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**THE NEW BALANCE:  
LIMITED ARMED STABILIZATION  
AND THE FUTURE OF U.S. LANDPOWER**

**Nathan Freier**

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# CONTENTS

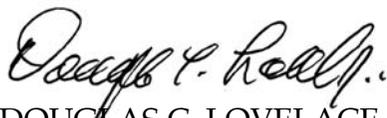
|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Foreword.....   | v   |
| About the Author.....   | vi  |
| Summary.....  | vii |
| Prologue: A New Era – Reality and Strategic<br>Temperance .....   | 1   |
| Introduction: A Period of Critical<br>Defense Choices.....  | 7   |
| The Strategic Environment Versus the Policymaking<br>Environment.....   | 11  |
| The Strategic Environment – An Unconventional<br>Status Quo and Its Implications.....                           | 13  |
| The Impact of the Strategic Environment<br>on Landpower Missions.....   | 28  |
| DoD 3000.05: The Lost Opportunity.....  | 30  |
| The Policymaking Environment – Full-Spectrum<br>Dominance, Uncertainty, and Increasing<br>Certainty.....        | 33  |
| The Tyranny of Uncertainty in Defense<br>Strategy and Planning .....  | 37  |
| An Era of Increasing Strategic-Level Certainty?.....  | 42  |
| Identifying and Institutionalizing a New<br>Balance for the Coming Strategy<br>and Resource War within DoD..... | 44  |

|   |    |
|---|----|
| An Alternative Spectrum of Conflict<br>and the New Balance.....   | 50 |
| Operationalizing the New Balance in Future<br>Force Planning .....  | 56 |
| Guiding Principles for Future Land Force<br>Employment .....  | 60 |
| A New Mission Set and Its Impact<br>on Force Planning .....   | 70 |
| A New Landpower Force Planning Construct:<br>A Two-Contingency Force Remains the Coin<br>of the Realm ..... | 82 |
| Conclusion: Pursuing a New Balance.....   | 86 |
| Endnotes.....   | 87 |

## FOREWORD

The U.S. Army's Peacekeeping and Stability Operations Institute and the Strategic Studies Institute are pleased to offer this groundbreaking monograph on the future of U.S. landpower. The Department of Defense (DoD) experienced revolutionary change in its strategic outlook over the past 8 years. As it transitions to new leadership in the White House and undertakes a historic *Quadrennial Defense Review* (QDR), it will be important for DoD to examine the "first principles" that guide its force planning.

Consistent with his past writing on the rapid onset of an unconventional operating environment, Mr. Nathan Freier takes a critical look at the mission-assignment and orientation of U.S. landpower. He calls for an unconventional revolution in U.S. land forces that optimizes them for intervention in complex and violent crises of governance and security in states crippled by internal disorder. In the end, he argues that the armed stabilization of states and regions in crises will be not just equivalent in importance to traditional warfighting in future land force planning, as suggested by DoD 3000.05 (Stability Operations), but instead the *primary* land force mission for the foreseeable future.



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## SUMMARY

The Department of Defense (DoD) cannot long ignore the inadequacy of much of the current force for nontraditional challenges lurking on the strategic horizon. In the face of the next large-scale unconventional challenge when the President turns to the Secretary of Defense (SecDef) for options, the SecDef must have the right force available to respond effectively.

Senior landpower leaders in particular should reorient on a new unconventional balance point for force optimization. They should anticipate that there will be changes in the U.S. approach to defense-relevant and defense-specific challenges around the world. As a consequence, they should act proactively to help the SecDef identify and build capabilities for the new balance point during the upcoming Quadrennial Defense Review. Doing so will enable DoD to better account for contemporary strategic conditions with minimum future institutional disruption. This monograph arrives at the following conclusions.

- The contemporary strategic environment is marked by a new unconventional status quo. Four characteristics define this new normal. First, unconventional threats of “purpose” and “context” dominate the defense operating space. Second, internal and external threats to foreign interests will commingle in future land-centric contingencies. Third, hybrid combinations of purposeful and contextual threats will be commonplace. And, finally, fourth, traditional military power—employed in isolation—will be increasingly less useful. Combined, these indicate that “fighting and winning America’s

wars” will mean something quite different to senior land force leaders in the future.

U.S. landpower fulfils two roles in this new unconventional operating space. It delivers decisive lethal and nonlethal military effects and enables effective employment of important nonmilitary capabilities and resources like aid, development assistance, consequence management, and preliminary reconstruction.

- Armed stabilization may be the next most common and most important major combat operation (MCO) for DoD land forces. More broadly among the many targets available for land force optimization in the coming years, the most prudent course is one that pursues an unconventional revolution in mission and capabilities. Shifting land force policy in this direction acknowledges that armed stabilization of nations and/or regions in crisis and the defeat of violent threats to a foreign internal order are likely more important organizing principles for future force planning than is preparation for future traditional MCOs.

Here, U.S. land forces optimize for circumstances where: (1) vital interests are challenged by violent unconventional threats; (2) the degree of violence itself is quite high and the environment is nonpermissive; (3) physical threats demonstrate some organization and relative sophistication at various levels (but not that commonly associated with high-end MCO); and finally, (4) foreign partners suffer from

substantial loss or complete failure of sovereign control over political and security outcomes.

- Four principles should govern future landpower employment in this new environment. These reflect the strategic experience and choices of the post-September 11, 2001 (9/11) era, and are sensitive to contemporary risk and cost tolerance. They are: (1) core interests first; (2) limited objectives; (3) risk management; and, finally, (4) early integration of joint, interagency, intergovernmental, and multinational contributions. All four blend at critical points.
- Shaped by these four principles, unconventional land force optimization calls for the adoption of eight new or revised missions. This new mission set is not a threat to the warfighting culture of either the U.S. Army or Marine Corps. Instead, it represents a recalibration of landpower's focus consistent with history, the likeliest strategic futures, and, finally, the desire by senior defense leaders to shift DoD's weight decisively in the direction of unconventional threats.

The new mission set includes: (1) active management of purposeful unconventional threats; (2) armed stabilization; (3) preemptive/punitive campaigns; (4) security sector reform and assistance; (5) conventional deterrence and limited traditional war; (6) facilitation of whole-of-government stabilization and reconstruction; (7) generation and sustainment of adequate land force capabilities; and finally, (8) homeland defense and security. All of these missions and

their associated force pools are interdependent. When combined, they amount to a new 21st century land power force planning construct.

Pursuit of an unconventional land force revolution that accounts for these eight missions resets landpower for decisive intervention in future complex contingencies. General purpose land forces, in particular, must optimize for armed stabilization missions that demand rapid containment and defeat of nontraditional foreign hazards under conditions of general civil disorder in order to create secure operating space for the effective employment of essential nonmilitary agents (e.g., interagency, intergovernmental, international, and nongovernmental). This course recognizes that U.S. land forces are warfighting institutions first. However, it forces landpower leaders to build for a different kind of warfighting future.

**THE NEW BALANCE:  
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**PROLOGUE: A NEW ERA – REALITY AND  
STRATEGIC TEMPERANCE**

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**Future Shock – The Next Two MCOs?<sup>1</sup>**

Let's imagine the minutes from a fictional National Security Council (NSC) principal's meeting occurring sometime within DoD's current planning horizon:

**The President:** As you know, in spite of our best efforts, we have not yet turned the corner on the global economic downturn. Global markets have failed to rebound satisfactorily. Now, parallel crises in the Middle East and Mexico promise to undermine the physical security of the United States and global political and economic confidence. I asked the Director of National Intelligence (DNI) to open our discussion with an update on the most recent developments. Admiral Smith.

**The DNI:** Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen. Generalized inter- and intra-communal disorder across Saudi Arabia is likely to worsen. As you are all well aware, the global economic crisis hit primary resource exporters like Saudi Arabia hard. We assess that widespread political disaffection and economic dislocation provide fertile ground for continuing violent instability. It appears that the Saudi government is unraveling. The extended royal family, government ministers, and long-serving technocrats have all left their posts. Saudi security forces are dissolving.

We can now also confirm that the Shi'a insurrection in eastern Saudi Arabia left most of the Saudi petroleum extraction and export capacity unattended, destroyed,

or under the control of anti-government forces. A similar uprising is reported in the Iraqi cities of Al Basrah and Um Qasr. Here it appears that locally-based Iraqi security forces are complicit in the seizure of Iraq's southern oil fields and Iraq's only deep water port.

As for Mexico, the pandemic spreading through Mexico's largest urban centers is a variant of Avian flu. The pandemic started in rural Mexico's poultry industry and has spread to many of Mexico's most consequential urban centers—most notably Mexico City. In Mexico City alone 100,000 to 200,000 citizens are ill. We have less visibility elsewhere. It is reasonable to assume that another 100,000 to 200,000 Mexicans are sick nationwide.

With a 12 percent mortality rate, upwards of 50,000 Mexicans are likely already dead. Continuing drought and famine in rural Mexico have witnessed 200,000 to 400,000 people migrating to major urban centers in the past 2 weeks. This is compounding the effects of the pandemic.

The pandemic's mortality rate is expected to spike at 40 percent due to the concomitant outbreak of methicillin-resistant *staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) pneumonia among those already sick or acutely ill. Mexico lacks the fourth order antibiotics and ventilators needed to treat this severe pneumonia. The number of those sick will grow exponentially over the coming days. The Mexican health system will collapse in the next 7-10 days. We assess that Mexican security forces are likely next to fall victim.

The pandemic has triggered a number of quite dangerous developments in an already deteriorating security situation. First, criminal gangs are preying on internally displaced populations. Hundreds of the displaced have been killed or critically injured in the past 2 weeks. Second, workers at the port of Vera Cruz and Mexico City International Airport have abandoned their positions as a result of flu-

related panic. A syndicate of organized crime groups and rogue national police occupy and run both. Legitimate commercial traffic, to include aid, has been dramatically curtailed. Third, we are witnessing dramatic increases in both illegal immigration and illicit cross-border criminal activity into the United States. Without remediation by us, this will result in the spread of the pandemic into this country. Finally, there are strong indications that much of Mexico's political leadership has agreed to an entente cordiale with Mexican organized crime. This has turned into significant elements inside the Mexican government for-profit criminal enterprises.

As you are well aware, like Saudi Arabia and Iraq, the global financial downturn has hit Mexico hard. The combined effects of increasing economic dislocation and criminality have fatally weakened the Mexican government and economy. Defection to organized crime of many Mexican political elites will put legitimate governance and national economic viability into a final death spiral.

Complicity of many government officials in criminal activity has encouraged increased criminality within the Mexican security forces and the lower levels of civil government. Conservatively, we estimate that upwards of 50 percent of Mexican territory is informally administered by criminal cartels. Of greatest immediate concern, we know of a number of large criminal sanctuaries abutting U.S. territory. Mexico's criminal cartels are better armed and better organized than what remains of legitimate Mexican security forces. Violence in Mexico is unchecked. This and the disproportionate impact of the economic crisis on Mexico have accelerated its devolution toward state failure. We have every reason to believe that it will fail completely within a month or two. We increasingly face the prospect of an ungoverned Mexico.

**The President:** The stable functioning of two friendly nations critical to the physical and economic security of

the United States is in grave doubt. The fatally weakened governments of Mexico and Saudi Arabia have reluctantly asked for our help. Iraq has done the same. Clearly, helping them restore some functioning order under their authority is a global security interest. There are precious few states in the world that can help besides us. We have limited options and we need to be sensitive to Mexican, Saudi, and Iraqi sovereignty. Unfortunately, time is not on our side.

Today's discussion is about options. If we choose to assist Mexico, Saudi Arabia, and Iraq, we have no alternative but to turn to the Department of Defense first to facilitate and enable a whole-of-government U.S. response. Therefore, I asked the SecDef to outline some preliminary thoughts in this regard. Mr. Secretary, you have the floor. . . .

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Since September 11, 2001 (9/11), the United States has played the role of "revolutionary power." It employed military force to pursue transformational social and political objectives in places like Iraq and Afghanistan. Since January 2009, the strategic frame of reference and choices made by the last national security team have entered a period of substantial revision. The sheer number and scope of future challenges indicate that less ambitious pursuits are in order.<sup>2</sup>

The Bush administration's approach resulted in rapid "defense exhaustion." This exhaustion resulted both from the previous team's choices on the use of force, as well as the character and orientation of the joint force itself. Without question, the hyperactivist defense posture of the previous 8 years is unsustainable. Yet, the United States is not in a position to ignore key changes in the strategic environment and the range of unconventional challenges attending them.<sup>3</sup> Some level of continued activism is inevitable. Sustaining

this activism, however, will require some permanent changes in defense force structure and mission.

DoD cannot long ignore the inadequacy of much of the current force for nontraditional challenges lurking on the strategic horizon. As posited in the opening scenario, when the President turns to the SecDef in the future, will he in fact have the right force available to respond to the likeliest 21st century threats? After the next grim DNI briefing when the President pauses and opens discussion with the provocative invitation, "Mr. Secretary, you have the floor," will the SecDef be in a position to provide satisfactory answers?

It would be prudent for DoD and its constituent service components and combatant commands to address this point directly in the next QDR. First, they should anticipate significant change in the U.S. approach to defense-relevant and defense-specific national security challenges.<sup>4</sup> As a consequence, they should act proactively to institute appropriate change in the future composition, orientation, and mission of much of the joint force. Doing so will enable DoD to better account for contemporary strategic conditions with minimum future institutional disruption.

Routine political transition at home inevitably leads to fresh perspectives on future actions abroad. There will be some continuity. For example, a war on terrorism (WoT) against jihadists will continue. Likewise, irregular wars in Iraq and Afghanistan will persist. However, these are only the first in what is likely to be an unbroken chain of unconventional defense-relevant contingencies on the strategic horizon.

Today, there is less uncertainty about future threats. It is, of course, impossible to predict with assured accuracy whether twin crises in Saudi Arabia and Mexico will occur as the fictional scenario above

suggests. It is certain, however, that contingencies like these will challenge DoD in the future.

From both a strategic and resource perspective, prudent adjustments to the contemporary defense status quo are essential. On this point, Ashton Carter observes, “Strategic clarity—What kind of military do we need and why?—must make a return to the Pentagon after a period when ever-growing budgets and single-minded preoccupation with Iraq have caused it to fall out of practice.”<sup>5</sup> Equally important is a more conservative, temperate, and realistic approach to the use of force abroad. Strategic necessity and finite resources will limit choice. Nonetheless, the future environment will continue to draw U.S. land forces into less traditional contingencies. This requires radical reexamination of land force “first principles.” The terms “conservative,” “temperate,” and “realistic” are not code for “infrequent,” “unsubstantial,” or “inconsequential” future commitments. The author’s use of these terms does, however, argue for deliberate reevaluation of some vintage defense concepts like “win decisively” and “regime change.”

Incoming defense policymakers and constituent members of DoD—like the U.S. Army and U.S. Marine Corps—would benefit from wider and more thoroughgoing discussions about those foreign security challenges likeliest to require substantial defense involvement over the next 2 decades. This is a key step toward identifying the most suitable and acceptable landpower contributions in response.<sup>6</sup> These conversations should begin now, as the new administration navigates transition and looks toward its inaugural QDR.

## INTRODUCTION: A PERIOD OF CRITICAL DEFENSE CHOICES

To date, naturally cautious and conservative U.S. defense and military establishments have pursued “full-spectrum” balance as a matter of policy.<sup>7</sup> Most analysts agree with this approach in principle. However, aggressive pursuit of balance within each service may create real imbalance between what the defense and military establishments can and want to do, on one hand, and what they must do in the future, on the other. Full-spectrum balance cannot mean weighting all points on the spectrum of conflict equally. While still invoking a wide interpretation of balance, SecDef Robert Gates recently underscored this point when he observed, “The principle driving our strategy is balance. . . . [B]alance is not the same as treating all challenges as having equal priority. We cannot expect to eliminate risk through higher defense budgets, to, in effect ‘do everything, buy everything’.”<sup>8</sup>

U.S. land forces have in the last decade demonstrated that they can succeed in classical counterinsurgency (COIN), although this ability arrived along a very steep and costly learning curve. Further, they continue to demonstrate decisive overmatch in traditional warfighting. One need only note success of the relatively modest U.S. land force that deposed the Iraqi regime in 2003.

