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TESTIMONY

STATEMENT BEFORE THE SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE ON DEFENSE STRATEGY

October 28, 2015

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Mr. Chairman, Senator Reed, Members of the Committee, thank you for inviting me to appear before you today to present my thoughts on the critical issue of our defense strategy.

I have followed this issue for over four decades now, beginning with my studies as a cadet at West Point. My doctoral dissertation focused on our strategy during the Vietnam War, and my military service on the staff of three defense secretaries and in Andrew Marshall's Office of Net Assessment during the Cold War gave me an opportunity to witness strategy formulation at the highest levels in the Defense Department. After retiring from the Army, my interest in military strategy has continued, over the last two decades, during my time as president of the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments. Today I will provide a framework for thinking about our defense strategy, along with some preliminary thoughts regarding strategy, its relationship to operational concepts, force sizing, force posture, missions, and capabilities.

It is my strong belief that the need for a well-crafted U.S. defense strategy has never been greater since the Cold War's end. Today the United States confronts three revisionist powers in three different regions that have long been viewed by administrations of both parties as vital to our national security. These powers are actively challenging the rules-based international system that has enabled a generation of relative peace and unparalleled prosperity. The scale of the challenge posed by these powers far exceeds that of the minor powers and radical non-state groups that formed the basis for much of our defense planning over the past quarter century. At the same time, the means available to address these challenges are diminishing. Just as important, the form of the challenges presented by our existing and prospective adversaries is shifting, in some cases dramatically.

This suggests that we will likely need to develop different ways of deterring our enemies, and of defeating them if deterrence fails. Our military will require a significantly different force sizing construct, operational concepts and doctrine, and corresponding changes in our force structure and capabilities. This effort

should be informed by (and inform) the strategy we adopt. Put another way, how our military deters, and how it fights depends on our security interests, the threat posed to those interests, the resources available to address those threats, and how we can best employ those resources. The "how" is the province of strategy.

Background to the Current Situation

The United States has been an active global power for nearly three-quarters of a century. The experience and cost of fighting two world wars convinced the leaders of both major U.S. political parties that the emergence of a hostile hegemonic power on the Eurasian landmass would constitute a major threat to both our security and economic prosperity. If such a nation or coalition succeeded in dominating the key power centers of Eurasia, it would possess the military potential—the manpower, natural resources, and industrial capacity—to overturn the global balance of power and isolate the United States, putting our security at risk and challenging our access to the global commons.

The U.S. strategic objective of preserving a balance of power to forestall the rise of a hostile hegemon was evident during World War I, when the United States intervened in Europe to prevent Germany from establishing a dominant position on the Continent. Following that war, Washington attempted to retreat from global affairs and put its trust in Great Britain to preserve the global military balance, much as it had done over the previous two centuries. Yet a little more than two decades later U.S. policymakers confronted the possibility that Nazi Germany's conquest of much of Europe and Imperial Japan's move to establish a Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere would find hostile powers dominating much of Eurasia, leaving Washington without any major allies and isolated in the Western Hemisphere. The United States responded by supporting the allies—Great Britain, Nationalist China and the Soviet Union—through means such as Lend Lease, convoy escorts in the western Atlantic Ocean, and the economic embargo of Japan. After the attack on Pearl Harbor, the United States became a fully active belligerent, taking the lead in Europe's Western Front and in the Pacific Theater of Operations as well. Following the war, it became clear that Great Britain could no longer sustain its position as the world's principal global "balancer." This convinced a majority of the American political elite and the American public that there was no alternative to the United States shouldering the responsibilities of global leadership, particularly given the Soviet Union's rise and communism's threat to the existing international order.

The threat of Soviet expansion from the Eurasian heartland into Western Europe (driving U.S. forces off the continent), Northeast Asia (isolating Japan, perhaps in league with China), and the Persian Gulf (seizing the region's petroleum reserves and gaining a permanent foothold along the Indian Ocean littoral) had a lasting impact on virtually every aspect of American military power. For instance, the United States forged alliances and partnerships with frontline nations across the Eurasian Rimland, principally to augment U.S. military capabilities (thereby helping to maintain a strong economic foundation at home), and to secure the

forward bases and access agreements it needed to defend the homeland in depth and project power against emerging threats.

Despite the passage of time and the Soviet Union's collapse in 1991, the objectives of U.S. security policy have remained remarkably consistent. They can be generally summarized as keeping major threats as far away from the U.S. homeland as possible, thereby leveraging the country's favorable geographic position and strategic depth; collaborating with highly capable allies and partners; preserving favorable military balances in key regions along the Eurasian periphery; and maintaining sufficient access to the global commons—to include the air and maritime domains and expanding over time to include the space and cyberspace domains—in order to sustain a forward defense posture while preserving access to key trading partners and vital natural resources.

