that America's present condition of distinct military primacy is essential to the nation's security—not just a fortuitous thing, but a necessary one. What recent practice shows, however, is that US leaders have dangerously overestimated the utility of America's preponderance of military power. At fabulous expense, the efforts to extend primacy and put it to work have been overwhelmed by unwanted and inadvertent effects.

Military primacy is not sustainable, at any rate. Indeed, the more it is exercised, the more it invites balancing behavior on the part of others. In this light, it is important to note that present global disparities in military power do not reflect the global distribution of human and material resources. Today, the United States devotes 70 percent more of its GDP to defense than do other nations, on average. This gap is much higher than the one prevailing in 1985. This means that other nations—China and Russia, among them—have considerable latent capacity to narrow the military gap between themselves and the United States, if they so choose. Something worth contemplating is that none, not even China, are doing all they might to close the military gap—not yet, at least. Why not?

Implicit in the "primacy principle" and in the expanded use of America's armed forces is a wager about the nature of strategic competition today, and about the balance among the strategic challenges that face America and all nations. Most nations—includ-

FY 2008 NATIONAL DEFENSE BUDGET

- Department of Defense (DOD) baseline: $481.5 billion
- Additional funding for wars: $180 billion
- Non-DOD national defense: $22.4 billion

Total FY 2008 National Defense: $683.9 billion

FY 2009 NATIONAL DEFENSE BUDGET

- Department of Defense (DOD) baseline: $516 billion
- Additional funding for wars: $66 billion*
- Non-DOD national defense: $22 billion

Total FY 2009 National Defense: 604 billion*

* Substantially more will be added in supplementals during 2009

CURRENT US SHARE OF WORLD MILITARY SPENDING

- Purchasing power parity: ~46 %

BUDGET GROWTH

- Increase in DOD funding 1998-2008, excluding war: 44% (inflation adjusted)
- Increase in DOD funding 1998-2008, including war: 90% (inflation adjusted)

POST-COLD WAR DOD EXPENDITURE

- 1992-2008: $7.5 trillion (including wars)
- Planned 2009-2013: ~$2.6 trillion (not including all war funding)*

* Reportedly, in early 2009, the service chiefs will request that the new president add $450 billion to this five year sum. Also likely are additional supplementals for war.

US GROSS FEDERAL DEBT

- Nov. 2008: $10.5 trillion

COSTS OF WAR

- Total DOD war spending, 2001-2008: ~$810 billion
- Total non-DOD war spending, 2001-2008: ~$50 billion
- US troops killed in Iraq & Afghanistan, 2001-Nov 2008: 4,818
- Wounded in action, Iraq & Afghanistan, 2001-Nov 2008: 33,355
- Non-hostile medical emergency/air evacuation, Iraq and Afghanistan: 41,911

ing major US allies and potential competitors—are betting that the military sphere is not the key one. Potential competitors and adversaries, especially, are wagering that America has over-invested itself in the wrong contest, the wrong sphere. The current economic upheaval, which has done more to damage American power than Bin-Laden could ever hope, suggests that they are correct.

A LITMUS FOR PROGRESS

Setting a new course in policy begins with acknowledging that the diffuse surge in US military activism that followed the 9/11 attacks has been, on balance, counter-productive. Looking to the future, national leadership must be more realistic about what can be reliably accomplished by military means. The most important relationship to keep in mind is not the balance between US power and that of its adversaries, but the balance between US power and US objectives. American leaders also need to be more cognizant of the costs and chaos that attend war. Among these is the risk of unnecessarily adding impetus to global re-militarization and re-polarization. A new cost-benefit calculus must be brought to bear in US military strategy.

To escape the paradox of "less security at greater cost", America's leaders must rethink the US security policy "problem set" and alter the balance among policy tools. An adequate alternative would emphasize broad multilateral cooperation in containing and resolving regional crises, reducing conflict potentials, and redressing the sources of instability in the international system. And, it would recognize that the sources of instability today are not principally military, political, or ideological in character, but instead economic, demographic, and environmental.