Despite U.S. advantages in traditional warfighting, and despite a necessary and successful detour in the direction of COIN, many within DoD and the defense strategy elite want to refocus defense strategy (including that associated with land forces) fully on emerging traditional military competition with resurgent great powers — e.g., “leap ahead” to defeat a

rising China or a resurgent Russia in speculative future conflicts. They hold this view regardless of how remote and manageable the prospect of large-scale traditional warfighting is in reality. In a recent book, Thomas Donnelly and Frederick Kagan concluded similarly: "There are hints of a desire to return to the 1990's focus on wars against larger and more conventional enemies in the wake of the painful experiences of Iraq and Afghanistan."<sup>9</sup> The SecDef warned against this tendency in observing, "The kinds of capabilities needed to deal with [irregular or unconventional conflicts] cannot be considered exotic distractions or temporary diversions. The United States does not have the luxury of opting out because these scenarios do not conform to preferred notions of the American way of war."<sup>10</sup>

Consistent with the afore-quoted sentiments of Secretary Gates, prudent horizon-scanning indicates that DoD and its land forces must become more effective in the strategic management of a range of unconventional "irregular," "catastrophic," or "hybrid" threats of purpose and context (these include, but are not limited to, COIN).<sup>11</sup> Under these circumstances, U.S. military power will be an important but not necessarily the most decisive instrument in achieving favorable outcomes. Moreover, definitive and ideal outcomes in the face of these less traditional threats are likely to give way to the pursuit and persistent management of outcomes that are "good enough" as resource and risk realities undercut pursuit of the "ideal."

Declining defense resources are a certainty.<sup>12</sup> Again, according to Ashton Carter, "The American people will certainly not be demanding a 'peace dividend'. . . . But neither is there likely to be a continuation of the rapid upward trend that has put DoD's base budget

authority 36 percent higher in real terms today than on 9/11.”<sup>13</sup> Despite an inevitable end to virtually unlimited defense resources, DoD will still be responsible for prosecution of unconventional contingencies abroad. It will remain the best-resourced national security agency. Simultaneously, DoD will remain responsible for dealing with the more remote risk of large-scale, traditional conflicts. It should do so through innovation, prudent burden-sharing, and careful strategy development. The intent of this monograph is to focus high-level defense decisionmaking on landpower force planning as it relates to persistent unconventional conflict abroad.

The analysis here concentrates on future landpower missions in an increasingly unconventional strategic and operational environment. Even as it zeroes in on future foreign contingencies, it accepts that U.S. landpower will also play a substantial role in homeland defense and security (HLD/S). Indeed, I argue later that there is significant harmony between capabilities necessary for HLS/D and those essential to success in unconventional foreign contingencies.

“Unconventional” military activity as used in this monograph is not synonymous with “unconventional warfare.”<sup>14</sup> Rather, unconventional here captures those new or newly appreciated nontraditional, defense-relevant conflict conditions endemic to the contemporary security environment. By and large, these conditions are distinct from the well-known demands of traditional warfighting. They are insurgency, terrorism, civil war, state failure and collapse, proliferation, strategically consequential criminal activity, and “hybrid war.”<sup>15</sup> In assessing potential strategic responses, the challenge for new defense decisionmakers is to recognize the point when diminishing returns begin to set in. More

specifically, in Steven Metz and Frank Hoffman's words, "The key is to identify the point at which the expense of building and sustaining capability outweighs the expected strategic utility."<sup>16</sup>

This monograph describes one among many potential points of departure for upcoming QDR deliberations on landpower force planning. In opening up decision space for the new defense team, it concludes that DoD should initiate an unconventional revolution when fashioning U.S. land forces so as to optimize them for employment against less traditional but still violent—and often nonmilitary—threats to core U.S. interests.<sup>17</sup>

The bottom-line role of general purpose land forces in the past was defeat of conventional land armies in major combat operations (MCO). This monograph finds that the strategic environment, including emerging threats and likely future land-centric contingencies, dictates that U.S. land forces instead optimize for the limited armed stabilization of crippled states. The SecDef recently delineated the emerging azimuth from past events:

Think of where U.S. forces have been sent and have been engaged over the last 40-plus years: Vietnam, Lebanon, Grenada, Panama, Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan, Iraq, the Horn of Africa, and more. In fact, the first Persian Gulf War stands alone in over two generations of constant military engagement as a more or less traditional conventional conflict from beginning to end. As General Charles Krulak . . . depicted a decade ago, instead of the beloved "Son of Desert Storm," western militaries are confronted with the unwanted "Stepchild of Chechnya."<sup>18</sup>

A new emergent mission focus on unconventional threats and challenges provides one promising

basis for upcoming QDR discussions on landpower force planning. This monograph concludes with a description of the landpower component of a future force planning construct (FPC). The author argues that an unconventional revolution in land forces is a legitimate, risk-informed choice for DoD and requires adoption by U.S. land forces of eight new or revised mission blocks for force development.

These missions include: (1) *active management of purposeful unconventional threats*; (2) *armed stabilization*; (3) *preemptive/punitive campaigns*; (4) *security sector reform and assistance*; (5) *conventional deterrence and limited traditional war*; (6) *facilitation of whole-of-government stabilization and reconstruction*; (7) *generation and sustainment of adequate land force capabilities*; and (8) *homeland defense and security*. Without question, pursuit of an unconventional revolution would have wide-ranging impacts on U.S. Army and Marine Corps force structure, doctrine, and training. Further, it would drive land force transformation and modernization for some time.

We must concede that significant cultural and bureaucratic obstacles stand in the way of this alternative. This should not, however, undermine its urgency or legitimacy.

## **THE STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT VERSUS THE POLICYMAKING ENVIRONMENT**

The SecDef owes the new President immediate advice on the future mission allocation and employment of U.S. land forces. Key force planning decisions lie on the near-term defense agenda. Seven-plus years of persistent unconventional conflict stunted wider debate on the role of U.S. landpower in future foreign

contingencies. An emotion-laden U.S. election also inhibited meaningful consideration of future land force employment. There has been very little room for speculative consideration of land force futures given the demands of ongoing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Strategic and operational circumstances are increasingly unconventional. They will remain so. The defense department and a broad collection of defense intellectuals now accept this proposition as inevitable. Consequently, the new defense team must turn to the business of deliberately assessing U.S. land forces in light of these circumstances.

One good starting point is a comparison of two competing environments. The first is external—the *strategic environment* within which DoD operates now and in the future. The second is internal—the bureaucratic *policymaking environment* within which DoD leaders frame strategic choices.

The strategic environment is hostile, complex, and quite distinct from the Cold War environment that preceded it. In serial unconventional engagements over the past 2 decades, it has provided the American defense establishment with a plethora of sometimes painful but nonetheless important lessons. Moreover, the policymaking environment is increasingly defined by the rapid onset of a number of resource-constrained strategic choices. Competing bureaucratic forces buffet the near-term policy decision space. We see long-held, traditional defense biases and declining defense resources. Yet, at the same time, we find increased recognition by military and defense professionals of the rising vulnerability and insecurity of core interests to unconventional threats. Thus competing forces contend for primacy as senior DoD policymakers debate critical future defense choices.

## THE STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT – AN UNCONVENTIONAL STATUS QUO AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

The fact that unconventional security challenges will dominate the defense operating space for the foreseeable future, calls for a revolutionary look at landpower force planning. This is the new post-9/11 status quo.<sup>19</sup> As argued in the introduction, this newly acknowledged set of unconventional challenges lies substantially outside traditional warfighting. Collectively, these challenges are marked by four key characteristics: (1) *the prominence of nontraditional – often nonmilitary – threats of purpose and context*<sup>20</sup>; (2) *the blurred boundaries between internal and external threats to friends, partners, and core interests*; (3) *the certainty that nontraditional threats will commonly combine into complex hybrids*; and (4) *the decreasing utility of traditional military power when employed in isolation*.

Together, these characteristics argue strongly for U.S. land forces sacrificing some “excessive conventional overmatch” in favor of optimizing for more complex and disordered foreign security contingencies.<sup>21</sup> In short, they argue for land forces focusing on foreign contingencies where violence or the threat of violence remains quite high and a preexisting indigenous order has been seriously undermined or incapacitated by internal and external sources of instability and conflict. Circumstances like these might arise through the hostile designs of aggressive state and/or nonstate actors; the ruinous confluence of adverse environmental factors; or some complex combination of both.<sup>22</sup>

## **Unconventional Threats of Purpose and Context.**

With respect to the first characteristic – *the prominence of unconventional threats of purpose and context* – there is near unanimity that the most compelling future defense-relevant challenges will be unconventional and often nonmilitary in origin and character.<sup>23</sup> They will originate both from hostile design and happenstance. Many will be strategically consequential and violent. As a result, they will require DoD’s undivided attention.<sup>24</sup> The most important among these for land forces are those that emerge from or are embedded in vulnerable or unstable foreign populations sitting atop key American interests. Favorable outcomes against them will ultimately rely on decisive engagement by U.S. and partner militaries, as well as important nonmilitary contributions from key U.S. Government (USG) and foreign actors.

These threats of purpose and context will continue to conform to the irregular, catastrophic, and hybrid models outlined by DoD and others over the last 5 years.<sup>25</sup> Unconventional threats of purpose originate in a bad actor’s hostile intentions. They manifest themselves as hostile, nonmilitary, irregular, or catastrophic actions like terrorism, insurgency, “unrestricted warfare” and strategically consequential criminality; and unfriendly or aggressive social, political, and economic agitation.<sup>26</sup>

Unconventional threats of context also range from the irregular to the catastrophic, challenging core interests by triggering or accelerating human insecurity. They include, but are not limited to, failing or failed governance, civil war and civil violence, public health crises, underdevelopment, political disaffection, environmental degradation, and natural or human disaster. The fictional scenario at the outset provides a

glimpse into both. Hybrid combinations of purposeful and contextual threats are discussed later.

Most unconventional threats are land- and people-centric. This alone argues strongly for their central role in the institutional decisionmaking of land force leaders. One important implication associated with the new prominence of unconventional threats is the growing likelihood that U.S. landpower will deliver or enable delivery of lethal and nonlethal U.S. power and effects in response to them. When a future U.S. President opens discussion with “Mr. Secretary, you have the floor,” the question is both “How will the military conduct operations?” as well as “How can military forces facilitate employment of other – often more appropriate – instruments of power?”

It follows then that landpower leaders should focus on a new high-intensity challenge set. This challenge set springs from environments where order has failed or is failing and where restoration and maintenance of a new order is possible only through comprehensive, whole-of-government responses relying on the threat or use of force for success. Under these circumstances, landpower enables positive outcomes but likely will not be the decisive instrument for achieving them.<sup>27</sup>

### **Internal and External Threats to Foreign Interests Will Commingle.**

The second characteristic – *the blurred boundary between internal and external threats to foreign interests* – is evident in contemporary conflicts. One clear lesson of recent U.S. operational experience is that even external threats to friends, partners, or foreign interests often materialize first within states and regions of concern. They do not commonly result from overt interstate

military aggression. External threats—even armed threats—to foreign interests will most often manifest themselves first as internal challenges to security and stability. These challenges will be both violent and nonviolent. They might be welcome or unwelcome to U.S. partners depending on their target, strategic intent, effect, and relative impact. The symbiosis and tension associated with Iranian influence in Iraq are important examples. In the fictional scenario, one might reasonably explore both the domestic and foreign origins of uprisings in Saudi Arabia’s Eastern Province and the parallel instability in al Basrah and Um Qasr. Likewise, there might be a symbiotic relationship between criminal cartels in the fictional future Mexico and less visible external state and nonstate agitators.

In practice in both Iraq and Afghanistan, identifying the precise source of violence and instability proved a real challenge to operational commanders and policymakers alike. Internal and external engines of instability are operative in both. These emanate from hostile purpose and context. They can come via aggressive opponents acting according to some strategic design or unstable internal and external conditions militating against U.S. interests in the complete absence of design. Note, for example, the adverse catalytic effects of external conditions like the global economy and internal forces like political disaffection, criminality, and public health challenges in one or both of the fictional scenarios above.

The Iraq and Afghanistan experiences remain critical to a nuanced appreciation of contemporary operating conditions. The variegated threats to the stable functioning of both mimic the type of challenges that will be repeated in complex contingencies worldwide. In Iraq, for example, it continues to be quite

difficult to identify hard boundaries between al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) and corporate al-Qaeda or indigenous Shi'a militias and irregular Iranian state-based actors like the Qods Force. Likewise, drawing bright lines between residual threats from foreign terrorists in Afghanistan, on one hand, and the interaction of hostile local or regional forces like the Afghan or Pakistani Taliban on the other, remains problematic. All operate in an environment that by itself is inherently volatile and insecure. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff underscored the blurring of purposeful internal and external threats recently when he observed, "Consider recent events in the border region between Pakistan and Afghanistan. . . . Ethnically disparate groups of extremists and militants are now cooperating with each other in an almost syndicate-like manner."<sup>28</sup>

Untangling informal, often naturally occurring, cross-border relationships having a material impact on the intensity of unconventional conflicts is a difficult task for land force leaders. Many of these relationships are simultaneously benign and malign.<sup>29</sup> They spring from the natural synthesis of interests inherent in families, tribes, criminal organizations, and transregional political movements/associations. Commonly these relationships ignore or are unconstrained by national boundaries. They witness simple influence, information, commerce, criminality, and political maneuvering, blurring and transiting borders with relative ease via foot, pickup truck, mule, jetliner, and/or mouse click.

Borders are arbitrary lines, relevant to cartographers but not necessarily to governments and populations. Further, what remains of classical state sovereignty in much of the world exists primarily in the aspirations of

indigenous political leaders but rarely in real practice on the ground. Thus, in unconventional contingencies abroad, U.S. land force leaders will remain in the business of responding to both internal and external threats simultaneously. Often both are manifested as nontraditional, nonmilitary threats and operate inside vulnerable, indigenous populations. As a consequence, land forces will operate with severe limitations on the use of force.

Key land force implications associated with the commingling of internal and external threats are manifest. First, while perhaps not impossible, large-scale military encroachments on U.S. interests are increasingly unlikely. As a consequence, while external threats to core foreign interests persist, they will be less vulnerable to conventional U.S. military advantages. Standing ready on the frontier to repel existing military threats to a foreign partner is no longer the gold standard for measuring military capability. Unconventional challenges are likely to be more surreptitious and insidious.

In point of fact, external threats to the stability of a friendly foreign power or the security of a key foreign interest will commonly arrive via wire transfer, foreign influence peddling, terrorism, insurrection, and/or political infiltration and agitation. They are far less likely to materialize as overt cross-border military incursions. When an external actor can exploit propinquity and deep traditional cross-border social, political, and economic affiliations, and has the advantage of time, there is very little use in exposing itself militarily to traditional U.S. advantages. Again, though many of these unconventional challenges will be violent, their violence will be less overt or direct than that associated with conventional warfighting. Land forces will have

to sift through this complexity and nimbly operate within and against it.

The U.S. military establishment is slow to acknowledge these implications. Largely the product of mirror-imaging, the tendency of the American defense and military establishments is to draw hard boundaries between internal and external challenges when developing and employing U.S. and foreign partner capabilities. This tendency results in an artificial division of security labor. For example, American military tradition holds that external threats are the business of armies, whereas internal challenges are the business of police. In this view, military and police functions are mutually exclusive – police forces patrol the streets looking inward, armies patrol international borders looking outward. Land armies influenced by this tradition continue to focus on conventional military violations of state sovereignty more out of habit than as a result of deliberate strategic net and risk assessment.

In much of the world, reality defies this convention. Where violent internal and external challenges are indistinguishable, the difference in function between police and/or constabulary forces and national armies should by necessity be less pronounced or important. This implies that both U.S. and partner land forces should assume those military and police characteristics that are most relevant to and useful in combating violent unconventional threats to a foreign partner's internal security regardless of origin.

A final implication is that, in almost all cases, the presence of hostile unconventional actors – state and nonstate, foreign or indigenous – will predate U.S. intervention and will remain long after a U.S. drawdown. In truth, it is impossible to sanitize a conflict environment of undesirable external influence.