While these security objectives have endured, the defense strategy and military posture for securing them has shifted over time. This is a function of factors such as the changing character of the threats to U.S. security objectives; the attitude of the American people; increasing partisanship in the American political system; the development of new means of warfare; changes in the U.S. alliance portfolio and in the contributions of U.S. allies and partners; and the United States' varying ability to mobilize its economic and manpower resources for defense.

The Cold War Era

The U.S. defense posture in Europe in the early years of the Cold War relied heavily on the country's advantage in nuclear weapons to deter aggression, with forward-based conventional forces serving primarily as a "tripwire" to enhance deterrence by increasing the chances that a Soviet attack would ensure U.S. entry into the war, thereby also reassuring America's NATO allies. As the Soviets began deploying substantial numbers of nuclear weapons, the U.S. defense posture shifted to rely relatively less on nuclear weapons and more heavily on large, forward-deployed conventional forces in Europe to mount a successful defense (or at least raise the risks to Moscow of being able to launch a successful conventional invasion), and to meet the challenge posed by Soviet proxies in the developing world, such as by expanding the Special Forces and employing U.S. state and non-state proxies.

In the 1970s, the Soviets continued building up their nuclear forces despite having reached what many U.S. policy-makers and military strategists considered to be a rough parity with the United States. Moscow also enjoyed what appeared to be an advantage in conventional forces. Rather than trying to match the Soviets tank-for-tank, plane-for-plane, and ship-for-ship, the United States adapted its defense strategy to emphasize an area of emerging (and what some perceived to be a likely enduring) advantage in information-related technologies. Thus, during the Carter administration, the U.S. formulated an "Offset Strategy" with the Defense Department giving priority to developing "information-intensive" capabilities such as stealth aircraft, precision-guided munitions, undersea sensor beds, increasingly

quiet (and thus difficult to detect) submarines, advanced reconnaissance satellites, and the Global Positioning System.

Following the United States' defeat in the Vietnam War, Washington also shifted its emphasis away from such interventions and toward greater reliance on regional partners in the developing world. In the early 1980s increased reliance was placed on supporting non-state proxy forces, such as the Mujahedeen in Afghanistan and the Contras in Nicaragua, to wage unconventional wars that imposed disproportionate costs on the Soviet Union.

The Unipolar Era

Following the Cold War's end the U.S. defense posture shifted once again. With the Soviet Union's collapse, the United States was left as the world's sole superpower with no immediate major threat to its security interests. With no extant great power rival and none on the immediate horizon, longstanding concerns over the emergence of hostile hegemons seemed anachronistic, while the threats posed by rogue nations (including nuclear proliferation) and terrorist groups became the most pressing concerns for U.S. policymakers and strategists. At the same time, Europe was largely free of major power rivalry due to the weakness of Russia, while most East Asian nations were more preoccupied with economic growth than military competition. Thus the United States was able to concentrate much of its attention on the broader Middle East—locus of the most proximate challenges to Eurasian stability as well as the most immediate threats to U.S. security.

Consequently both Democratic and Republican administrations made major cuts in the U.S. military's size and modernization programs and called home a large portion of America's forward-deployed forces. The "frontier" forward-defense posture of the Cold War era was progressively reduced as U.S. forces were re-positioned in the continental United States and shifted toward an expeditionary posture. Following the First Gulf War, the U.S. military found itself increasingly engaged in minor conflicts in the developing world, such as in the Balkans, Haiti, Rwanda and Somalia, while conducting residual security operations centered on Iraq. Operations against irregular threats such as these expanded greatly following the 9/11 attacks. Large U.S. and allied expeditionary forces were deployed to Afghanistan and Iraq to conduct stability operations, while American and allied Special Forces engaged in sustained global counter-terrorist operations. In summary, in the quarter-century following the fall of the Berlin Wall, the U.S. military has increasingly emphasized expeditionary operations against modestly equipped irregular forces.

The Rise of Revisionist Powers

The U.S. military's large and protracted campaigns against radical Islamist forces in Afghanistan and Iraq, combined with a significant erosion of the U.S. Government's fiscal position, did much to convince President Barack Obama to withdraw all U.S. forces from Iraq in 2011 and end all American combat operations in Afghanistan in 2014. In 2011, the administration negotiated an agreement with Congress designed to reduce the large deficits the government had been running since the onset of the Great Recession. The result, the Budget Control Act of 2011, requires substantial reductions in defense spending over ten years amounting to nearly $1 trillion when compared to the projections submitted by President Obama in his Fiscal Year (FY) 2012 budget.