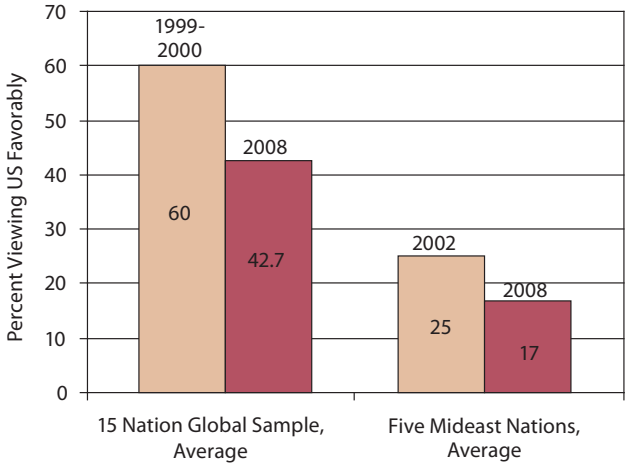
The United States should redouble its effort to promote the spread of human rights and democracy. And it should energetically support sustainable development. But these efforts should be *de*militarized. And care should be taken to ensure that they do not become or seem to become part of a strategic competition between states or groups of states.

The real measure of a renewed US diplomacy will be efforts to reach across current strategic divides—especially to Russia, China, and the Muslim world—and find common ground. Cooperation on water, food, energy, and health security, global warming, economic development, and the management of globalization could serve as a foundation for cooperation on more divisive issues. Regarding these divisive issues, a re-emphasis on traditional "quid pro quo" diplomacy will pay higher dividends than will the resort to coercive diplomacy and saber rattling.

In the future, America's armed forces should focus more narrowly on containing, deterring, and defending against actual threats of violence to critical national interests. Efforts at "environment shaping" and "threat prevention", which currently preoccupy much of the US military, are most appropriately the job of the State Department.

Peace and stability operations are important and will remain so—but they should be undertaken only as multilateral affairs under the auspices of inclusive international institutions. To be successful, they must be based on strong global, regional, and local consensus. They are not wars and should not be prosecuted as such. Generally

GLOBAL VIEWS OF THE UNITED STATES



15 nation sample includes Britain, France, Spain, Germany, Poland, Russia, Turkey, Pakistan, Indonesia, Japan, S. Korea, Brazil, Mexico, Argentina, and Nigeria.

Source: Pew Global Attitudes Survey 2008, 2007; Office of Research, US State Department.

Five Nation Mideast sample includes Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Saudi Arabia.

Source: Zogby International poll, March 2008; and, "Five Nation Survey of the Middle East", Zogby International, December 2006.

speaking, the rules of engagement in such efforts—and in counter-insurgency campaigns as well—should become more restrictive, not less.

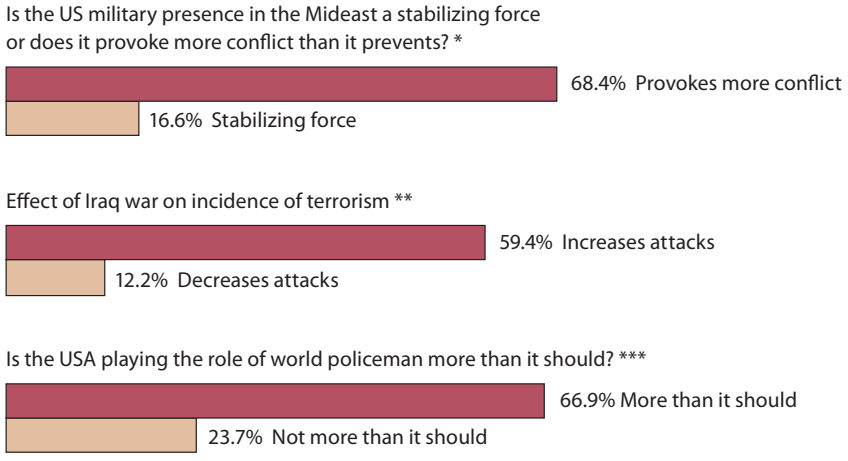
THE STRUGGLE FOR MEANINGFUL TRANSFORMATION

During the first two years of the Obama administration, all of America's defense guidance will be reviewed and, to an unknown extent, rewritten. The impediments to adequate policy change are substantial. Several factors predispose the American polity to a dependence on military power and on its exercise in international affairs.