This is not intended to suggest that foreign intervention is irrelevant. It does suggest, however, that the opportunity for U.S. ground commanders to neatly separate foreign and indigenous sources of conflict for successive and final defeat remains the exception. Most unconventional threats and conflicts are management challenges first. U.S. and partner land forces will be in the business of driving down consequential internal and external resistance to levels that are tolerable but not in most cases extinguished. Winning, in this regard, assumes a whole new meaning.

### **Hybrid Combinations of Purposeful and Contextual Threats.**

The high likelihood of hybrid threats argues strongly that the most compelling unconventional, foreign security challenges confronting U.S. land forces will appear as complex fusions of purposeful and contextual challenges.<sup>30</sup> This view is gaining currency in official defense decisionmaking. On the subject of purposeful hybrid threats specifically, Secretary Gates recently observed, “We can expect to see more tools and tactics of destruction—from the sophisticated to the simple—being employed simultaneously in hybrid and more complex forms of warfare.”<sup>31</sup>

The Gates illustration describes purposeful challengers combining irregular, catastrophic, and traditional methods to offset obvious U.S. advantages. The author offers three extreme illustrations of other complex hybrid foreign threat combinations where the origins, sources, and forms of hazard combine. These should be among the basic challenges gaining increased attention on the landpower agenda. None of these individually or collectively represent the entire

universe of prospective defense-relevant hybrid events. All, however, hold key implications for land forces.

**Free Riding.** Purposeful state and nonstate opponents often pursue ends directly anathema to core U.S. interests by free riding on adverse contextual conditions associated with a conflict or contingency already of substantial interest to the United States. As argued above, Iran leverages the chaos of the collapsed Iraqi state into a proxy battlefield. Likewise, nonstate groups like al-Qaeda do the same in Iraq, Afghanistan, and across the wider Middle East. Depending on the original sequence of events in the earlier scenarios, violent uprisings in the oil-producing regions of Saudi Arabia and Iraq might be examples of free riding. Further, the fictional internal struggle in Saudi Arabia's Sunni community in part might stem from Saudi Arabian alignment with the United States in the wider war on terror (WOT).

In free riding, the commingling of internal and external threats is often most acute. Though the United States remains focused on violent Islamists feeding off political disaffection and human insecurity in the Muslim world, similar circumstances will arise from or within other regions and sources as well. This piling-on to preexisting, unconventional conflicts and conditions complicates pursuit of U.S. objectives by diluting the ability to concentrate resources, capabilities, and strategic focus on a single source of violence or instability.

In foreign contingencies at the tactical and operational levels, hostile internal and external actors will seek refuge in adverse contextual conditions like failed governance, political instability, and human insecurity to secure strategic objectives that are either central or peripheral to the immediate conflict at hand.

They hide among, exploit, and work through vulnerable and/or complicit local populations – often exploiting the advantages of common confessional, ethnic, or regional identity. Free riders operate autonomously, employing the cover of internal instability to enhance their freedom of action. They also operate in concert with other hostile actors, according to common interest or convenience. Worse, they can work through corrupt or duplicitous partner government and security force actors. All three instances of free riding are common.

On the latter point, when allies (or allied actors) themselves at times act against U.S. interests, the United States cannot rely on indirect approaches alone. For land forces, this means that effectively combating hybrid combinations of purposeful threat actors and contextual threat conditions requires both direct and indirect approaches. This involves a nimble combination of physical U.S. presence and direct U.S. action, merged with the careful cultivation, motivation, and employment of trusted local partner capacity. Working through others is always preferred but not always possible.

**Strategic State Instability and Collapse.** With regard to the collapse of functioning order in a major state, the United States is forced by circumstances to contend with a victim state's residual military capacity (possibly including weapons of mass destruction), while reestablishing functioning order in the face of irregular resistance and widespread human insecurity.<sup>32</sup> Thomas Donnelly and Frederick Kagan highlight recent official concern over the political viability of Pakistan and North Korea, both nuclear-armed, as well as the durability of the Saudi monarchy as examples in this regard.<sup>33</sup> Likewise, a recent *Washington Post* article by Joby Warrick discussed similar concerns related to the

catalytic effects of the global economic downturn. In that article, Warrick observes, “Intelligence officials are warning that the deepening global financial crisis could weaken fragile governments in the world’s most dangerous areas.”<sup>34</sup> He continues, “A protracted financial crisis could threaten the survival of friendly regimes from Pakistan to the Middle East while forcing Western nations to cut spending on defense, intelligence, and foreign aid.”<sup>35</sup>

The fictitious President’s dual challenges in the Middle East and Mexico are clear examples of similar contingencies. In the event of strategic state collapse or disorder, even minimalist objectives—e.g., the immediate security of WMD or critical infrastructure—would prove resource-intensive land force missions. More “expansive stabilization and transformation objectives” would likely be even more costly in lives, money, and material.<sup>36</sup>

In cases of strategic collapse or instability, incidental free riding will be common. Challenges that are both internal and external to the collapsed state will combine into a homogenous whole. Violent internal actors will work against U.S. interests in an attempt to secure their position in a new post-collapse order. Disruptive external actors on the other hand will similarly work against U.S. objectives in an attempt to shape outcomes favorable to their interests. All such actions will occur under conditions of expanding contextual insecurity where the affected population itself is poisoned by social dislocation, disaffection, deprivation, and toxic political agitation.

There are other landpower implications related to strategic state collapse. First, regardless of cost, intervention that predominantly, or even exclusively, involves American forces may be unavoidable. This is particularly true in the earliest stages of intervention.

There may simply be no effective indirect approach or capable partner. Note the fictional President's lament in the prologue, "Clearly, helping restore some functioning order [under Saudi, Mexican, and Iraqi authority] is a global security interest. There are precious few states in the world that can help besides us." The absence of capable partners is not a prohibition against action. It is, however, a caution against overly ambitious strategic objectives.

A related implication is recognition that U.S. land forces should prepare to conduct rapid, multi-point foreign intervention and armed stabilization under conditions of general civil disorder. Given natural sensitivities about sovereignty, interventions of this kind will occur from a cold start after all other options are exhausted. In the fictional scenario, for example, the United States has been asked to help. The greater the immediate danger to the security of the United States, the more it is expected that U.S. Presidents will act sooner rather than later.

As part of a larger joint and interagency effort, U.S. land forces might find themselves responsible for (1) defeating residual traditional military threats inside the victim state; (2) confronting active irregular resistance from indigenous nationalists, extremists, and spoilers; (3) isolating the victim state from the most malign and violent forms of external intervention; (4) preventing the migration of conflict and instability to surrounding states; (5) securing key national infrastructure and/or dangerous military capabilities; and (6) addressing and managing widespread humanitarian concerns.

A third implication for land forces is that, in cases of strategic state failure, the breadth of the stabilization challenge will quickly exceed the capacity of the U.S. and its primary partners. Without a broader and

more thoroughgoing international commitment, this precludes pursuit of the type of holistic reconstruction envisioned by contemporary stability operations literature and doctrine.<sup>37</sup> It is likely that recent experience in complex contingencies and the twin challenges of resources and time will confine U.S. decisionmakers to more modest strategic and operational objectives. Much more will be said on this later.

**Invasion by Proxy.** Still another hybrid example envisions a capable state or nonstate competitor exploiting contextual conditions to conduct an invasion by proxy so as to secure irredentist objectives. Most often, this occurs through surrogates and sophisticated foreign fifth columnists, employing other-than-military means. Here, an external challenger prosecutes war against another state from within—often without firing a shot. In practice, this takes the form of a nonmilitary end run around U.S. military advantages. Hostile, state-based opponents might shield themselves during invasion by proxy by holding substantial military capacity in reserve to discourage traditional U.S. intervention or retaliation.

While not direct instruments for prosecution of the conflict per se, a competitor's traditional military capabilities remain risk considerations for U.S. decisionmakers. This option is attractive to both high- and low-end competitors. The fictional crises in the prologue leave the door open to the prospect that twin insurrections in Saudi Arabia and Iraq are part of an invasion by proxy. If the source of the invasion is Iran, for example, the stirring up of irregular/unconventional conditions inside the affected states and Iran's traditional military capacity are naturally central to U.S. risk calculations. On the subject of the possible resurgence of proxy wars against the United

States by competing great powers like China, Andrew Krepinevich recently observed:

It is not, however, far-fetched to believe that China, which seeks to develop strong ties to Third World countries hostile to the United States . . . might pursue proxy irregular warfare against U.S. interests, somewhat similar to what the Soviet Union did during the Cold War through its sponsorship of "wars of liberation."<sup>38</sup>

There is no real recent precedent for responding strategically and operationally to invasion by proxy. What experience from the Cold War exists is fast fading in the institutional memory of the USG. One clear landpower implication is the likelihood that many U.S. military options will be off the table. The United States and the Soviet Union were burned by foreign proxy wars in the past. That experience and more recent U.S. experience in Iraq and Afghanistan might govern the strategic calculations of U.S. decisionmakers.

In the absence of a clear *casus belli*, traditional U.S. military advantages might be sidelined or useful only under limited conditions. In particular, land forces might reinforce a vulnerable partner's failing security capacity; they might be employed to secure threatened U.S. economic interests; and/or they might be used to provide for the physical security of U.S./partner citizens. Barring overt and traceable external aggression, it will be difficult to justify a more expansive use of military force against the likeliest antagonists.

### **Decreasing Utility of Traditional Military Power.**

The final characteristic results from aggregation of the previous three. It is the decreasing utility of traditional military power when employed in isolation.

As articulated above, consequential challenges to U.S. security interests will commonly be unconventional threats of purpose and context. They will originate both within and outside of victim states and societies. And most will materialize as complex hybrids where a menu of hostile intentions, methods, and conditions combine to frustrate U.S. designs.

As argued above, the threats most commonly will not materialize in the form of overt military aggression. Today hostile actors and hostile conditions rarely dare to confront traditional U.S. strengths. By implication, effective U.S. responses to them require the nuanced blending of military and nonmilitary resources and methods.

Though traditional uses of force are less appropriate, DoD is—for the foreseeable future—in the business of leading USG responses to complex, unconventional contingencies abroad. Sheer military capacity alone places DoD in a position to either dominate or substantially contribute to U.S. success. There simply is no other USG actor with comparable, self-contained command and control, security, and support capacity. Therefore, DoD will at a minimum provide both the theater architecture and manpower for effective U.S. responses.

As the fictitious President observed earlier, “We have no alternative but to turn to the Department of Defense first.” In almost all cases of violent unconventional threat, U.S. landpower will be at the center of DoD-led USG responses. As much as DoD and its land components prefer to limit their core competencies to a narrow definition of warfighting, strategic conditions will not cooperate.

## IMPACT OF THE STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT ON LANDPOWER MISSIONS

Effective management and defeat of violent threats to U.S. interests remain core landpower business. Nevertheless, future landpower relevance hinges on its continuing to push against long-held defense conventions about what constitutes threats to U.S. interests and thus what constitutes the most appropriate land component contributions in response to them. It seems abundantly clear that fighting and winning America's wars will mean something quite different to senior land force leaders in the future.<sup>39</sup>

Conflict and war may not change much in their fundamental character, that is, "a dynamic expression of political wills in conflict, colliding via the means of organized violence."<sup>40</sup> Nonetheless, the precise conditions that constitute war or consequential conflict have changed and will continue to change. Working from the definition of war implied above, DoD must answer three key questions.

First, what precisely is consequential organized violence? Should, for example, DoD concern itself only with physical violence? Or military violence? Second, at what level of organization, aggregation, or political will does organized violence become important to the United States and the Defense Department—nation-state, transnational movement, warlord, clan leader, criminal organization, international institution? And third, under what circumstances and in what form should U.S. land forces be prepared to contend with organized violence? Concerning all three, Donnelly and Kagan usefully counsel against narrow conceptions of DoD's future mission: "In truth, the military's mission can and should be simply stated. The United States maintains and uses its armed forces for the purpose

of defending, supporting, and advancing its interests around the world."<sup>41</sup>

Traditional military conflict involving the United States is not inconceivable in the contemporary strategic environment. It is, however, more avoidable, manageable, and anomalous than conservative military assessments acknowledge. In a previous monograph, the author argued that future traditional conflict is likeliest to come via three routes—miscalculation by rivals, accident, or American preemption.<sup>42</sup> All three lend themselves to prudent hedging strategies. Indeed, much of the risk associated with the prospect of traditional conflicts can be mitigated through whole-of-government strategies that robustly apply some military—but, more importantly, significant nonmilitary—resources against their occurrence. Secretary Gates was clear on this when he recently observed: "It is true that the United States would be hard-pressed to fight a major conventional ground war elsewhere on short notice; but as I have said before, where on Earth would we do that? . . . So while we are knowingly assuming some additional risk in this area, that risk is a prudent and manageable one."<sup>43</sup>

The strategic environment's four prevailing characteristics in combination point toward U.S. land forces continuing to jettison some excessive conventional overmatch so as to further optimize for foreign contingencies centering on a future consequential failure of political order.<sup>44</sup> The overarching implication for U.S. landpower in this regard is recognition that its mission, structure, training, and doctrine likely must undergo permanent reorientation toward less traditional military operations.

In practice, it is reasonable to argue that defeat of violent threats to basic public order and restoration and

maintenance of minimum essential political, security, and economic conditions within victim states might constitute the new MCO for U.S. land forces. If this is the new landpower MCO, then optimizing for it is the new standard for landpower force planning.

## **DOD 3000.05: THE LOST OPPORTUNITY**

Lost in recent debates regarding defense policy on stability operations is the idea that some form of limited armed stabilization of crippled states may in fact become the most common and most important MCO for DoD in the future. The assertion in DoD Directive 3000.05 that “(s)tability operations are a core U.S. military mission that . . . shall be given priority comparable to combat operations” divided future national security challenges into artificially distinct categories.<sup>45</sup> Recent publication of the new DoD Directive for Irregular Warfare (DoD Directive 3000.07) reinforced this separation.<sup>46</sup> It is, for example, reasonable to conclude that DoD 3000.05’s reference to “combat operations” is shorthand for traditional warfighting. This viewpoint also holds that “combat operations” most often occur between U.S. forces and those of competitor states. This is the state of nature most preferred by traditional defense planners and strategists.

Given the way the two concepts—that of combat operations on the one hand, and stability operations on the other—are presented in DoD 3000.05, it is equally reasonable to assume that the directive’s drafters intended combat operations to be distinct from stability operations. The author argues for a much different perspective. Given a reasonable appreciation of contemporary strategic conditions, violent stability operations are among many unconventional contingencies that are not just comparable in priority to

combat operations, but instead are actually the likeliest, most important, and most consequential combat operations on the strategic horizon.

Shifting policy in this direction acknowledges that which many already recognize – *contingencies involving the armed stabilization of nations and/or regions in crisis, including defeat of violent threats to a foreign internal order, are more important missions for future landpower force planning than is preparation for future traditional MCOs.* According to Steven Metz and Frank Hoffman, “[I]nvolvement in irregular warfare and stabilization operations in weak and failing states will be [landpower’s] most common activity – perhaps its only major one.”<sup>47</sup> For force development and mission assignment, this proposition (1) reorients landpower priorities against the likeliest and most compelling unconventional challenges; (2) underwrites landpower’s role as both legitimate and indispensable to the prosecution and success of complex unconventional interventions abroad; and (3) rightly returns employment of military force to the fore as DoD’s most important direct contribution to resolving foreign security contingencies.

The net effect of this new perspective on defense policy and decisionmaking is powerful. It focuses defense interest on unconventional challenges that are among the most violent, dangerous, and strategic in nature. It merges the concept of warfighting with that of military operations other than war (MOOTW).<sup>48</sup> And it argues for this new perspective to be a centerpiece in future defense strategy development. Finally, it forces substantial additional cultural adjustment on DoD as an institution.

Conversely, it also argues strongly against shifts in defense capabilities that severely limit land force

capacity for the use of precision violence. It extends beyond merely optimizing land forces for “nation building,” and addresses the far more strenuous task of harnessing DoD landpower specifically as the principal U.S. arm for establishing and maintaining legitimate order under the most compelling, unconventional strategic circumstances abroad.