While U.S. defense budgets have typically increased and declined as threats to the country's security have grown and faded, respectively, the same cannot be said regarding the current situation. Indeed, despite the Obama administration's efforts to reduce U.S. involvement in countering radical Islamist groups, their strength has increased rather than decreased in recent years. To paraphrase Leon Trotsky, "The United States may not be interested in waging war against radical Islamists, but radical Islamists are waging war on the United States."

As the Islamist State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and other Sunni extremist groups, like al-Qaeda, demonstrate, radical Islamism remains a persistent threat. Yet the challenges posed by radical Islamism are relatively modest when compared to the increasingly belligerent activities of three revisionist powers: China, Iran, and Russia, which threaten long-standing U.S. interests in the Western Pacific, Middle East, and Europe, respectively.

China and Russia far outstrip the capabilities of any terrorist organization or minor power, such as Iraq and North Korea, that formed the basis for much of our defense planning over most of the past two decades. Moreover, in East Asia and the Middle East there are other threats to American and allied security aside from China and Iran, respectively. In the case of the former, the challenges posed by a nuclear-armed North Korea cannot be underestimated. Nor can resurgent radical Sunni Islamism be ignored in the Middle East. Our military strategists are thus confronted not only with prioritizing their efforts across three Eurasian regions, but also within regions. The problem is further complicated in that Sunni and Shi'a extremists pose a threat not only to U.S. security interests, but view each other as enemies.

In East Asia, China's continuing economic growth has fueled its revisionist ambitions and enabled a large-scale, sustained military buildup, one that is beginning to shift the local balance of power in its favor. As a result, Beijing has been emboldened to act more assertively toward its neighbors, as reflected in its expanding its territorial claims, which include not only Taiwan, but also most of the South China Sea and Senkaku Islands.

In Europe, Russia's recent behavior suggests that its 2008 military campaign against Georgia was not an aberration, but rather an initial effort to overturn the prevailing regional order. By seizing the Crimea, waging unconventional warfare in eastern Ukraine, and engaging in military deployments that threaten its East European neighbors, Moscow has made it clear that it does not accept the post-Cold War political order in Europe. Russia's recent deployment of forces to Syria suggests that it is once again both willing and able to employ its military to advance its aims beyond its "near abroad."

Finally, Iran continues to support extremist groups that seek to destabilize friendly regimes across the Middle East, while questions remain about its willingness to accept stringent restrictions on its capacity to build nuclear weapons. Moreover, the region remains wracked by ethnic and religious tensions instigated by Iran and its proxies, and by radical Sunni Islamist groups.

Together, these developments have greatly increased the scale of the security challenges confronting the United States relative to what they were less than a decade ago.

Military Challenges

Moreover, the *forms* of the threats posed by these three revisionist states are in some important ways quite different from the Soviet threat of the Cold War era. Beijing, Moscow and Tehran are accumulating military capability at different rates, on different scales, and in varying levels of sophistication. When combined with other factors, such as geography, demography and political culture, each poses a unique challenge to U.S. security interests. Disruptive change in the military competition is almost certainly under way in the following areas.

The Battle Network Competition

During the Cold War, the U.S. military focused considerable attention on electronic warfare, or what the Soviets called "Radio-Electronic Combat." As both superpowers began deploying satellites in substantial numbers during the 1960s, space became the focus of increased competition as well. Following the Cold War, however, the U.S. military entered a period when its command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (C4ISR) operations were conducted in benign (or uncontested) environments. This happy circumstance no longer exists. The entrance of Russia and (especially) China into direct military competition with the United States means that the U.S. military can no longer count on its C4ISR capabilities being immune from attack.

Although China is the pacing threat, its emphasis on attacking the U.S. military's "nervous system" in the form of its battle networks is hardly unique. According to the U.S. intelligence community, "Russian leaders openly maintain that the Russian armed forces have antisatellite weapons and conduct antisatellite

research."[1] Likewise, Russia and Iran both have active and capable cyber warfare programs, as evidenced by Moscow's apparent use of computer network attacks against Estonia in 2007 and Georgia in 2008, as well as Tehran's alleged attacks on Saudi Aramco in 2012.