First, popular domestic assent to US global activism characteristically has depended on such activism being framed as a "security issue"—a matter of "defending forward". This maps a path to globalism that accords with deep-seated "American exceptionalist" and "isolationist" sentiments. So does a preference for emphasizing "decisive" (that is, military) means—because these seem to promise a quick, clear, and surgical form of engagement. Thus, past surges in US global activism have been war-driven—in 1917, 1941, and 1950—with peacetime engagement thereafter almost continuously framed in terms of "Cold War". Today, the "war on terror" defines a politically practicable path for global activism. Unfortunately, as an overall framework for foreign policy, it favors the wrong mix of instruments. Still, it may be difficult to form a domestic consensus around an alternative path—that is, a path that does not rely on a war frame (as former president Bill Clinton learned during the 1990s).

A second impediment to change is that the institutional base of America's security policy discourse strongly favors a militarized view—that is, the "Pentagon lens" predominates. The defense establishment enjoys an unmatched capacity to broadly convey its assessment of the global security environment and US security requirements. DOD and the services employ thousands of personnel to communicate their perspectives to various constituencies. And they heavily court retired officers and government officials who routinely serve the news media as "independent analysts". Finally, DOD and the services sustain a network of policy centers and contracted think tanks whose aggregate size rivals those in the public sphere. (Expenditures for DOD's "studies and analysis centers" surpass $200 million annually, excluding research laboratories. By contrast, the largest nongovernmental "think tank" devoted principally to foreign

WORLD OPINION AND US MILITARY POWER



* Average of poll responses from 14 nations, April 2007.

Source: Chicago Council on Global Affairs and WorldPublicOpinion.org.

** Average of poll responses from 33 nations, February 2006.

Source: BBC World Service, GlobeScan, and Program on International Policy Attitudes at the University of Maryland.

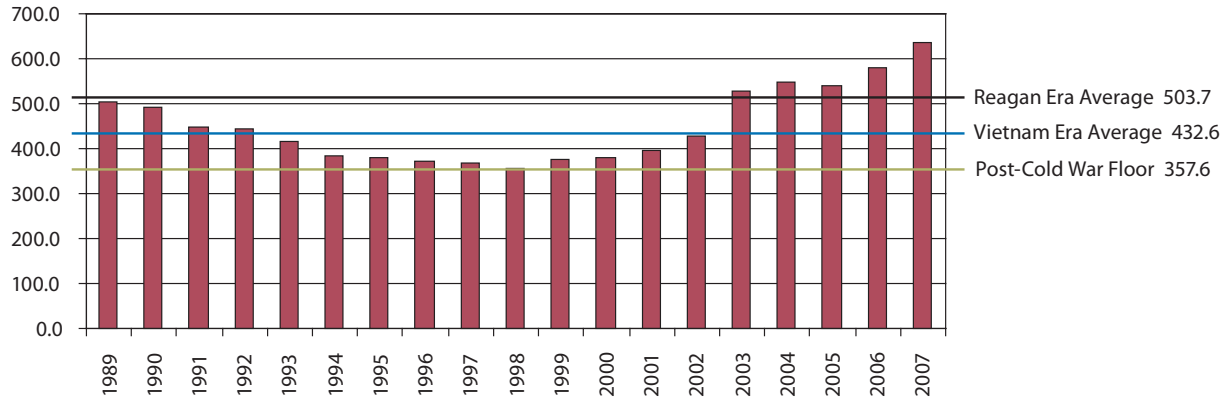
*** Average of poll responses from 24 nations, January 2007.

Source: BBC World Service, GlobeScan, and Program on International Policy Attitudes at the University of Maryland.

All three survey questions include polls from Argentina, Australia, China, France, India, Indonesia, Philippines, Russia, and South Korea. In addition to the core, the first question includes polls from Armenia, Israel, Palestine, Peru, and Ukraine. In addition to the core, the second question includes polls from Brazil, Chile, Egypt, Germany, Great Britain, Hungary, Italy, Kenya, Lebanon, Mexico, Nigeria, Poland, Portugal, Turkey, and UAE. The third adds to the core: Afghanistan, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Congo, Egypt, Finland, Germany, Ghana, Great Britain, Iran, Iraq, Italy, Kenya, Mexico, Nigeria, Poland, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, South Africa, Spain, Sti Lanka, Tanzania, Turkey.