Powerful bureaucratic antibodies line up against this conclusion. Among landpower traditionalists this perspective appears to denude the Army and Marine Corps of long-cherished core warfighting competencies. For stabilization, COIN, and counterterror (CT) advocates, this perspective argues for greater selectivity in the employment of U.S. landpower abroad. Further, this new unconventional focus appears to step back from the notion that military forces are both instruments of hard and soft power.

Traditionalists should be mollified by the fact that this adjusted perspective reinforces DoD and subordinate institutions as warfighters. Nonetheless, it does force DoD land components to focus priority of effort and resourcing on a different kind of war. It also forces traditionalists to devote substantial resource, structure, and training priority on DoD’s more comprehensive role in bringing this different kind of war to a satisfactory resolution.

To stabilization, COIN, and CT constituencies, the message holds that a great power like the United States cannot treat all unconventional or nontraditional conflicts equally. Some matter more than others in strategy and planning. Those that matter more should enjoy much higher priority. The United States can ill afford to parcel landpower out against diffuse unconventional threats that might be peripheral to core interests.

Naturally, terrorist, insurgent, or militia groups of concern are bad actors. Not all, however, are strategically consequential. In this regard, routine peacekeeping, peace enforcement, and stabilization activities cannot be nearly as important in defense strategy and force planning as more robust unconventional warfighting.

COIN, stabilization, and CT enthusiasts should recognize, however, that the hard and soft power remain central to future land force missions. In this regard, landpower is a deliverer of hard power and a key enabler for the protection and precise employment of U.S. soft power. Stabilization, COIN, and CT advocates should also recognize that this new perspective raises unconventional threats to the rank of primacy over (and not equivalence to) traditional warfighting in DoD strategy development.

Military traditionalists—particularly those in the land forces—should redefine defense convention in the direction of unconventional conflicts. Likewise, stabilization, COIN, and CT advocates will by necessity need to focus attention and interest against a clear set of strategic priorities that may or may not conform to their more expansive preferences for intervention in internal conflicts. This tension will be carried into the coming policy debates associated with the 2009 QDR (QDR 09).

## **THE POLICYMAKING ENVIRONMENT— FULL-SPECTRUM DOMINANCE, UNCERTAINTY, AND INCREASING CERTAINTY**

### **The Theology of Full-Spectrum Dominance.**

In spite of dramatic and necessary adjustments by U.S. land forces to the more unconventional demands of stabilization, CT, and COIN over the last

7 years, DoD's land components still remain largely optimized for ordered conflicts of fire and maneuver against rival states.<sup>49</sup> This is an artifact of DoD's near-theological commitment to the joint concept of full-spectrum dominance (FSD). FSD is "the ability of U.S. forces, operating unilaterally or in combination with multinational and interagency partners, to defeat any adversary and control any situation across the full range of military operations."<sup>50</sup> In practice, FSD translates into balance within and across (and not between) services with respect to mission, structure, and strategic orientation.

Evaluating FSD as a universal organizing principle across DoD should be central to the upcoming defense review. As suggested above, QDR 09 will need to tackle the inherent tension that exists between warfighting traditionalists and advocates of stabilization, COIN, and CT. Neither has a lock on virtue. But FSD, as a universally applicable compromise position within the joint community, may be untenable on a number of counts. Unfortunately, future QDR debates are prone to devolve early into squabbles over scarce defense resources. They are less prone to proceed as serious discussions on strategy and prudent risk-taking.

QDR 09 will be the second conducted with significant U.S. land forces committed to active unconventional military operations overseas.<sup>51</sup> It is undeniable that QDR 09's outcomes will be colored by post-9/11 strategic realities as well as recent U.S. experience in foreign wars. Though contemporary defense and military decisionmaking are accounting for recent experience, they are doing so cautiously, continuing to hedge (inside each service) against future, as yet undetermined and unformed, traditional threats.

DoD is pursuing full-spectrum balance department-wide. Rarely, if ever, does it approach the concept of balance through the lens of role differentiation. Full-spectrum balance is instead seen by the service departments as the self-contained capacity of each military component to contribute on a near-equal basis to decisive outcomes across the spectrum of conflict. The author would suggest this approach is neither strategic nor risk-informed.

Indeed, to date, naturally conservative defense and military establishments have opted to pursue full-spectrum balance as a hedge against long-range uncertainty about the future character and relative importance of various conventional and unconventional hazards.<sup>52</sup> Pursuit of full-spectrum balance has become widely-held defense convention. For example, in 2007, Michele Flournoy, then President of the centrist Center for a New American Security (CNAS) and now the Undersecretary of Defense for Policy, and Tammy Schulz, then a defense analyst for CNAS, observed in a report on landpower expansion:

What is required is a more fundamental shift in orientation, from a force that has been optimized to fight large, conventional wars to a future force that is truly “full-spectrum” – with greater capacity for irregular operations while retaining the ability to prevail in high-end warfighting against conventional or WMD-armed foes.<sup>53</sup>

Left with no other choice in the current policymaking environment, land forces are positioning themselves for full-spectrum balance through doctrine development. The Army has dutifully responded to the contemporary consensus on strategic conditions and full-spectrum balance by completing three pieces of new or revised doctrine—Field Manual (FM) 3-0, *Opera-*

tions; FM 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*; and FM 3-07, *Stability Operations*. All three reflect senior leader thinking about future land-based operations. Combined, they represent a contemporary sense of the Army on future landpower employment. In their scope, detail, and general orientation, all three efforts are commendable.

The latter two FMs—on COIN and stabilization—fall in the Army’s family of keystone doctrines.<sup>54</sup> These are among many manuals that “focus [the Army] on keystone concepts” for force employment.<sup>55</sup> New doctrine on COIN and stabilization rightly orient Army capabilities on recent unconventional security demands. However, given current policy-level preferences for FSD, the most important among these—the capstone FM 3-0—remains focused on achieving full-spectrum balance within the Army, enshrining it as the predominant guide for future planning.<sup>56</sup>

In line with DoD 3000.05, FM 3-0 advances the idea that stability operations are now coequal components of foreign contingency planning alongside more traditional offensive and defensive operations. From an Army perspective, this sets a new three-way, full-spectrum balance for land forces.<sup>57</sup> Balance is sought within the Army; not between the Army (and by implication the Marine Corps) and the other service components. According to Army doctrine, an internal balance between offensive, defensive, and stability operations emerges from the unique sequencing, blending, and relative emphasis of each within specific operational campaigns.<sup>58</sup>

Resolving fundamental issues associated with full-spectrum balance must occur at levels well above military doctrine or service department preferences. Doctrine is not policy. It outlines how the military intends to respond operationally to policy guidance

under a variety of circumstances. Service departments like the Army and Marine Corps provide trained and ready forces to policymakers in accordance with national priorities. Policymakers determine when, under what circumstances, and to what extent the military employs its standing doctrine and capabilities to achieve national ends.

As a rule, strategy and policy differences over the concept of balance arise in its precise definition, as well as subsequent identification of the most important balance point against which military forces in general and land forces specifically devote their finite resources and attention. The Army has chosen full-spectrum balance in the absence of hard defense choices on optimization. As a result, there is no balance point.

Strategic thinking inside DoD suffers from a diffusion of focus across contingencies that range from most likely and dangerous to the most unlikely. Future land force optimization—i.e., identifying the missing balance point—is one among a handful of key defense questions for QDR 09. According to Ashton Carter, “The principal strategic challenge for the Army is to decide how much to invest in [forces more appropriate to irregular or unconventional challenges] and how much to invest in more traditional force-on-force land combat capabilities; and then how to combine both types of forces into a single overall Army.”<sup>59</sup>

## **THE TYRANNY OF UNCERTAINTY IN DEFENSE STRATEGY AND PLANNING**

[I]nvestment strategists must avoid the pitfall of using uncertainty as a rationale to avoid major change.

Andrew Krepinevich<sup>60</sup>

Basing full-spectrum land force optimization on strategic uncertainty is consistent with DoD preferences. The Army's commitment to full-spectrum balance stems from the primacy of gross uncertainty in defense planning. The introduction of the Army's FM 3.0 is clear in this regard:

The Army's experience makes it clear that no one can accurately predict the nature, location, or duration of the next conflict. So [FM 3.0] . . . addresses the needs of an Army responsible for deploying forces promptly at any time, in any environment, against any adversary. . . . Once deployed, the Army operates for extended periods across the spectrum of conflict, from stable peace to general war.<sup>61</sup>

The tyranny of uncertainty in DoD decisionmaking often stifles meaningful defense innovation, hard investment and strategy choices, and joint force optimization. As senior defense decisionmakers mull over future landpower focus and capabilities, they should carefully consider Krepinevich's caution about the weight accorded "uncertainty" in decisionmaking. To paraphrase his caveat, uncertainty should not become a blanket authorization for strategic imprecision or a lack of policy and investment focus.

Invoking uncertainty in defense and military strategy development has been particularly important since the advent of "capabilities-based planning" (CBP) under SecDef Donald Rumsfeld. CBP is a "method to inform decisions regarding DoD planning, resourcing, and operations that addresses *uncertainty* and *risk* through agile analysis of a broad spectrum of challenges."<sup>62</sup>

In practice, CBP attempts to hedge against an undetermined strategic future by identifying potential

threat capabilities/methods (but not specific threat actors) and subsequently determining defense strategy and investment priorities for countering these capabilities and methods. As the DoD definition above suggests, it hinges on defense strategy and planning that emphasizes “unpredictability” in the strategic environment over predictive threat-based approaches, which are seen to be riskier.<sup>63</sup> Accordingly, the most recent QDR argued that U.S. defense policy must move from “a time of reasonable predictability – to an era of surprise and uncertainty” and from “single-focused threats – to multiple complex challenges.”<sup>64</sup>

In many respects, CBP is defense planning cafeteria-style. Defense capability options relevant to different points along a linear spectrum of conflict are presented as menu selections. In theory, those necessary to counter the most dangerous current threats and maintain U.S. military/security advantage have priority. Yet, CBP can predispose defense planning toward transformational capabilities and methods that are consistent with existing DoD biases—i.e., those menu items of comparative military advantage or niche preference but not necessarily those most appropriate to contemporary and future strategic conditions.

An even greater danger in CBP sees DoD selecting menu items with a view toward preparing for every conceivable threat or contingency – an unfocused and undisciplined exercise to optimize for the widest range of challenges. In trying to do everything, DoD risks not being able to do anything well. Here CBP lacks discrimination in its strategic choices—i.e., selecting points that genuinely demand optimization, while consciously choosing to sub-optimize or hedge on the margins in the case of others. Krepinevich recently

made a similar argument with respect to the Army specifically when he observed:

[B]ecause the range of missions is so broad, and the skill sets required sufficiently different, attempting to field forces that can move seamlessly from stability operations to high-intensity conflict appears destined to produce an Army that is barely a “jack-of-all-trades,” and clearly a master of none.<sup>65</sup>

The author suggested in the introduction that pursuit of full-spectrum balance cannot be synonymous with weighting all points on the spectrum of conflict equally.<sup>66</sup> Today U.S. land forces can fight an intense COIN campaign. With sufficient strategic warning, they can also prevail in limited traditional conflicts. Some would prefer to re-optimize land forces for the latter, in anticipation of future traditional great power competition. This will be especially true as the United States reduces its commitments in Iraq and Afghanistan.

However, my appraisal of the environment and its demands indicates that land forces will be the force of choice for the United States against a wide range of unconventional threats of purpose and context for the foreseeable future. If landpower reverts back to more traditional optimization, it will force DoD into another painful period of adjustment when the next large-scale, unconventional contingency arises. Contingencies like this might include, but are not limited to, classical COIN. Thus, exclusive or excessive optimization for partnership with a state threatened by a traditional insurgency might also be ill-placed. Secretary Gates again was quite to the point when he observed:

In Iraq, an army that was basically a smaller version of the [U.S.] Cold War force over time became an effective

instrument of counterinsurgency. But the transition came at a frightful human, financial, and political cost. For every heroic and resourceful innovation by troops and commanders on the battlefield, there was some institutional shortcoming at the Pentagon they had to overcome. There have to be institutional changes so that the next set of colonels, captains, and sergeants will not have to be quite so heroic or quite so resourceful.<sup>67</sup>

Though land forces are less likely to be called upon to fight intense and ordered conventional campaigns against other capable enemy armies in the future, they will frequently be called upon to fight and enable decisive nonmilitary effects in much less ordered unconventional or hybrid environments and conflicts. Though often quite violent, these conflicts will have little in common with many of the traits of traditional warfighting.

One can reasonably argue that traditional warfighting capacity has atrophied over the past 7 years. But one cannot reasonably argue that the United States is seriously disadvantaged in traditional warfighting against its most consequential potential competitors as a consequence. Secretary Gates made this point in a recent *Foreign Affairs* article: “[A]lthough U.S. predominance in conventional warfare is not unchallenged, it is sustainable for the medium term.”<sup>68</sup> Thus, in spite of the relative decline in traditional land force readiness, the United States will continue to benefit from (1) an enormous head start in the development of traditional capabilities; (2) a robust military-industrial base that continues to push traditional innovation; (3) a decreasing array of traditional threat contingencies; and (4) substantial advantages in leadership, training, doctrine, and material capabilities. All will help mitigate marginal traditional risk for some time to come.

Again, note the concepts of enemy miscalculation, accident, or preemptive American action as likely sources of traditional risk. Offsetting these residual risks requires prudent investment in traditional warfighting capacity, as well as deliberate whole-of-government strategy focused on conventional war avoidance. It does not necessarily require the whole of the joint force to invest equally in both traditional and unconventional warfighting.

### **AN ERA OF INCREASING STRATEGIC-LEVEL CERTAINTY?**

Breaking the tyranny of uncertainty requires recognition that some strategic conditions are more certain than many inside DoD prefer to acknowledge. As a consequence, the new defense team should temper lingering attachment to blind uncertainty as a cornerstone for strategic planning.

If one accepts the trinity of miscalculation, accident, or preemption as they relate to traditional conflicts, as well as the now obvious strategic risks and costs of the same, then it is increasingly certain that the United States (1) can avoid the most dangerous traditional conflicts, and (2) should pursue more modest and limited strategic and operational objectives should traditional conflict become unavoidable. General war may simply no longer be either realistic or affordable for either the United States or its main state competitors. More common, future traditional conflicts in particular are likely to take the form of coercive campaigns in pursuit of limited strategic and operational objectives.<sup>69</sup>

As already outlined, there is also reasonable certainty about the dominant character of compelling threats to U.S. interests. They will by and large be unconventional. They will range from catastrophic

terrorist attacks to massive politico-security disruptions of the kind described in the prologue. This is not simply the author's view. Again, according to the SecDef:

The recent past vividly demonstrates the consequences of failing to address adequately the dangers posed by insurgencies and failing states. Terrorist networks can find sanctuary within the borders of a weak nation and strength within the chaos of social breakdown. A nuclear-armed state could collapse into chaos and criminality. The most catastrophic threats to the U.S. homeland . . . are more likely to emanate from failing states than from aggressor states.<sup>70</sup>

Further, there is increased certainty about where, in what form, and under what conditions violent unconventional threats will materialize. More precisely, there is more certainty today about where and how the appearance of these threats poses the greatest hazards to core interests. As a consequence, the myriad ways DoD contributes to future success against unconventional threats is also more certain.

DoD will most commonly be asked to pursue a circumspect set strategic and operational objectives, in concert with its interagency partners, in environments where legitimate order ranges from dangerously vulnerable to failed. In spite of whole-of-government aspirations to the contrary, DoD will most often be the senior partner in these endeavors. From this perspective, landpower is less an instrument for imposing U.S. will on foreign military opponents and more the primary instrument for restoring minimum essential order in key regions faced with violent and contagious disorder.

Finally, it is also quite certain that recent strategic experience in Iraq and Afghanistan predisposes U.S. decisionmakers toward substantial caution about

future military interventions. Decreasing defense resources, a clearer conception of core interests, and the likeliest and most dangerous hazards to those interests force discrimination on defense planners and strategists as to the key questions – Plan for what? and Do what? – in the future.<sup>71</sup> This is particularly true for interventions in complex unconventional conflicts or more traditional crises that might devolve into protracted irregular wars.