The Mature Precision-Strike Competition

For nearly seventy years— beginning with the buildup of American military forces for an anticipated invasion of Japan in the summer of 1945, and through the Korean, Vietnam and both Gulf wars, as well as innumerable lesser operations in places like the Balkans, Dominican Republic, Panama, and Somalia—the United States has repeatedly been able to deploy and sustain its forces over lengthy air and sea lines of communication to forward theater ports, airfields, and staging areas immune from serious attacks; and achieve air superiority using short-range platforms based in close proximity to an area of operations.[2] These favorable conditions have had a profound influence on U.S. force structure and contingency planning.[3] Yet, as in the case of U.S. battle networks, the era of uncontested U.S. global force projection is rapidly drawing to a close, due in large part to the proliferation of conventional precision-strike capabilities. Combined with improvements in guidance kits, wide-area sensors, communications links, data processing systems, and other key information technologies, this is enabling conventional munitions to become increasingly lethal over progressively greater ranges—and against both fixed and mobile targets. The United States, however, no longer enjoys the commanding position in the precision-strike regime that it occupied in the two decades following the end of the Cold War.[4]

Once again China is the pacing threat. The People's Liberation Army (PLA) is fielding a variety of advanced surveillance and strike capabilities to support its anti-access/area denial (A2/AD)[5] forces, with an eye toward progressively shifting

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[1] James R. Clapper, "Statement for the Record: Worldwide Threat Assessment of the US Intelligence Community," Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, January 29, 2014, p. 7, available at http://www.intelligence.senate.gov/140129/clapper.pdf.

[2] Andrew F. Krepinevich, *The Military-Technical Revolution: A Preliminary Assessment* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2002). This is a reprint of the assessment written in the Office of the Secretary of Defense in 1992; and Jan van Tol with Mark Gunzinger, Andrew Krepinevich, and Jim Thomas, *AirSea Battle: A Point of Departure Operational Concept* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2010).

[3] Mark Gunzinger, *Shaping America's Future Military: Toward a New Force Planning Construct* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2013).

[4] Barry Watts, *The Maturing Revolution in Military Affairs* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2011); and Barry Watts, *The Evolution of Precision Strike* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2013).

[5] Anti-access capabilities are used to prevent or constrain the deployment of opposing forces into a theater of operations, whereas area-denial capabilities are used to restrict their freedom of maneuver once in theater. See Andrew F. Krepinevich, Jr., "The Pentagon's Wasting Assets," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 88, No. 4 (July/August 2009). For an overview of China's military capabilities and strategy, see Office of the Secretary of Defense. *Annual Report to Congress:*

the East Asian military balance in Beijing's favor. Although China's precision-strike capabilities far exceed those of most other nations, Iran and Russia appear to be following its example, albeit in more modest fashion. Ultimately, in a conflict against an adversary that possesses large numbers of guided weapons along with the battle networks needed to locate distant (and mobile) targets, and coordinate complex operations, the U.S. military may find that air and seaports of debarkation, forward bases and staging areas, and mobile high signature assets such as major surface combatants are increasingly vulnerable to attack.

Modern Sub-Conventional Warfare

Precision weaponry (such as precision-guided rockets, artillery rounds, mortars and missiles, or G-RAMM, as well as anti-tank guided munitions (ATGMs) and shoulder-fired surface-to-air missiles) has the potential to augment profoundly the military potential of irregular proxy forces.[6] Non-state actors—especially groups such as Hezbollah with significant resources, state sponsors, or both—are embracing the precision revolution by acquiring guided anti-aircraft, anti-armor, and anti-personnel weapons that were, only a decade or so ago, beyond their reach.[7] If this trend continues, even irregular armed groups like Hezbollah and Daesh may be able to establish denial zones on, above, and even beyond their territory.

Today China, Iran and Russia are employing paramilitary forces, non-state proxies, and/or soldiers in disguise (also referred to as "little green men") in pursuing sub-conventional acts of aggression against their neighbors. Unfortunately, this form of military competition has often proven particularly troublesome for the United States.

The Second Nuclear Age

The nuclear competition has become both different and in some ways more complex than was the case during the Cold War, which was dominated by the United States and the Soviet Union. Since the Cold War new nuclear powers have

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Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2014 (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 2014).

[6] During the Second Lebanon War in 2006, Iran's proxy Hezbollah proved surprisingly capable against the Israeli Defense Force during their month-long conflict. Yet Hezbollah possessed only ATGMs and a few anti-ship cruise missiles (ASCMs) to augment a substantial arsenal of rockets, artillery, mortars and missiles (or "RAMM"), none of which had precision guidance.