POST-COLD WAR US DEFENSE SPENDING

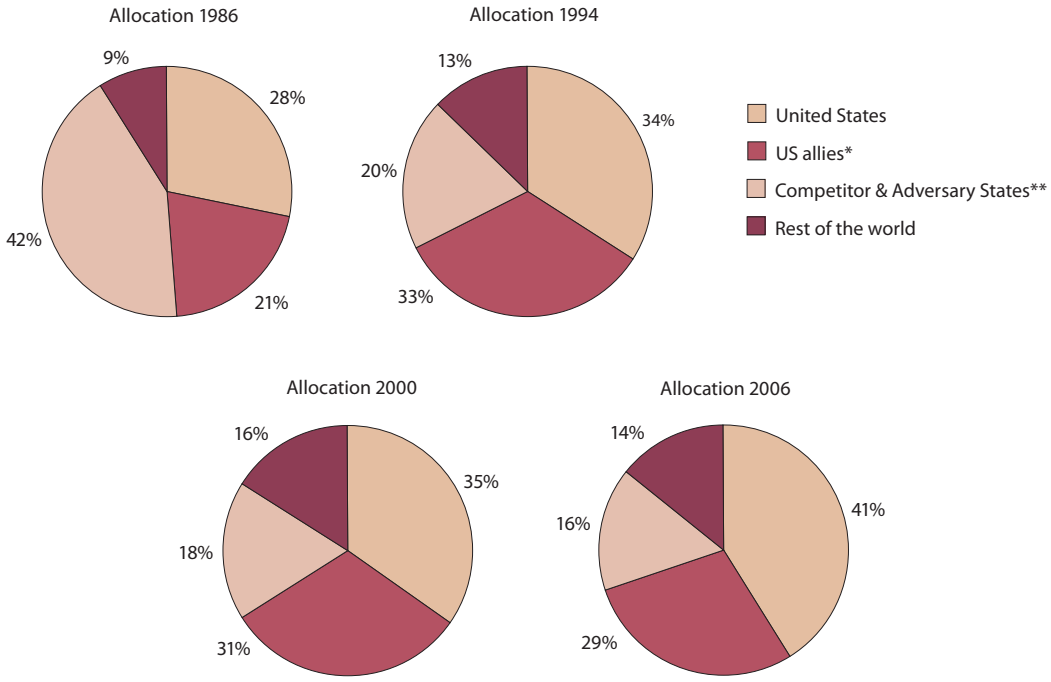
Billions of US Dollars



Sources: Office of the Undersecretary of Defense (Comptroller)

ALLOCATION OF WORLD MILITARY SPENDING

(Purchasing Power Parity)



*US allies include all NATO states plus Israel, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Taiwan, and South Korea.

** Potential Adversary and Competitor States include, for 1986, the Soviet Union and other Warsaw Treaty states, China, Cuba, Iran, Iraq, North Korea, Libya, Syria, and Vietnam. For 1994, the former Soviet Union and Warsaw Treaty states are replaced by Russia and Belarus. In 2000, Vietnam is removed from this category. In 2006, Libya is also removed, but Venezuela is added.

Sources: International Institute for Strategic Studies, The Military Balance 1996/97, 1995/96, 1994/95, 1993/94, 1992/93, 2002-2003, 2008; US ACDA, World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers 1995, 1999-2000.

and security affairs—the right-of-center Center for Strategic and International Studies—had a 2005 budget of $28 million.)

Like all bureaucracies, DOD and the services tend to see and represent the world in terms of their own defining missions and functions. They are attuned to the military aspect of foreign affairs and tend to view these in terms of military conflict scenarios. There is nothing inherently wrong with this bias; it conforms to the military's role and it belongs in the mix. What is dysfunctional, however, is the overall imbalance in America's marketplace of ideas, which gives the "Pentagon lens" predominance. This is a product of history and inertia—the effluent of the Second World War and the Cold War. And, in recent policy, it has had the effect of normalizing a view of the security environment that privileges military action.

Paradoxically, the armed services do not explicitly favor military activism. Indeed, the Joint Chiefs often exert a restraining influence when political leadership is considering war. Nonetheless, the net effect of the defense establishment's "policy shops" and "think tanks" is to prime the charge for forceful intervention.

DOD and the services are also intent on defending their institutional prerogatives and preserving (or expanding) their budget share. Again, like all bureaucracies, they seek to grow—consuming more resources, appending new roles, and extending the scope of their authority. This they perceive and portray as a national security imperative. An important and potentially supportive constituency is the more-than-12-million voters who live in households with at least one person who is in the active or reserve military, employed by DOD, or employed by a defense contractor. Many millions more live in cities and towns heavily dependent on DOD activity. For good reason, American politicians generally demure from "running against the Pentagon".

An alternative approach would emphasize broad multilateral cooperation to contain and resolve regional crises and defuse potential conflicts.