Here, both anticipated strategic costs and interests are certain to trump preferences. True, senior policymakers can always overrule the most cogent strategic arguments for or against future interventions. However, they now know that they do so at their peril. In the end, there is a prevailing certainty that a reasoned, interest-based approach to defense planning – one informed by increasing confidence about the future character of the environment and its challenges – will position the new administration for prosecution of the forthcoming strategy and resource war inside the Pentagon over defense priorities.

## **IDENTIFYING AND INSTITUTIONALIZING A NEW BALANCE FOR THE COMING STRATEGY AND RESOURCE WAR WITHIN DOD**

Some uncertainty lingers. It remains unclear, for example, exactly how a new appreciation of the security environment, recent combat experience, national interests, and unconventional threats to these interests impact DoD thinking on land force planning. It is not unthinkable, for example, that defense strategy development might be inconsistent with strategic realities. Severe economic uncertainty at home increases this risk. In this regard, there is some allure to building

the force DoD can afford versus building the force that it urgently needs.

There are also enduring DoD preferences for optimizing U.S. forces for the most comfortable, defense-specific challenges. Here, the extent to which future defense decisionmakers will push back against traditional military conventions like full-spectrum balance is equally uncertain. Regardless of this lingering doubt, near-term senior leader decisions will obviously affect future U.S. landpower force planning.

From now until QDR 09's delivery in a little over a year, intense debates over the orientation, structure, and use of landpower abroad will occur.<sup>72</sup> The SecDef has three major options: These define the contours of the coming war over strategy, doctrine, and resources inside DoD. The SecDef can opt to:

- *Continue pursuit of full-spectrum balance across DoD and within each service component.* This option avoids hard choices on role differentiation. It continues measured adjustment of land forces to a more unconventional strategic and operational environment. Yet, it also sees DoD investing in a coequal landpower hedge against future traditional threats.
- *Pursue institutional regression.* This option aims for a *counter-revolutionary* reaction against perceived land force over-optimization for nontraditional threats. It instead refocuses U.S. land forces against future conventional military challenges. These challenges are closer to traditional military missions and institutionally more comfortable to the defense establishment.
- *Pursue an unconventional revolution.* This option accelerates and expands reorientation of U.S. land forces on nontraditional security challenges. It re-normalizes them for complex

conflicts and contingency interventions. And it does so while hedging against the prospect of high-intensity conventional conflict with appropriate investment in naval, air, and nonmilitary instruments.<sup>73</sup>

Pursuing broad full-spectrum balance acknowledges the importance of unconventional security threats but also over-emphasizes future traditional conflicts and their joint military demands. The more that planning inclines in the direction of coercive campaigns, the likelier it is that traditional challenges will be seen by senior DoD leaders as less demanding across the entire joint force.

Continued pursuit of broad full-spectrum balance is DoD's likeliest course of action, but it is suboptimal strategically. Recall Krepinevich's "barely jack-of-all-trades" characterization. Moreover, pursuit of broad full-spectrum balance will rapidly run up against uncooperative fiscal realities. It likely will be unaffordable in the current economic environment to optimize each military service for the entire spectrum of conflict.

Powerful advocates inside DoD favor full-spectrum balance. They seek to have it all, by optimizing all service components for the full-spectrum of conflict regardless of how likely or unlikely future contingencies are at any one point along that spectrum or how much any one service component is likely to contribute to those contingencies. Full-spectrum balance sees land forces pivoting between the demands of a known present (dispersed employment in unconventional environments) and an unknown future (maintenance of excessive overmatch to hedge against future high-end traditional conflict). As a consequence, it pulls

land forces (and the joint force overall) in competing, often irreconcilable directions.

The second option—institutional regression—is at once consistent with latent military preferences and potentially the least costly from a fiscal perspective.<sup>74</sup> This is the “system reboot” option described by Shawn Brimley and Vikram Singh in 2007.<sup>75</sup> It resembles a return to the pre-9/11 Rumsfeld transformation agenda where defense savings are arrived at by focusing on capabilities, not numbers.<sup>76</sup> Though both more comfortable and potentially more cost-effective in the minds of some, institutional regression is also dangerously inappropriate to current and projected strategic circumstances. It is, in a word, astrategic. As a result, it has few senior-level advocates. However, traditional military biases indicate that it cannot be discounted.

In institutional regression, landpower reverts to its traditional role as the decisive arm against miscalculating state-based opponents. Unconventional challenges would return to secondary status. Competencies for combating them would migrate back to special operations forces (SOF).<sup>77</sup> However, there would also be an increased demand for general purpose ground forces operating as capacity builders. Here, land forces team with partners to increase their defense and security self-sufficiency. On the subject of institutional regression, Brimley and Singh observe, “Such a reboot would involve both active removal of some innovations from the system and malign neglect of others. The result would be a military that [is] . . . prepared primarily for the wars it wants to fight.”<sup>78</sup>

In future planning, if most speculative traditional conflicts amount to large-scale coercive campaigns, there are substantial institutional and bureaucratic

risks embedded in institutional regression for land forces. If future wars against great and lesser powers are deemed both most likely and most dangerous in the upcoming QDR, and if, as many suspect, they will unfold as coercive air and naval campaigns involving only peripheral land force contributions (raids, missile defense, etc.), then senior DoD leaders might pursue substantial land force reductions to achieve what they perceive to be reasonable cost savings.

Responses to unconventional strategic realities, however, are manpower intensive. They are certain to rapidly overtake perceived cost-savings. One need only recall the author's earlier reference to the possibility of regime failure attending future coercive campaigns for some appreciation of this. Similarly, one should consider how effective U.S. responses to the Iraq insurgency would have been had the Bush defense team succeeded in substantially reducing U.S. ground forces, as was the early predisposition of Secretary Rumsfeld.<sup>79</sup>

For these reasons, DoD should pursue the third option – unconventional revolution. An unconventional revolution in U.S. land components optimizes them for intervention against nontraditional threats that, at the higher end, culminate in the limited armed stabilization of victim states. Toward this end, land forces are adapted for a new balance point on an alternative spectrum of conflict, positioning them first to meet a number of less traditional military demands.

Given the anticipated trajectory of serious threats to U.S. interests, unconventional revolution is the most strategic choice for DoD. Admittedly, this choice is presently an institutional orphan inside DoD. It is antithetical to prevailing defense convention and the

theory of full-spectrum dominance, as it directs landpower resources heavily against the increasing certainty of an unconventional security future. And by doing so, it requires a significant re-rationalization of defense roles. The impact on U.S. landpower would be profound.

Traditional military conservatism inhibits meaningful consideration of an expansive, unconventional land force revolution. There is a strong legacy attachment to the concept of full-spectrum balance as the ultimate strategic hedge against losing the big one. Yet, a more wide-ranging reorientation on unconventional challenges asks, “Exactly what form is the big one likeliest to take in the future?”

A wider unconventional revolution confronts the concept of full-spectrum balance in land forces directly. It would allow Army and Marine Corps leaders to optimize their general purpose forces specifically for limited armed stabilization while retaining the flexibility to reorient missions and capabilities—with sufficient strategic warning—against higher-intensity traditional challenges and in support of future coercive campaigns.

Corporately, DoD should also elevate planning for limited armed stabilization to a position of primacy. Here, conventional coercive campaigns and conflicts become the new lesser included defense contingencies in strategic planning. This new perspective would materially impact future defense investments, as DoD reordered priorities more radically in favor of unconventional threats.

An unconventional landpower revolution reduces risk against the likeliest nontraditional threats while continuing to accept prudent risk in traditional warfighting. Though such a revolution is now only a

marginal candidate inside DoD, the policy sea-change attending the presidential transition and the new administration's QDR might provide a window of opportunity for its meaningful consideration.

## **AN ALTERNATIVE SPECTRUM OF CONFLICT AND THE NEW BALANCE**

The current spectrum of conflict is the first obstacle to a more thoroughgoing revolution in landpower force planning. Designing a more appropriate conflict spectrum is an essential first step toward revolutionary change. It would help senior defense decisionmakers visualize the likeliest warfighting future. It also would help them see where, when, and under what circumstances the new president would be likely to order commitment of U.S. landpower. And, by implication, it would also illuminate how DoD should shape and employ land forces for future success.

Army doctrine employs a linear spectrum of conflict ranging from a stable peace all the way up to general war (see Figure 1).<sup>80</sup> It portrays such radically different types of conflict as points of escalation on a single continuum. Traditional descriptions of the spectrum of conflict describe both the nature of specific conflicts and U.S. military responses to them—insurgency begets COIN and general war begets MCO.



**Figure 1. Current Spectrum of Conflict.**

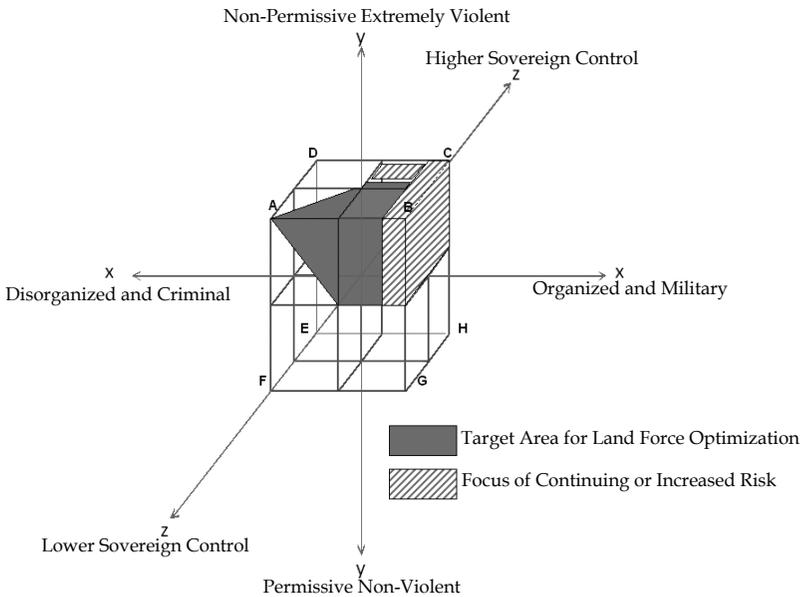
In a critique of the spectrum of conflict circa 1981, Air Force Lieutenant Colonel John T. McGrath

observed, “The spectrum of conflict, as portrayed in most readings, is single dimensioned, linear, and continuous. It is probably the simplest model possible, but it is just too naïve for the complexities of modern warfare.”<sup>81</sup> McGrath’s critique remains valid today. Jack Kem, a professor at the U.S. Army’s Command and General Staff College, recently made a similar observation:

Conceptually, the “spectrum of conflict” construct may be an over-simplification of the nature of conflict. Just as stability operations will take place simultaneously with offensive and defensive operations in a conflict, there may also be disparate elements of unstable peace, insurgency, and limited conventional war occurring simultaneously in a conflict. Future doctrinal development might require a departure from thinking of warfare in purely linear terms.<sup>82</sup>

I offer a new three-dimensional spectrum of conflict (see Figure 2). Its principal function is to describe those conflict environments that demand future U.S. military involvement. The X axis—running left to right—represents the nature of purposeful threats in the conflict space. It ranges from disorganized, purely criminal threats on one side to more sophisticated, organized, military-like, or actual military threats on the other.

The Y axis—running vertically—represents the degree of permissiveness and ongoing (or potential) violence in a conflict zone.<sup>83</sup> It ranges from permissive and nonviolent at the lower end to nonpermissive and extremely violent at the top. Finally, the Z axis runs from front to back. This axis describes the extent to which vulnerable foreign partners exercise sovereign control over political and security outcomes.<sup>84</sup> On the



**Figure 2. An Alternative Spectrum of Conflict.**

near end, foreign partners exercise lower sovereign control over outcomes. At the far end, foreign partners exercise higher control. Judgments about a foreign partner's relative control result from dispassionate evaluation of its command over the instruments of violence, its degree of political authority over constituent territory, and the relative strength and effectiveness of its formal governmental institutions.<sup>85</sup>

This spectrum of conflict assumes relevance only within the context of the core U.S. interests. Specifically, the spectrum should describe for policymakers the most consequential defense-specific and defense-relevant threats to U.S. interests, not necessarily all violent conflicts worldwide. Given earlier descriptions of the strategic and policymaking environments, it should be possible to portray on this alternative spectrum a new model for U.S. land force optimization.

DoD's core mission remains to confront and defeat violent foreign threats to core interests. Therefore, the focus for defense strategy and capabilities (i.e., optimization) naturally lies in some combination of the top four blocks in Figure 2. The top blocks share two qualities. First, they demonstrate high or potentially high levels of violence. Second, each is or could become partially or wholly nonpermissive.

In the past, land forces optimized for MCO against capable competitor states. Most prospective MCOs are captured in the upper right extreme of Block C. Today, in theory, landpower optimizes for the full-spectrum of conflict—Blocks A, B, C, and D. The author argues that land forces should optimize for challenges and conflict environments residing in some combination of Blocks A and B. This area is home to a range of unconventional military missions that might culminate in limited armed stabilization.

The shaded area in Figure 2 (parts of Block A and B) is the new pivot point for land forces. The hatched surfaces in Figure 2 (Block C and part of B) highlight areas of increased or continued DoD risk-taking. This risk space represents much of the conventional military domain. It also captures areas of pervasive unconventional threat regarding which the United States enjoys its most capable foreign partners.

U.S. landpower fulfils two general roles in the shaded space. First, it delivers decisive lethal and nonlethal military effects. Second, it enables effective employment of other equally important nonmilitary capabilities and resources—e.g., aid, development assistance, consequence management, reconstruction, etc. Active and reserve land forces here optimize for success under complex circumstances where (1) vital interests are challenged by violent unconventional

threats; (2) the degree of violence itself is quite high and the environment is, in the main, nonpermissive; (3) physical threats demonstrate some organization and relative sophistication at various levels (but not that commonly associated with high-end MCO); and (4) foreign partners suffer from substantial loss or complete failure of sovereign control over political and security outcomes. For a more comprehensive discussion of the top four blocks, see the following text box titled “The Alternative Spectrum of Conflict”:

### The Alternative Spectrum of Conflict

Some further description of the top four blocks in Figure 2 might be helpful. Block A represents conditions where purposeful threats are less organized. Political and security outcomes in this space are under little or no formal sovereign control of foreign U.S. partners. Contemporary analogs might be Somalia, the FATA region of Pakistan, or a future collapsing Mexico, as in the fictitious example presented in the prologue. Much of the “ungoverned and exploitable areas” of the developing world might also be accounted for in this block.

Block B represents conditions where purposeful threats are more sophisticated, organized, military-like, and/or military. In this block, control by foreign U.S. partners over outcomes ranges from highly contested to nonexistent. Admittedly, many of the challenges in this block are more speculative than they are in Block A. Nonetheless, should these more speculative contingencies come to pass, their strategic impact is also potentially much more grave—in large measure because the physical threats are more sophisticated.

Contemporary or future analogs in this space might be violent dissolution of strategic states, again as presented in the fictional scenario that opened this monograph. An example of operational conditions in Block B (but not necessarily an example of equivalent strategic impact) might be pre-Dayton Bosnia. At the more “military,” upper right extreme of Block B are future cross-border invasions by strong regional competitors who rapidly overtake U.S. partners in conventional or hybrid military operations. These contingency events are much lower in probability. Thus, they are targets for prudent risk-taking.

Block C represents conditions where threats are more sophisticated and organized. Yet, foreign U.S. partners also have greater control over outcomes. Most contemporary and legacy challenges lie in this block. Analogs range from Colombia’s decades-long civil war against narco-traffickers and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC); the continued stand-off between U.S./Republic of Korea (RoK) forces and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK); the contemporary Iranian challenge; and the continuing military tension between the two Chinas. Naturally, both the strategic import and the intensity of these vary. Nonetheless, in each case the United States has one or more capable foreign partners who have an equal – if not greater – interest in outcomes and have some resident capacity to exercise control over outcomes. The degree to which they have unilateral control naturally varies.