[7] On Hezbollah's capabilities in particular, see Nicholas Blanford, *Warriors of God: Inside Hezbollah's Thirty-Year Struggle against Israel* (New York: Random House, 2011). Non-state actors armed with precision-guided weapons are often cited as the chief example of "hybrid" threats that combine guerrilla tactics with capabilities that were until recently widely available only to states. For discussions of this concept, see Frank G. Hoffman, "Hybrid Warfare and Challenges," *Joint Force Quarterly* No. 52 (2009); and Williamson Murray and Peter R. Mansoor, eds., *Hybrid Warfare: Fighting Complex Opponents from the Ancient World to the Present* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

emerged. A regional nuclear competition has emerged in South Asia between, India and Pakistan, and one may develop in the Middle East between Iran and Israel. There are concerns that a nuclear-armed Iran may trigger a nuclear proliferation cascade across the Middle East, perhaps involving Saudi Arabia, Turkey and other states as well.[8] Moreover, the United States and Russia have reduced their arsenals to levels far below those of the Cold War. Consequently the barrier to entry to great power nuclear status has been lowered. This could tempt China and perhaps India and/or Pakistan (currently the leading producer of nuclear weapons) to augment their arsenals to "superpower" levels. Such an "n-player" nuclear competition among comparable powers would likely be characterized by higher levels of uncertainty and, perhaps, crisis instability as well.[9]

The era of precision warfare is further complicating matters. During the Cold War the "firebreak" between conventional and nuclear weapons was relatively stark. The advent of precision-guided munitions in large quantities that, in some instances, can cover targets previously reserved for nuclear weapons has provided the U.S. military with a significant advantage over its prospective rivals. Both China and Russia are developing their own precision warfare capabilities. In the interim, both have sought to offset the U.S. advantage in precision warfare by improving their atomic arsenals, in some cases by developing nuclear weapons with extremely low yields and/or focused effects (such as an electromagnetic pulse). The result is a progressive blurring of the distinction between nuclear and conventional weapons and the firebreak that has, in the minds of many, helped to discourage nuclear weapons use.

The Second Nuclear Age, as it has been called, is also changing the strategic landscape regarding the role of defenses as well as crisis stability. With the emergence of small nuclear powers, modern air and missile defenses may prove effective against nuclear missile attack in some circumstances, even if the offense still enjoys an overall advantage. States with large nuclear arsenals that are also major advanced economic and technology powers may be able to field effective

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[8] Andrew F. Krepinevich, *Critical Mass: Nuclear Proliferation in the Middle East* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2013). See also Bob Graham and Jim Talent et al., *World at Risk: The Report of the Commission on the Prevention of Weapons of Mass Destruction Proliferation and Terrorism* (New York: Vintage, 2008), available at http://www.absa.org/leg/WorldAtRisk.pdf; William J. Perry and James R. Schlesinger, et al., *America's Strategic Posture: The Final Report of the Congressional Commission on the Strategic Posture of the United States* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2009), available at http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/America's_Strategic_Posture_Auth_Ed.pdf; and Bradley Bowman, *Chain Reaction: Avoiding a Nuclear Arms Race in the Middle East*, S. Prt. No. 110-34 (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2008), available at http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CPRT-110SPRT39674/html/CPRT-110SPRT39674.htm.

[9] Fred Charles Iklé et al. *The Diffusion of Nuclear Weapons to Additional Countries: The "Nth Country" Problem* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 1960); Fred Charles Iklé, "Nth Countries and Disarmament" *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* Vol. 16, no. 10 (December 1960), available at http://csis.org/images/stories/ikle/038.BulletinAtomicSc1960.pdf; and Andrew F. Krepinevich, *Critical Mass: Nuclear Proliferation in the Middle East* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2013).

defenses against minor nuclear powers. In the case of minor nuclear powers that are in close geographic proximity to one another (such as India and Pakistan, or (prospectively) Iran and Israel), owing to the speed at which ballistic missiles travel, both sides' attack warning times would be compressed from the twenty to thirty minutes or so that existed between the two Cold War superpowers to perhaps a little as five to six minutes. This time compression will place enormous strain on the early warning and command and control systems of nuclear rivals in close geographic proximity to one another—assuming they have the technical, human and material resources to field, operate and maintain them.

Other problems loom as well. One is the potential of cyber weapons to corrupt early warning data and command-and-control systems. Another concerns the lack of understanding of how the culture and personalities of those controlling nuclear weapons in the new nuclear powers calculate cost, benefit and risk. Simply stated, the character of the nuclear competition is undergoing a fundamental and potentially dangerous shift.