So, can the next administration steer clear of the present overemphasis on military power and chart an alternative course for US policy? In light of the impediments to change, progress will require unusual foresight and courage. The least hazardous path politically would be a modest departure from Bush administration military policy. But this would not be adequate to the quandary in which America presently finds itself—as will become clearer, if it needs to be, when the next administration lifts the veil on the status of our armed forces and their efforts abroad. Economic troubles and fiscal pressure are also likely to generate stronger support for a shift in priorities. Finally, any new charm and diplomacy offensive attempted by the next administration will soon fall flat if not mated to a significant change in US defense strategy. Now, less than ever, can America's allies afford to join America in desultory wars.

Unfortunately, presidential campaigns tell us little about what comes next in this area of policy. For different reasons, both Democrats and Republicans have handled defense issues gingerly. So the prospect for meaningful reform depends on November 4th marking not the conclusion of the US security policy debate, but its rebirth.

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

Toward a Sustainable US Defense Posture. PDA Briefing Memo #42. 02 August 2007.

War & Consequences: Global Terrorism has Increased Since 9/11 Attacks. PDA Briefing Memo #38. 25 September 2006.

Losing Hearts and Minds: World Public Opinion and post-9/11 US Security Policy. PDA Briefing Memo #37. 14 September 2006.

Fighting on Borrowed Time: The Effect on US Military Readiness of America's post-9/11 Wars. PDA Briefing Report #19. 11 September 2006.

Carl Conetta. "Dissuading China and Fighting the 'Long War'." *World Policy Journal* (Summer 2006).

QDR 2006: Do The Forces Match the Missions? DOD Gives Little Reason to Believe. PDA Briefing Memo #36. February 2006.

Carl Conetta. *Arms control in an age of strategic and military revolution.* Presentation at "Thinking with Einstein" conference, Federation of German Scientists. Berlin, 14-16 October 2005.

Vicious circle: The dynamics of popular discontent in Iraq. PDA Research Monograph #10. 18 May 2005.

THE PROJECT ON DEFENSE ALTERNATIVES (PDA)

PDA seeks to adapt security policy to the challenges and opportunities of the post-cold war, post-9/11 era. Toward this end, the project:

- Offers independent, non-partisan analysis of security issues,
- Develops and promotes a broad range of policy alternatives, and
- Helps support a lively, open public debate on defense policy.

PDA uniquely combines "common security" and "defense reform" perspectives in its work. Thus, the project is especially interested in policy options that reconcile the goals of:

- Reliable, sustainable defense against aggression,
- Enhanced international stability and cooperation, and
- Lower levels of armed force and military spending, worldwide.

Although the project focuses primarily on US defense policy, it also has worked on renovation of the UN peacekeeping system as well as on defense reform for East and Central Europe, southern Africa, South America, and the Persian Gulf.

POLICY INNOVATION

In weighing official policy and developing alternatives, PDA adopts a distinctively holistic perspective. The project views policy choices not only in terms of traditional cost and effectiveness criteria, but also in terms of their broad stability and collateral effects. This is a way of ensuring that policies intended to enhance security do not inadvertently contribute to conflict potentials and arms racing. Sustainability also requires attention to the broader economic effects of a defense posture.

BUILDING POLICY DEBATE

A nation's ability to successfully adapt its security posture to changing circumstances depends on the existence of a lively, constructive, and thorough policy debate. For this reason, PDA:

- *Draws attention to the fundamental assessments, assumptions, and goals that frame policy choices.* Doing so illuminates the range of feasible alternatives and stimulates critical analysis and innovation;
- *Supports new venues for policy debate and the exchange of ideas and information.* These venues include PDA conferences, round-tables, workshops, and media forums as well as internet-based "special topic" libraries and information exchanges; and,
- *Strives to bring forward and promote innovative thinkers and ideas from across the policy spectrum, notably including armed forces personnel.*

AFFILIATIONS

PDA is a member of the Security Policy Working Group and the Unified Security Budget Task Force. It is affiliated with the International Study Group on Alternative Security Policy (Berlin) and the International Security Network (Geneva)

CONTACTS AND RESOURCES

- PDA Homepage: www.comw.org/pda
- Other PDA resources, International Security Online: http://www.comw.org/infogate/
- Carl Conetta, Washington office: cconetta@comw.org
- Charles Knight, Cambridge office: cknight@comw.org