Finally, Block D represents circumstances where threats are less organized and mostly criminal. In this block, foreign U.S. partners exercise a high degree of

sovereign control over political and security outcomes. Analogs in this case might be persistent terrorist and criminal threats in North America, Western Europe, and the wider developed world. Admittedly, the permissiveness axis here is less germane. Indeed, U.S. military involvement here is unlikely.

Most western or developed states currently enjoy a monopoly over the instruments of violence within their territory. By implication, the environment is permissive—especially for partner security forces. Nonetheless, there are or can be less permissive pockets of effective sanctuary in any state—apartment block, neighborhood, region, etc.

## OPERATIONALIZING THE NEW BALANCE IN FUTURE FORCE PLANNING

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Let's now rejoin the fictional NSC principal's meeting:

**SecDef:** Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen. In conjunction with two integrated planning teams led by USCENTCOM and USNORTHCOM and involving representatives of the interagency, we have developed options for newly designated Joint Interagency Operating Areas (JIOA)—JIOA Northern Arabian Gulf and JIOA Mexico. These options have been developed in coordination with Saudi, Iraqi, and Mexican authorities.

In JIOA Northern Arabian Gulf, the President asked us to achieve five limited objectives in what amounts to an armed stabilization of eastern Saudi Arabia and southeastern Iraq. First, secure the free movement of commerce, most importantly petroleum exports, through the Arabian

Gulf. Second, secure on behalf of the Saudi people critical petroleum extraction and export infrastructure and critical lines of communication in eastern Saudi Arabia. Third, assist the Iraqi government in reestablishing control over the same critical infrastructure in the vicinity of al Basrah and Um Qasr. Fourth, defeat organized threats to and meet the basic needs of both the Saudi and Iraqi people in a corridor running from just south of ad Dammam to the Kuwaiti border in Saudi Arabia and in Iraq, from the mouth of the Shatt al-Arab to just northwest of al Basrah. And fifth, assist both Saudi Arabia and Iraq reestablish legitimate civil authority and control throughout their territory. We have already established liaison with the Saudis and Iraqis to facilitate U.S. intervention.

To accomplish our objectives, we propose an initial multipoint, joint-interagency intervention in three critical air/sea ports at ad Dammam, al Jubayl, and al Basrah/Um Qasr with smaller supporting interventions throughout the JIOA as additional forces and interagency capabilities arrive. Physical threats to both the operation and the affected populations in the region are numerous. In Saudi Arabia, operating inside and sometimes with the support of a population that numbers 3 million plus are loose networks of competing Shi'a resistance groups, rogue elements of the Saudi Arabian military, a range of "pop-up" anti-government Sunni groups, al Qaeda-affiliated terrorists, and a number of Iranian fifth columnists. We can anticipate that our presence will attract more threats over time. In Iraq, principal threats include a similar collection of Shi'a militias, rogue Iraqi security forces – both army and police, and Iranian government agents. The population of al Basrah Province is approximately 1.7 million. We anticipate disorganized but nonetheless lethal resistance to the entry and continued presence of coalition forces and civilians in both regions. In both Saudi Arabia and Iraq we will enjoy some limited support from indigenous forces.

Throughout operations in both Saudi Arabia and Iraq, the United States must maintain control of both the sea lanes and air space in the JIOA. Given the apparent dissolution of the Saudi government and mounting damage to both the Saudi and Iraqi oil infrastructures, we are planning for a 2-year minimum commitment of U.S. forces. Land deployment can begin in 12 hours and will require 3 months to reach full capacity. A dispersed theater, the diffusion of threats, long land lines of communication, enormous operational dead space, and the vast physical security and point defense requirements call for an initial commitment of approximately eight brigade combat team equivalents and support infrastructure. Total Army and Marine Corps forces supporting the operation will number roughly 100,000-110,000. Our objective in JIOA Northern Arabian Gulf is to turn security responsibility over to a functional local or international authority as rapidly as possible.

JIOA Mexico is a different problem in scale. It is a country of approximately 109 million. In some respects, our proximity to this crisis is an advantage. In others, it pulls us toward a more comprehensive and resource-intensive response. I indicated to the President that we can neither ignore nor hope to fully contain the crisis in Mexico. No one needs to be reminded that the United States faces a shared 2,000-mile land border with Mexico; 1,600 miles of Gulf coastline offering sizable maritime access to the United States; and a quite significant legal and undocumented Mexican expatriate community inside the U.S.

Given ongoing political deterioration in Mexico, the President outlined six preliminary objectives for JIOA Mexico. Like the missions in Saudi Arabia and Iraq, I must emphasize that our mission in Mexico is seen foremost as a relief and stabilization mission. However, with respect to Mexico specifically, it is also a mission focused on protecting the sovereignty and immediate physical security of the United States.

In spite of the support of residual Mexican authorities, powerful indigenous forces are certain to oppose our involvement. We do anticipate significant violence. Our first objective is to secure and reopen the port of Vera Cruz, the Mexico City International Airport, and land and air lines of communication from both into Mexico City, principally for the provision of direct relief. Second, we will assist in containing and reversing the growing Avian Flu pandemic and providing direct humanitarian relief to the population of Mexico City and major population centers. Third, we will establish secure sanctuaries for displaced populations and protect those populations from further harm. Fourth, we will help legitimate authorities defeat criminal disorder inside Mexico City and assist in the reestablishment of legitimate civil order. Fifth, we will secure Mexico's critical petroleum extraction and export infrastructure to prevent irrevocable disruption. And sixth, alongside legitimate Mexican authorities, we will eliminate the criminal sanctuaries in northern Mexico.

DoD will deploy 15 brigade equivalents inside Mexico initially. They will support the range of security missions outlined or implied by the objectives described. An additional 5 federalized Army National Guard brigades will be deployed on the U.S. side of the border as a stop-gap measure to back up U.S. border authorities. In addition to a robust security presence inside Mexico, DoD will also need to deploy most of its excess medical capacity, as well as large numbers of logistical and support forces, to meet Mexico's mounting humanitarian challenges. I anticipate the total Army and Marine Corps commitment inside Mexico to climb to a minimum of 160,000. We will reach that number in a little under 60 days.

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## GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR FUTURE LAND FORCE EMPLOYMENT

Prior to determining the shape, mission, and composition of future land forces, the President, on the advice of the SecDef, must determine the principles that will govern future landpower employment. The author offers the following four principles for future defense strategy and land force contingency planning. This monograph has attempted to build a case for each throughout prior discussion.

They reflect the experience and strategic choices of the post-9/11 era. They are strategically targeted and sensitive to the risk and cost-tolerance operative in contemporary American policymaking. The four principles are: (1) *core interests first*; (2) *limited objectives*; (3) *risk management*; and (4) *early integration of joint, interagency, intergovernmental, and multinational contributions*. All four blend at critical points and are thus not mutually exclusive. The fictional scenarios highlight the importance of each.

### **Core Interests First.**

The first guiding principle implies that *core national security interests* – i.e., those that will have a material impact on the fundamental security, well-being, and prosperity of the United States, its population, and its allies – should govern the use of U.S. landpower. U.S. decisionmakers must recognize that the United States does have immutable interests. Strategic leaders can provide for the protection of these interests in the light of the most compelling unconventional threats and challenges. Threats to the most important national interests by necessity enjoy the greatest strategy,

planning, and resource attention. The fictitious crises in the Middle East and Mexico, for example, pose significant physical hazards to the security of the United States, potential challenges to important foreign U.S. partners, and systemic hazards to an already wounded global economic system.

An upfront appreciation of interests, awareness of the likeliest and most dangerous strategic threats to those interests, and the required defense capabilities in response, collectively provide policymakers with a conceptual matrix for defining strategic and operational military requirements. This interest-based defense analysis should provide DoD decisionmakers with a conceptual foundation for the future U.S. landpower force planning.

Careful calculation of interests, on the one hand, and cost-benefit analysis, on the other, should govern decisions on intervention. As Michele Flournoy suggested in 2001, “[A]ny sound strategy must have as its foundation a clear conception of national interests.”<sup>88</sup> Thus, grounding the operationalization of future defense strategy in interests is one step in reducing defense uncertainty.

Candidates for core U.S. interests abound. In a previous monograph, the author offered five general categories of “strategic states” that merit close monitoring for increased irregular, catastrophic, and hybrid instability.<sup>89</sup> Some of these states are also prospective candidates for future coercive campaigns. A strategic state is not necessarily a friendly state.

The Princeton Project’s Working Group on State Security and Transnational Threats also recently offered a more general, but nonetheless serviceable set of “fundamental [U.S.] interests.” These include “economic prosperity; governance continuity; ideological sustainability; military capability; population

well-being; and territorial integrity.”<sup>90</sup> Both the author’s list and the Princeton Project’s formulation are among many that might provide useful guides in any U.S. threat-to-interest-to-cost calculation.

Careful objective comparison of core interests and unconventional threats allows defense leaders to make prudent risk judgments about strategy and capabilities. Though sometimes difficult to acknowledge publicly in a liberal democracy, some circumstances (or strategic outcomes) simply matter more than others. For example, in reality, the Middle East; South, Central, and Northeast Asia; the Eurasian core; and the Americas are more likely to generate strategically consequential unconventional challenges than are Sub-Saharan Africa or the Southwest Pacific. Likewise, policy priority goes to purposeful or contextual challenges impacting proliferation of nuclear weapons, the surety of nuclear arsenals, confidence in and functioning of the global economic system, and U.S. physical and economic security. All of these take precedence over purely humanitarian concerns.

There is very little controversial about the foregoing rationale to warfighting traditionalists. Nonetheless, a new unconventional focus and the prospect for large-scale but still limited armed stabilization do force traditionalists to accept some additional risk in contingency scenarios involving latent conventional or traditional military threats. Likewise, they also constrain stabilization, COIN, and CT advocates to accept much more discrimination in the employment of U.S. landpower abroad.

Without question, grave unconventional threats to core interests can emerge from the strategic periphery — e.g., al-Qaeda in Afghanistan. Threats like these will require the attention of land forces. However, their

emergence does not necessarily stamp the label “core interest” on their geographic origins. As a consequence, addressing them does not automatically require a large landpower response. Steven Metz and Frank Hoffman make the point very well:

While some of the September 11 terrorists underwent training in Afghanistan, no one has made the case that such training was necessary for the attack on the United States. Sanctuary may be . . . a “nice to have” for terrorists rather than a “must have.” If this is true, the massive strategic and economic costs of intervening and controlling ungoverned spaces outweigh the benefits.<sup>91</sup>

There are some unconventional threats that can be managed solely through the discriminative use of precision military violence. Pre-9/11 Afghanistan, for example, rested somewhere inside Block A in Figure 2, most likely to the center-right. Clearly, the neutralization of terrorist sanctuaries from undergoverned Afghanistan was necessary. Nonetheless, it did not necessarily require revolutionary transformation of the Afghan state and society.

Both location and the nature of the threat matter. However, real strategic value is a function of interests. Strategic value grows out of answers to the questions, what has happened (or can happen and its likelihood), how it has happened (or how it is likely to happen), where it has happened (or might happen), why and when it has happened (or might happen), and what’s likely to happen next as a consequence. The combined answers determine the strategic value of specific conditions. What the United States does to defend those vulnerable interests that exhibit higher strategic value is a matter of choice. In the author’s fictitious scenario,

for example, untoward circumstances erupting in less important regions of the world will by necessity be less compelling to U.S. decisionmakers.

### **Limited Objectives.**

The second guiding principle for land force employment is pursuit of limited objectives in both traditional and unconventional conflicts. Given the experience of the last 7 years and the diversity, character, and complexity of future challenges, the strategic aims of future military endeavors must by necessity become more realistic and limited. Absent pursuit of limited objectives, a new cycle of defense exhaustion will ensue.

Post-Cold War contingency planning occurred in the absence of relevant operational experience. Even worst-case scenario-based planning often resulted in best-case or ideal objective formulation. U.S. planners and senior decisionmakers assumed that comprehensive regime change—or, even better, comprehensive regime removal and replacement—were realistic, risk-informed outcomes in most traditional campaigns. By implication, comprehensive regime replacement in the event of state collapse was also seen as cost-adjusted and risk-informed. Recent strategic experience suggests that both assumptions were and likely remain unrealistic.

The United States is now in the 8th year of a regime removal and replacement in undergoverned Afghanistan. It is in its 6th year of regime removal and replacement in Iraq. The long-term, strategic outcome of both commitments is in doubt. And the strategic and opportunity cost associated with resetting depleted forces for similar undertakings in the future

is enormous. Going forward, defense and military planners now have a great deal of real-world conflict experience. This experience has generated a host of lessons on the limitations of an over-committed all-volunteer force.

Recent experience and the predisposition of current policymakers indicate that deliberate regime change is a low-probability future demand. For example, one is hard-pressed to see regime change or forcible democratization as objectives in any future conflict with rising great powers like China or Russia. In the event of a future great power conflict, prospective land force contributions would support coercive/punitive operations centered on air and naval actions. They may also be employed in pursuit of limited objectives on the periphery of the offending state to reverse limited incursions or seize key terrain. Likewise, the now obvious costs of a deliberate regime change and forcible democratization make it hard to visualize the United States adopting either objective in a future conventional conflict with lesser regional powers. As Secretary Gates recently emphasized, “The United States is unlikely to repeat another Iraq or Afghanistan – that is, forced regime change followed by nation building under fire – anytime soon.”<sup>92</sup>

Even if regime change remains a policy option against lesser powers, conventional military operations against them will most commonly see land forces employed in operations of narrow scope and duration, in support of limited campaign objectives. Traditional U.S. advantages will often speed transformation of specific campaigns like this toward the high-low, hybrid mix witnessed in Operation IRAQI FREEDOM. Operational conditions where U.S. forces encounter complex traditional-irregular combinations are prone to

rapidly devolve into armed stabilization, as American forces quickly overwhelm traditional resistance, yet continue to contend with a host of hostile irregular actors and humanitarian assistance to the target state's most vulnerable populations.

Regime failure (e.g., collapse of a target state) is one possible incidental consequence of future coercive campaigns like this. The trigger for collapse or failure of offending regime or victim state is immaterial. Limited armed stabilization will look similar whether a regime falls of its own weight or as a consequence of coercive external action. As noted in the previous discussion of strategic state collapse, some level of armed stabilization will ensue. Responding to regime failure or collapse would naturally entail substantial follow-on land force contributions. In this regard, according to Secretary Gates, "[E]ven the biggest wars will require 'small wars' capabilities."<sup>93</sup>

The concept of limited objectives rejects the tempting resort to deliberate regime change in conventional warplanning and the pursuit of regime restoration under more unconventional circumstances. It does not, however, foreclose consideration of effective landpower responses to regime failure. Moreover, it argues for a form of strategic discipline in all future interventions. This discipline constrains policymakers to pursue more modest, definable, and achievable outcomes. In this respect, it argues strongly against going in with maximal force under many contingency circumstances unless the strategic benefits clearly outweigh the strategic costs. Both value and cost-benefit calculations are foremost a function of reasoned appreciation of interests. Here Metz and Hoffman are also instructive:

Iraq has reminded American policymakers that removing a regime is relatively easy, but rebuilding stability – much less a form of stability friendly to the United States – is a massive undertaking. In many, perhaps all, instances the strategic benefits are not worth the strategic costs.<sup>94</sup>

In more traditional conflicts – i.e., coercive campaigns or the rarer conventional MCO – the objective should be satisfactory adjustment of an offending regime’s bad behavior. Or, where the offending regime has seized sovereign territory from another state, the objective would be simply to restore the status quo ante bellum. Under the worst unconventional circumstances – e.g., where we undertake armed stabilization – strategic objectives should be similarly limited. They will, however, be much more landpower intensive. Strategic and operational aims should key on minimum essential conditions like the following:

- Rapid restoration of minimally functioning indigenous authority and accountability.
- Limitation of horizontal regional escalation of conflict and instability.
- Isolation of the victim state (or region) from hostile intervention by outside instigators.
- Protection of vulnerable populations and critical state institutions and infrastructure.
- Defeat of violent organized threats to internal security and abuses by indigenous security forces.<sup>95</sup>
- Establishment of responsible control over strategic resources and military capabilities.
- Temporary delivery of essential public goods and establishment of the basic foundations for an indigenously-led national/regional recovery.