Resource Challenges

The Budget

Since World War II, as threats to U.S. security have increased, generally the resources allocated to meet them have increased as well. Correspondingly, in periods where threats appeared to be receding, the resources allocated for defense typically declined. This is not the case now. The U.S. defense budget, as a percentage of GDP, is expected to decline from over four percent in 2010 to less than three percent by 2020, a decline of over 25 percent.

Further complicating matters since 9/11, maintaining an all-volunteer force has seen personnel costs increase dramatically, crowding out spending on training, readiness and new equipment. With respect to modernization, the challenge is made more acute by the cancellation of a series of new systems due to concerns regarding cost growth, over-ambitious technical requirements, and questionable performance, among others.[10] As discussed above, emerging security challenges could accelerate the depreciation of the military's existing equipment stocks.

Allies and Partners

Ideally, under these circumstances Washington could prevail upon its allies and partners, particularly those that are among the most advanced states of the developed world, to take up some of the slack. Reality, however, finds the opposite:

[10] Among the major programs terminated or greatly truncated are the Army's Future Combat System, Crusader artillery system, and Comanche helicopter; the Navy's CG(X) cruiser and DDG (1000) destroyer, the Air Force's Airborne Laser and F-22 fighter, and the Marine Corps' Expeditionary Fighting Vehicle.

Our European allies with the largest GDP—Germany, France and Great Britain—have seen their allocations for defense (as a percentage of GDP) fall from an average of 1.6, 2.9 and 3.2, respectively, during the period from 1995-1999, to 1.3, 1.9, and 2.4 percent in 2013.[11] Japan, which boasts the world's third largest economy, remains tethered to its self-imposed ceiling on defense spending at 1 percent of GDP, and has recently failed to reach that modest level.[12]

In summary, the means available to both the United States, its allies and partners to defend their interests are declining while those available to the three revisionist powers are increasing. Thus the United States finds itself progressively less capable of pursuing a "rich man's strategy" of simply outspending its competitors. Instead it will need to figure out a way to prevail by crafting a "smart man's strategy." It also means that dificult choices will have to be made regarding U.S. defense priorities.

This is not to say that the United States and its allies should seek to maintain a level of defense spending pegged to a particular percentage of their GDP. The level of defense spending should be a function of many factors, among them: the scale and form of the security challenges to our interests; the level of risk we are willing (and able) to accept to those interests; social factors (such as the cost of maintaining a volunteer force versus a draft); the defense strategy chosen (e.g., one that adopts an objective of mounting a successful forward defense versus a mobilization strategy that maintains a relatively small active force); and how effective a strategy one is able to craft (i.e., one that makes the most efficient use of resources, aligns friendly strengths against an enemy's weaknesses, imposes disproportionate costs upon the enemy in conducting a long-term competition, etc.). That being said, and all other factors being equal, the decline in resources projected to be devoted to defense relative to those being invested by the revisionist powers suggest the United States is accumulating risk to its ability to preserve security interests at an alarming rate, one that even a well-designed strategy may be unable to offset.

[11] The corresponding U.S. percentages are 3.2 and 4.4. One might interpret this as the United States increasing its military efforts in part to offset the decline in its allies' efforts. As noted, U.S. defense funding is now in decline as well when measured as a share of GDP.

[12] Although Japan, under the Abe government, has sent strong signals that it intends to increase its defenses, it remains to be seen whether it will match its words with deeds.

The Need for Strategy

The situation described above finds the United States entering a period of heightened security challenges—in both their scale and form—not witnessed since the late 1940s and early 1950s when the Soviet Union and Communist China emerged as major threats to U.S. and allied vital interests in Europe and the Far East. The geopolitical threat was compounded by profound discontinuities in the military competition driven in part by the development of nuclear weapons, thermonuclear weapons, ballistic missiles, and military satellites, all within the span of little more than a decade.

Faced with growing threats and declining or, at best, plateauing resources, the need for well-crafted regional defense strategies and an integrated U.S. global defense strategy and posture is clear. Yet the U.S. Government has lost much of its competence to do strategy well.[13] The Defense Department's approach to strategy is primarily driven by *process*—the QDR is undertaken every four years, not sooner, not later—than by *need* or from an understanding that strategy is not an occasional effort, but a constant endeavor.

This view is shared by some who have been deeply involved in U.S. defense strategy formulation. Andrew Marshall, who recently retired as head of the Office of Net Assessment, Office of the Secretary of Defense, declared before his departure:

> There's a disinclination . . . . as compared with the interest in and the capacity to do this kind of thing [i.e., strategy], that characterized the early part of the Cold War. It just has disappeared in the U.S. Government.
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> [W]hen you look at what the government has mainly produced as so-called strategies, [they] are, first, simply lists of good things they want to happen. They have nothing about how you're really going to get there . . . . [T]hey are focused entirely—to the extent that they pay any attention to the opponent—it is his strengths that they get into the business of reacting to. Whereas strategy . . . [involves] exploiting the weaknesses of the other side, or your strengths. The big problem in the Defense Department is that the minute you start categorizing our strengths and advantages then the Services faint, because their sales pitch on the Hill is [focused on] our weaknesses, or the strengths of the other side.[14]

President Dwight D. Eisenhower noted that any strategy, no matter how good it might be, is at the mercy of constantly changing events. This does not mean that efforts to develop strategy do not matter; rather it is the need, undertaken on a continuing, persistent basis to identify new sources of competitive advantage in a constantly changing world that matters most. As Eisenhower put it, "[T]he secret

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[13] Andrew F. Krepinevich and Barry D. Watts, *Regaining Strategic Competence* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2009).

[14] Andrew W. Marshall, Remarks at a Senior Roundtable on Strategy, Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, Washington, DC, September 25, 2007.

of a sound, satisfactory decision made on an emergency basis has always been that the responsible official has been 'living with the problem' before it becomes acute."[15] Or, as he put it, "Plans are useless . . . planning is indispensable."[16]

The decline of competence when it comes to defense strategy can also be attributed to the fact that strategy requires not only persistent effort, but that it also is something that is difficult to do well. Eisenhower realized this and noted that:

> The basic principles of strategy are so simple that a child may understand them. But to determine their proper application to a given situation requires the hardest kind of work from the finest available staff officers.[17]

Consequently he tasked small groups of highly competent strategists to develop strategy.[18]

Yet for a variety of reasons the current development of U.S. defense strategy is not undertaken by proven strategists, but as part of a bureaucratic process involving hundreds of people. It is not a persistent endeavor, but an occasional undertaking.

Strategy and the Defense Posture

As President Eisenhower observed, the crafting of a good strategy is a very challenging proposition. Consequently, the best I can do at present is to provide a sense of how to think about the problem.

The first order of business is to answer the question: "What are we trying to do?" or "What do we seek to accomplish?"

Next, what, given the resources—human, technical and material—likely to be available to us, are our options for accomplishing the objectives we have set for ourselves? Simply put, having identified what we are trying to achieve and the means at hand to accomplish the task, what choices are available regarding how we are going to link the two. The "how" is our strategy. Only after choosing a strategy can we make informed decisions regarding our defense posture, such as operational concepts, doctrine, force size and mix, basing posture.[19]

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[15] Robert R. Bowie and Richard H. Immerman, *Waging Peace* (Oxford. UK: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 89.
[16] Richard Nixon, *Six Crises* (Garden City, N.J.: Doubleday, 1962), p. 235.
[17] Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Crusade in Europe* (New York: Doubleday, 1948), p. 36.
[18] An example of this is Eisenhower's so-called Solarium Project, which proved instrumental in developing NSC 162/2, one of the foundational Cold War strategy documents. See
[19] That being said, the choice of a strategy should be informed by the kinds of operational concepts available for executing it. The range of plausible operational concepts are themselves limited by, among other things, the kinds of capabilities available, those that may be deployed over the planning horizon, basing alternatives, the contributions of allies, and so on.

To give you a sense of what I am talking about, permit me to offer two examples. The first is our strategy for defending Western Europe during the Cold War. The second examines our current approach to the Western Pacific.

Example: Cold War Europe

Given our longstanding interest in preventing the rise of a hostile hegemonic power in Europe, early in the Cold War we set containing Soviet power as our objective under the key assumption that time was on our side in this competition and that, given enough time, the Soviet system would fail. The military objective we set in the key theater of operations—Western Europe—was to deter Soviet aggression and, if deterrence failed, to end the war on terms favorable to us and our NATO allies. The military strategy we chose was the forward defense of Western Europe.

The principal means for executing this strategy changed over time. Early on the United States relied on its advantage in nuclear weapons and employed a "tripwire" conventional force in Western Europe. As the Soviet Union expanded its nuclear arsenal more emphasis was given to conventional forces.

Simultaneously, operational concepts that set forth how our forces might best accomplish their missions were developed and refined. This effort reached its apex in the early 1980s when the Air Force joined with the Army to develop AirLand Battle. This operational concept called for U.S. and NATO forces to hold the line against the initial wave of Warsaw Pact forces while also engaging the second wave coming from Eastern Europe and the western Soviet Union. Plans were made and exercised for the rapid reinforcement of Army and Air Force units from the United States to Western Europe, with their equipment pre-positioned in West Germany to accelerate the process.