A “to do” list like this must be employed flexibly. Under certain conditions more will be possible. In those cases, most—or all—of this list may be realistic. In other cases—commonly most—the extent of the challenges will be so great and resources so limited that a conservative containment approach will be in order. For example, it may be that only pieces of a fallen state are viable targets for comprehensive stabilization and reconstruction.

Pursuit of limited objectives does not necessarily or even commonly suggest limitations on the physical size of future military commitments. Pursuit of the strictest and most precise definitions of the outcomes outlined above under very real operational conditions still calls for a robust range of land force capabilities. If one recognizes that, by population size (25 million) alone, Iraq is probably on the medium to low end of future problem sets, then a reasonable response range for future similar contingencies will include equal—if not greater—ground force commitments, even with more limited objectives. Pursuit of limited objectives is thus an acknowledgement that, even with large-scale commitment of U.S. forces and interagency capabilities, some downward rationalization of objectives is essential.

### **Risk Management.**

The third principle—risk management—is closely linked to the previous two. It assumes that commitment to risk elimination, though more palatable, often entails much more human, material, fiscal, and political cost than contemporary risk tolerance allows in practice. Thus, we have the aforementioned tension between

full adherence to a universal to do list and more modest selection of a limited number of menu items intended to drive down strategic risk. Viewing future land force commitments first through the lens of risk management allows senior political decisionmakers to maximize impact on important but still limited objectives, recognizing that in some cases they are only treating the worst symptoms of a complex but nonetheless manageable disease. Attempting more—for example, curing the underlying disease itself—might be excessively risk-laden, impossible, time-consuming, and/or unaffordable.

The principle of risk management further acknowledges that early commitment to and pursuit of good enough leaves the United States with maximum freedom of action for management of its myriad global risks over time. In this regard, prudently minimizing risk is often more realistic in both absolute and cost terms than is eliminating it entirely. If risk is a rational assessment both of the likelihood of failure, and of the likelihood that success, if possible, might also be unaffordable in lives, money, material, political capital, and freedom of action, then policymakers should consider undertaking those minimum essential actions necessary to control hazards at acceptable levels of discomfort first.

### **Comprehensive Interagency and International Approaches.**

Finally, the fourth guiding principle requires that employment of land forces occur within a broader strategic design exploiting decisive contributions from other national and multinational security actors. From this perspective, a decision to employ landpower should

not be made unless and until there is strong evidence that military gains will be underwritten meaningfully by requisite contributions from other U.S. and partner agents. This is a tall order. According to Ashton Carter, “[O]ur edge in marshalling all elements of national power is not nearly as sharp as that of our military prowess.”<sup>96</sup>

Under most unconventional circumstances, non-military actors—or, more importantly, nonmilitary effects—are likely more responsible for durable strategic outcomes than are purely military actors and/or outcomes. However, as Carter suggests, nonmilitary resources are likely much more limited than military resources. Therefore, by necessity, their employment must also occur according to the three aforementioned guiding principles, that is, employment must take due note of core interests, limitation of objectives, and risk.

## **A NEW MISSION SET AND ITS IMPACT ON FORCE PLANNING**

Ready for the violent and disordered environments captured in Blocks A and B in Figure 2 and operating according to the four guiding principles, land forces should prepare for eight new or revised missions. This mission set adjusts priorities to support active defense of core interests in an era of persistent unconventional conflict. It seeks to do so at fundamentally lower levels of strategic and institutional risk and cost by purposefully avoiding the dramatic swings in mission focus that defined the post-9/11 period.

These eight missions reflect a more realistic strategic frame of reference for land forces. They do not, as some will argue, constitute threats to the warfighting focus of the U.S. Army and Marine Corps. Nor, for

that matter, are they fundamental deviations from either institution's core warfighting ethos. Instead, they represent a recalibration of landpower missions and forces accordant with the examples of history, the trajectory of the strategic environment, and the mandate by senior defense leaders to shift DoD's weight decisively in the direction unconventional threats and challenges.

The new mission set breaks out as follows: (1) *active management of purposeful unconventional threats*; (2) *armed stabilization*; (3) *preemptive/punitive campaigns*; (4) *security sector reform and assistance*; (5) *conventional deterrence and limited traditional war*; and (6) *facilitation of whole-of-government stabilization and reconstruction*. These six are underwritten by two more foundational mission requirements—(7) *generation and sustainment of adequate land force capabilities*, and (8) *homeland defense and security*. The seventh mission captures the critical functions performed by the institutional Army and Marine Corps. The eighth mission recognizes both steady state and surge land force requirements associated with defending the United States from direct attack and supporting civil authorities in the event of domestic emergency.

All of these missions are interdependent. In some cases, the capability to perform one relies in whole or in part on borrowing capabilities inherent to other missions. This will become clearer in the description of the landpower force planning construct (FPC) outlined below.

### **Active Management of Purposeful Unconventional Threats.**

The first mission—*active management*—recognizes that the United States will employ specialized land

force capabilities as a matter of course against dispersed terrorist and criminal threats worldwide. In the near term, this mission will be most associated with the WOT. This was recognized in the 2006 QDR report: “[Defense] guidance must account for [persistent commitment to] distributed, long-duration [irregular] operations [worldwide].”<sup>97</sup> In continued prosecution of the WOT, this mission and supporting capabilities set provides DoD with its principal lever for managing active terrorist threats. However, limiting the concept of active management to the current WOT alone would be imprudent.

The active management mission will endure and expand in focus over time. Recently Ashton Carter concluded, “Whatever the lifetime of Islamist extremism . . . it will long remain the business of national security authorities to counter terrorism arising from other movements and groups.”<sup>98</sup> Indeed, U.S. decisionmakers recognize the value of keeping nonstate actors like terrorists under constant pressure. This will not change with the new administration. There is evidence that *active management* limits the intensity and frequency of direct catastrophic threats to the U.S. homeland and key U.S. interests. This, according to Steven Metz and Frank Hoffman, indicates that “[i]n the absence of a catastrophic attack on the American homeland, something like the existing strategy is likely to be sustained no matter who the next President is.”<sup>99</sup>

The challenges of both terrorism and organized crime are increasing in strategic impact and lethality. Their lethal and nonlethal management requires persistent commitment of land forces with specialized capabilities. These forces must penetrate foreign territory and populations and operate with discrimination, precision, and low visibility.

This mission most commonly takes the form of episodic, direct action in small (> 1 brigade equivalent) tactical actions around the world. It includes ground-based, precision attacks to eliminate known threat actors; criminal apprehensions and support to the extra-territorial application of U.S. law; and sensitive site exploitation. Quite often active management requires deep land force penetration of under-governed territory and nonpermissive environments. Tailored force packages typically associated with the active management mission are also employed in sensitive, specialized activities that support a number of the other mission areas outlined below. This mission and force pool are dominated by SOF but include general purpose forces as well.

### **Armed Stabilization.**

The second mission—armed stabilization—has been a salient topic throughout this monograph. The armed stabilization mission represents a sea-change in the landpower mission focus. It recognizes that the principal large-scale, land-based contingency against which Army and Marine Corps forces optimize is no longer traditional MCO but rather the minimum essential armed stabilization of a strategic state, territory, or region—friendly or hostile—where functioning order has failed or has been seriously undermined by unconventional internal and external forces.

Armed stabilization is triggered by events ranging from insurgency, civil war, catastrophic terrorism, and insurrection to state collapse and natural or human disaster. It is close in concept to the 2006 QDR description of surge demands associated with the

“conduct [of] irregular operations.”<sup>100</sup> The 2006 QDR concludes that DoD must be capable of conducting “a large-scale, potentially long duration irregular warfare campaign including counterinsurgency and security, stability, transition, and reconstruction operations.”<sup>101</sup> However, it differs from the 2006 QDR model in that it accounts for large-scale, land-centric contingencies occurring in response to hostile action, as well as to agentless political or natural misfortune.

Armed stabilization calls for “relatively large multipurpose ground forces capable of operating among civilian populations with strong self-protection and minimal harm to friendly civilians.”<sup>102</sup> It typically requires rapid introduction of substantial U.S. land forces (< 8 brigade equivalents) and supported/supporting international and interagency partner capabilities for the purpose of restoring a favorable, indigenously-led political and security order. These missions will occur in states, territories, or regions whose stable functioning is critical to the security and prosperity of the United States and its international partners.

Armed stabilization is undertaken in concert with other states in coalition. But it also remains a unilateral U.S. option. It includes substantial combat action, simultaneous provision of basic public goods to affected populations, and the initiation of early reconstruction. As described above, overall objectives are likely to be much more limited and/or modest than those pursued in Iraq and Afghanistan. Outcomes will focus first on the establishment of those minimum essential security conditions necessary for an indigenous or internationally-led recovery. Note, for example, the minimalist pursuits outlined in the discussion of limited objectives above.

The condition that most distinguishes armed stabilization from classical conceptions of stability operations or COIN is the potential level of organized violence. For example, doctrine and planning for stability operations do not commonly anticipate continuing combat action against legacy elements of the armed forces of fallen strategic states. Furthermore, armed stabilization will commonly occur in regions where political success or failure will profoundly affect the physical and economic security of the United States.

Operational conditions in an armed stabilization might range from a low-level, smoldering insurgency or insurrection to a nastier hybrid collapse of a relatively sophisticated state with high-end military capabilities. Consistent with the schema in Figure 2, the operating environment is likely to be violent and nonpermissive. Indigenous authority in the affected state or region is either crippled or failed. And human insecurity will be one among many key obstacles to the restoration of minimum essential stability.

Forces in the armed stabilization pool include tailored combinations of combat, combat support, and combat service support capabilities most appropriate to sustained stability operations in dangerous, highly-lethal conflict environments. The most complicated and dangerous circumstances might be those involving a crippled nuclear state. From an enemy C2 perspective, the combat action required in most cases of armed stabilization is quite intense but far less ordered than that anticipated in most traditional military operations.

Armed stabilization missions might occur on behalf or alongside of the government institutions and security forces of victim states, as in the fictional

scenarios above. Or they might occur in the absence of capable and organized foreign partners altogether. Furthermore, they are as likely to occur in hostile states as they are in states that to date have enjoyed good relations with the U.S. Hostile strategic states suffering from internal disorder may threaten U.S. interests as fundamentally as friendly states beset by a similar fate.

Armed stabilization could occur as a stand-alone contingency. Or, as discussed earlier, armed stabilization might be incidental to regime failure attending coercive campaigns or a rarer U.S.-initiated regime change. Defense strategists and planners should anticipate armed stabilization beginning with opposed or semi-opposed entry into theater. Yet, it might also occur at the behest of a crippled foreign partner or in accordance with an international mandate. The bulk of general purpose operating forces reside in this pool.

### **Preemptive and Punitive Campaigns of Limited Scope and Duration.**

The third mission—preemptive/punitive campaigns—involves the rapid introduction of a relatively modest land contingent (> 8 combat brigade equivalents) into a hostile, nonpermissive foreign environment. Punitive/preemptive campaigns focus on achieving a limited set of very specific political and military objectives over a short period of time. Missions might include violent destruction or dismantlement of terrorist sanctuaries and/or support networks, reversing illegitimate seizures of political power, contingency protection of American assets abroad; seizure and security of WMD or vulnerable national infrastructure; anticipatory defeat of rogue political

actors threatening friendly foreign governments; and/or short-term protection of vulnerable foreign populations.<sup>103</sup> This mission and force pool provide the armed stabilization mission with the capacity for forced or opposed entry. The forces involved include a mix of general purpose and SOF. These are predominantly combat forces but also contain support forces necessary to sustain intervention over a limited period of time.

### **Security Sector Reform and Assistance.**

The fourth mission—security sector reform and assistance—recognizes the growing imperative for more robust, deployable advisory capacity. The security sector reform and assistance mission is undertaken both under routine conditions, according to strategic priorities, as well as in extremis—e.g., in support of armed stabilization. It largely focuses on pre-conflict and post-conflict military and paramilitary capacity-building.

Security sector reform and assistance are DoD's principal contribution to whole-of-government conflict prevention. In theory, they reduce future demands for large-scale contingency intervention as U.S. partners become more confident with their own capabilities. It is also one key lever for facilitating meaningful reduction of U.S. land force commitments in the event large-scale intervention becomes unavoidable. Security sector reform and assistance capacity should reside in both SOF and general purpose forces. The force pool should involve a mixture of dual-role military capabilities, as well as stand-alone, specialist advisory capacity.

## **Conventional Deterrence and Limited Traditional War.**

The fifth mission—conventional deterrence and limited traditional war—retains within U.S. land forces the capacity to aggregate appropriate capabilities from this and other force pools to conduct conventional military campaigns to achieve a circumspect set of military objectives against traditional military opponents. This mission requires the more conventional capacities for armored fire and maneuver; attack aviation; general purpose, indirect fire support; niche demands like theater and national missile defense; and the unique combat support and combat service support capabilities necessary to enable and sustain all of these in the field.

These capabilities should be sufficient to deter traditional challenges around the world. Nonetheless, recognition of the importance of this contingency mission here is not a license to maintain excessive conventional overmatch. In the event of higher-intensity instances of armed stabilization, this force pool provides land force commanders with the ability to defeat hostile conventional capabilities and forces that remain under some coherent command and control, as they simultaneously perform other military and nonmilitary functions more common to stability operations. This capability largely resides within Army and Marine Corps general purpose forces.

## **Facilitation of Limited, Whole-of-Government Stabilization and Reconstruction.**

The sixth mission—facilitation of whole-of-government stabilization and reconstruction—is now

commonly recognized as a core function of land forces. It has not, however, been adequately defined or resourced. Robust, stand-alone, nondefense stabilization and reconstruction capabilities—appropriate for employment in semi-permissive and nonpermissive environments—remain distant prospects. Ashton Carter calls this “[t]he crippling inadequacy of the non-Defense instruments of crisis intervention.”<sup>104</sup>

As already described, land forces will conduct complex contingency operations where internal/external human security challenges are as much an issue as are purposeful violence and conflict. As a consequence, it is now more necessary for landpower leaders and organizations to assume responsibility for enabling and facilitating the delivery and employment of nonmilitary resources and effects. This will often require providing essential civilian actors with the planning, support, and command and control architecture essential to their effective operation in the field.

In reality, land forces will also need to demonstrate increased competency in a number of essential nonmilitary functions associated with complex unconventional contingencies. For example, the more violent the environment, the likelier it is that U.S. land forces will fill essential nonmilitary capacity gaps until conditions are more conducive or hospitable to large-scale civilian deployment. This mission and force pool largely belongs to general purpose forces and includes (but is not limited to) niche military capabilities associated with civil affairs, consequence management, limited civil reconstruction, and disaster relief. In part, it represents that level of inherently nonmilitary capacity that must nonetheless be built into and remain in landpower force structure for the foreseeable future.

Landpower capacity both for enabling employment of nonmilitary capabilities and for performing nonmilitary functions in extremis are essential to successful prosecution of the myriad missions described above. Landpower also underwrites broader U.S. capabilities for responses to humanitarian crises worldwide.

### **Generation and Sustainment of Adequate Land Forces.**

The seventh mission—generating and sustaining adequate forces—enables operational land forces to perform the missions outlined above. These are institutional U.S. Army and U.S. Marine Corps functions related to recruiting, training, organizing, supplying, equipping, manning, and mobilizing land forces for the conduct of operations. The U.S. Army calls this structure the “generating force.” According to Army doctrine, “The generating force consists of . . . organizations whose primary mission is to generate and sustain operational Army capabilities.”<sup>105</sup> The 2006 QDR refers to these activities as “normal force generation, sustainment, and training activities.”<sup>106</sup> The intense demands of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and the wider WOT have demonstrated the value of a robust and adaptable institutional infrastructure to support deployed land forces.