Our Navy and Marine Corps built upon this concept with their own. The Navy sought to accomplish its mission of safeguarding the sea lines of communication from North America to Europe by keeping Soviet forces north of the so-called Greenland-Iceland-UK (or "GIUK") gap through an operational concept known as the Outer Air Battle. Meanwhile, the Marine Corps pre-positioned equipment in Norway to enable its rapid deployment to that country to help secure NATO's northern flank.

These integrated concepts, which were also coordinated with our NATO allies, gave a clear sense as to the size and shape of the forces we would need, the kind of equipment that would serve them best, the division of labor between the Services, and the kind of support our allies might provide that would prove the most valuable.

Example: Today's Western Pacific

I assume that the United States is not abandoning its longstanding interest in preventing the rise of a hostile hegemonic power in the Far East. The only

revisionist power in the region that seeks to establish such a dominant position is China. Let me further assume that our pivot or rebalance to the Asia-Pacific is designed, to an increasing degree, to prevent China from achieving its revisionist aims through coercion or aggression. Given China's expanding territorial claims, the so-called First Island Chain, running through Japan's main islands and its Ryukyu Chain, through Taiwan and then along the Philippine Islands before stretching across the Malay Peninsula, is likely to be the focal point of the military competition. Importantly, the United States has alliances with both Japan and the Philippines and remains committed to the security of Taiwan.

How do we plan to meet these commitments? What is our military strategy for maintaining our interests in this region?

We have several plausible strategies we might pursue, most of which are not mutually exclusive. One is to commit to a forward defense of the First Island Chain. Or we might rely on a tripwire force as we did in Europe in the early days of the Cold War, implying that we are prepared to "go to the brink" of nuclear war if need be. Then there is the mobilization strategy pursued in World War II, ceding territory while amassing overwhelming military power to pursue what proved to be a long and costly, but successful counter-offensive. There is the strategy of "Offshore Control," that calls for a distant blockade of China as the best way to achieve our security objectives.

Depending upon the strategy that emerges out of these options (there are other possibilities as well), we can begin to make sense of how well our current and projected force posture supports it. At present, however, neither the American people, nor its Congress, nor our allies have a sense of our military strategy in the Western Pacific remotely comparable to what we achieved during the Cold War in Europe. Nor are efforts by the strategic studies community in recent years to fill the vacuum a substitute for such a strategy.[20] Moreover, this challenge exists not only in the Western Pacific, but also in other regions of long-standing vital interest and to key domains such as space, cyberspace and the seas that enable access to these regions.

Summary

The strategic pause that characterized the immediate post-Cold War era is long past. We are confronted with growing security challenges and are accumulating strategic risk at an alarming rate. At the same time the resources available to address these challenges are diminishing. As the gap widens between the threats

[20] See, for example, Jan van Tol with Mark Gunzinger, Andrew Krepinevich, and Jim Thomas, *AirSea Battle: A Point of Departure Operational Concept* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2010); Mark Gunzinger with Chris Dougherty, *Outside-In: Operating from Range to Defeat Iran's Anti-Access and Area-Denial Threats* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2011); T. X. Hammes, "Offshore Control is the Answer," *Proceedings*, 2012; and Andrew F. Krepinevich, "How to Deter China: The Case for Archipelagic Defense," *Foreign Affairs*, March-April 2015.

to our interests and the means we have available to meet them, we need to employ these resources as effectively as possible. Hence the acute need for a well-crafted strategy.

Given our circumstances, there is an understandable eagerness to have answers to many questions, such as: What kinds of capabilities do we need? What kinds of forces? What is the proper division of labor between the military services, and between our military and those of our allies? Where should our forces be positioned? But informed responses to questions like these cannot be arrived at without knowing our strategy, and developing one will require persistent effort by talented strategists, and sustained involvement by our senior political and military leaders. There is no short cut.

About the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments

The Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments (CSBA) is an independent, nonpartisan policy research institute established to promote innovative thinking and debate about national security strategy and investment options. CSBA's goal is to enable policymakers to make informed decisions on matters of strategy, security policy and resource allocation. CSBA provides timely, impartial and insightful analyses to senior decision makers in the executive and legislative branches, as well as to the media and the broader national security community. CSBA encourages thoughtful participation in the development of national security strategy and policy, and in the allocation of scarce human and capital resources. CSBA's analysis and outreach focus on key questions related to existing and emerging threats to US national security. Meeting these challenges will require transforming the national security establishment, and we are devoted to helping achieve this end.