### **Homeland Defense and Security (HLD/S).**

Finally, the HLD/S mission largely draws on the capabilities germane to and resident in the missions and force pools described above. Commonalities between some aspects of armed stabilization, facilitation of limited whole-of-government stabilization and

reconstruction, and homeland defense and security are particularly noteworthy in this regard.<sup>107</sup> DoD remains a primary source of human and material capital for the USG. Use of military forces in support of civilian-led responses to domestic emergencies is less constrained by geography and “terms of employment” than is use of most of the remainder of the federal work force. There are historical precedents and legal strictures governing employment of U.S. forces in support of civil authorities at home.<sup>108</sup> These remain critical and inviolable bedrocks of civil-military relations and political tradition.

Nonetheless, DoD land forces provide civil authorities with significant capabilities under a coherent chain of command. As a consequence, they remain extraordinarily useful to USG responses to domestic human, natural, or other catastrophes. In the current economic environment, it may be neither prudent nor cost-effective for the USG to build parallel civilian capabilities that are as useful to the military in foreign contingencies (like armed stabilization or facilitation of whole-of-government stabilization and reconstruction) as they are to civilian leaders in episodic domestic emergencies that surpass local, state, and national capacity.

There are enduring traditional and unconventional military demands associated with HLD/S. In the traditional realm, for example, national missile defense requires continuing support from the force pools for conventional deterrence and limited conventional war. Less traditional—but perhaps more urgent—contingency homeland security demands include disaster relief, consequence management, and physical security. In accordance with U.S. law, civil authorities can rapidly introduce U.S. land force capabilities resident across mission areas—especially general purpose forces—to meet civilian capacity shortfalls in

extremis. Here DoD land components act as a strategic reserve for civilian decisionmakers confronted with extraordinary, resource-intensive domestic emergencies.

### **A NEW LANDPOWER FORCE PLANNING CONSTRUCT: A TWO-CONTINGENCY FORCE REMAINS THE COIN OF THE REALM**

The force planning construct (FPC) used by strategists and defense planners to address “activities that the Department conducts continuously (steady state) as well as those it conducts episodically (surge)” is one key outcome of the next QDR.<sup>109</sup> The FPC “provides a guide to determine both the appropriate size of the force (capacity), as well as the types of capabilities (forces and equipment) needed across a range of scenarios.”<sup>110</sup> Figure 3 schematically aggregates the aforementioned anticipated landpower missions into a new landpower-specific FPC for the next QDR.

In addition to both the steady-state and surge demands of active management, force generation and sustainment, conventional deterrence, and homeland defense and security, DoD should size its land force to meet the requirement for dealing with two simultaneous or nearly simultaneous large-scale, land-centric foreign contingencies. The most demanding surge contingencies in this regard are instances of armed stabilization. There are smaller surge demands as well. A two-contingency force remains valid for a variety of compelling strategic reasons. Three of these reasons are particularly important—detering purposeful challengers, avoiding self-deterrence, and hedging against resource-intensive demands in the Americas and at home.

With respect to the first—detering others, the capacity “to wage multiple campaigns in overlapping time frames” provides the United States with “a strong deterrent against opportunistic aggression or attempted coercion.”<sup>111</sup> This continues to be a compelling justification for a “two contingency” capability vis-à-vis purposeful challengers. The mounting universe of unconventional threats of purpose and context and the demonstrated limits of U.S. capabilities over the previous 7 years increase the likelihood that the United States and/or its interests will be threatened simultaneously by two or more challengers in the future. As argued previously, these will not be conventional challenges. Having the capacity to address only one consequential threat at a time hollows out U.S. commitments to actively defend other important interests, leaving them vulnerable to the predations of “those who wait.”

On the second point—avoiding self-deterrence, limiting U.S. freedom of action to a single large-scale response can complicate future U.S. crisis decisionmaking to the point of paralysis. This is perhaps most important when looking at less purposeful and more contextual threats and challenges. Should the United States face a serious and imminent unconventional threat in one theater and a latent but nonetheless increasingly likely and more important threat in another, national security decisionmakers have the choice of: (1) intervening immediately against the known and more active challenge, potentially leaving an equally valued interest unguarded for an extended period of time, or (2) hedging against the second crisis by holding back from forcefully responding to the first. In either case, the United States is left with a one-contingency force and at least a two-contingency

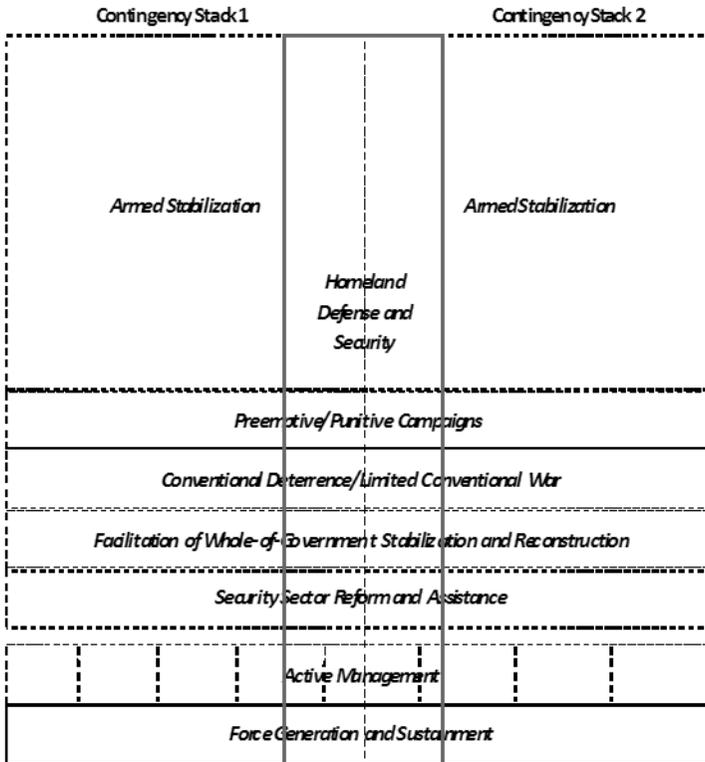
challenge set. In the case of (2), choosing not to choose is a choice. In either case, dangerous self-deterrence results—the first through inadequate capacity and the second through inaction. The fictional crisis scenarios demonstrate this dilemma in bold relief.

On the third point—hedging against resource-intensive demands in the Americas and at home—the United States can no longer treat the homeland; Caribbean; or North, Central, and South America as unlikely regions for significant military commitment. First, like a number of other regions around the world, the Americas to our south are increasingly vulnerable to catastrophe arriving via contextual threats like pandemic, economic collapse, natural or human disaster, collapsed political authority, civil violence, and criminality. There are purposeful threats to the internal security of states in the Western Hemisphere as well. Proximity, demographics, and the potential threat to U.S. sovereignty and physical security all argue that DoD address these latent challenges as it builds capabilities and resources military demands. This point is evinced in the fictional scenario as well.

Senior U.S. officials are also increasingly cognizant of real threats to the U.S. homeland. These range from extraordinary environmental and human catastrophe to lethal attacks by unconventional challengers like terrorists. Hurricane Katrina and 9/11 were grim reminders of the vulnerability of American society. Responding effectively to the worst human, natural, or purpose-driven catastrophes inside the United States could require land force capabilities beyond those currently assumed in strategic planning.

Figure 3 portrays the interdependence of the different mission sets and force pools. Each contingency stack displays how the most demanding circumstances

are those requiring substantial contributions from the other mission blocks and contingency stacks. The contingency stacks represent both the aggregate missions and capabilities necessary to achieve the most demanding “high-intensity” land force missions like armed stabilization, as well as sources for additional landpower capabilities to offset shortfalls in other pressing contingencies. Thus, the dashed lines.



**Figure 3. An Alternative Landpower Force Planning Construct (FPC).**

The contingency stacks are speculative combinations. Naturally, an active contingency might exceed the capabilities resident in a single contingency stack. Future contingencies, for example, might require most or all of the resources resident in one or more of the force pools. This narrows senior leader options in the event of a second or third contingency event, becoming both a source of risk and a target for risk mitigation. Thus, any FPC adopted must be tested against the range of plausible contingencies to identify the degree to which risk must be recognized and mitigated.

The HLS/D mission intentionally overlays the two contingency stacks. It also spans the range of mission areas. Defense and security of the homeland are inviolable trusts of the armed forces. Though DoD is concerned principally with violent contingencies abroad, it must first consider and resource HLS/D to a minimum essential level. As senior landpower leaders build the future force, they should assemble those landpower capabilities necessary both to succeed in unconventional foreign contingencies and to support civilian authorities in the event of extraordinary crises at home.

## **CONCLUSION: PURSUING A NEW BALANCE**

An unconventional revolution in land forces redefines the balance point for force optimization. As a hedge against lingering traditional uncertainty, full-spectrum balance remains a legitimate goal for parts of DoD. Nonetheless, the author concludes that uncompromising pursuit of full-spectrum balance in land forces is fraught with unwarranted strategic risk. Indeed, pursuit of full-spectrum balance is likely to result in renewed imbalance in favor of the missions

landpower leaders are culturally most comfortable with as against those they are likeliest to undertake. In this regard, excessive investment in full-spectrum balance in land forces is an expensive strategic detour that can result in sub-optimizing for an unconventional future.

Pursuit of a wider unconventional revolution resets the balance point for land forces in a way that best positions them for decisive intervention against compelling unconventional threats. Landpower remains the most versatile and broadly employable DoD capability. General purpose land forces, in particular, must optimize for armed stabilization. This envisions a land force capable of containing and defeating nontraditional hazards to U.S. core interests under conditions of general civil disorder in complex foreign contingencies. Their purpose in doing so is to create secure operating space for the essential work of important nonmilitary agents (i.e., interagency, intergovernmental, international, and nongovernmental). This course recognizes that American land forces are warfighting institutions first. However, it pushes landpower leaders to recognize that they must anticipate and build for a different kind of warfighting environment.

## ENDNOTES

1. These scenarios are naturally fictional. The author opted to use actual states to make the descriptions more compelling. The fictional scenarios described are intended only to demonstrate the complexity and simultaneity of future unconventional challenges. They are not intended to be predictive of specific unconventional contingencies and in no way are they intended to impart value judgments on the authorities or populations of Saudi Arabia, Iraq, or Mexico.

2. See Robert Jervis, "The Remaking of a Unipolar World," *Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 29, No. 3, 2006, available from [www.twq.com/06summer/docs/06summer\\_jervis.pdf](http://www.twq.com/06summer/docs/06summer_jervis.pdf), accessed September 22, 2008, p. 7. Jervis observes, "In the fierce debate over the merits of its post-September 11 foreign policy, insufficient attention has been paid to the odd fact that the United States, with all its power and stake in the system, is behaving more like a revolutionary state than one committed to preserving the arrangements that seem to have suited it well."

3. For a detailed discussion of the author's views on "unconventional" challenges, see two works. The first is a forthcoming CSIS monograph, "Shifting Emphasis: Strategic Leaders, Strategists, and Operators in an Era of Persistent Unconventional Challenge"; the second is a joint SSI/PKSOI monograph entitled *Unknowns: Unconventional "Strategic Shocks" in Defense Strategy Development*, Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, November 2008, available from [www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdffiles/PUB890.pdf](http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdffiles/PUB890.pdf), accessed December 16, 2008.

4. Both the terms *defense-relevant* and *defense-specific* are used in this monograph. Detailed discussions of "defense-relevant unconventional threats of purpose and context" are included in the two works cited by the author in endnote 3. Defense-relevant security challenges or conditions are mostly nonmilitary in character but should be of substantial interest to DoD. A defense-specific challenge is one that springs from a military source and requires primary involvement by DoD.

5. Ashton B. Carter, *Defense Strategy & Budget in the Post-Bush Era*, Washington, DC, and Aspen, CO: Aspen Strategy Group, available from [belfercenter.ksg.harvard.edu/publication/18521/defense\\_strategy\\_budget\\_in\\_the\\_postbush\\_era.html](http://belfercenter.ksg.harvard.edu/publication/18521/defense_strategy_budget_in_the_postbush_era.html), accessed January 5, 2008, p. 3.

6. See Headquarters, Department of the Army (HQDA), FM 3-0: *Operations*, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, February 2008, p. 1-15. The U.S. Army describes "landpower" as "the ability—by threat, force, or occupation—to gain, sustain, and exploit control over land, resources, and people." For the remainder of this monograph, the author employs this term as

shorthand for DoD's land force components – the U.S. Army and U.S. Marine Corps.

7. See HQDA, February 2008, p. 3-1. The new Army operations doctrine states, "The Army's operational concept is *full-spectrum operations: Army forces combine offense, defense, and stability or civil support operations as part of an interdependent joint force to seize, retain, and exploit the initiative.*"

8. Robert M. Gates, Speech: National Defense University, Washington, DC, September 29, 2008, available from [www.defenselink.mil/speeches/speech.aspx?speechid=1279](http://www.defenselink.mil/speeches/speech.aspx?speechid=1279), accessed October 2, 2008.

9. Thomas Donnelly and Frederick Kagan, *Ground Truth: The Future of U.S. Land Power*, Washington, DC: The AEI Press, 2008, p. 13.

10. Robert M. Gates, "A Balanced Strategy: Reprogramming the Pentagon for a New Age," *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2009, available from [www.foreignaffairs.org/20090101faessay88103/robert-m-gates/how-to-reprogram-the-pentagon.html](http://www.foreignaffairs.org/20090101faessay88103/robert-m-gates/how-to-reprogram-the-pentagon.html), accessed December 9, 2008.

11. See the forthcoming CSIS monograph by the author entitled *Shifting Emphasis: Leaders, Strategists, and Operators in an Era of Persistent Unconventional Conflict*. In that work, the author describes the primacy of risk and conflict management over risk and conflict resolution in unconventional conflicts. For example, the author observes, "Unconventional conflicts and contingencies are better seen as management challenges. Few of them are ripe for decisive resolution. Therefore, endeavors against them from the tactical to strategic levels will be marked by perpetual pursuit of outcomes that are 'good enough' versus 'ideal'."

12. There is mounting evidence that the new administration will need to cut defense spending. It appears that many experts believed this regardless of which presidential candidate was elected. See, for example, John Keller, "Defense Spending to Decrease Over the Next Decade; Procurement and RDT&E to Be Hit Hard," *Military & Aerospace Electronics*, available from [mae.pennet.com/display\\_article/309460/32/NEWS/none/none/1/Defense-spending-to-decrease-](http://mae.pennet.com/display_article/309460/32/NEWS/none/none/1/Defense-spending-to-decrease-)

*over-next-decade;-procurement-and-RDT&E-to-be-hit-hard/*, accessed November 10, 2008; Thom Shanker and Christopher Drew, "Pentagon Expects Cuts in Military Spending," *New York Times*, available from [www.nytimes.com/2008/11/03/washington/03military.html?partners=rssnyt&emc=rss](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/03/washington/03military.html?partners=rssnyt&emc=rss), accessed November 10, 2008; and Nancy A. Youssef, "Financial Crisis Could Put Crimp in Defense Spending Plans," *McClatchy Newspapers*, available from [www.mcclatchydc.com/227/story/53674.html](http://www.mcclatchydc.com/227/story/53674.html), accessed November 10, 2008.

13. Carter, p. 2.

14. See Department of Defense, Joint Publication 1-02, *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, April 12, 2001 (as amended through August 26 2008), available from [www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/new\\_pubs/jp1\\_02.pdf](http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/new_pubs/jp1_02.pdf), accessed October 6, 2008, p. 574.

15. For detailed discussions of "hybrid war" and "hybrid challenges," see Frank G. Hoffman, *Conflict in the 21st Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars*, Arlington, VA: Potomac Institute for Policy Studies, available from [www.potomacinstitute.org/publications/Potomac\\_HybridWar\\_0108.pdf](http://www.potomacinstitute.org/publications/Potomac_HybridWar_0108.pdf), accessed November 5, 2008; and Nathan Freier, *Strategic Competition and Resistance in the 21st Century*, Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, May 2007, available from [www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/display.cfm?PubID=782](http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/display.cfm?PubID=782).

16. Steven Metz and Frank Hoffman, "Restructuring America's Ground Forces: Better, Not Bigger," Muscatine, IO: The Stanley Foundation, September 2007, p. 7.

17. Nonmilitary threats, in this context, are security challenges, activities, capabilities, or circumstances whose origin and form have little in common with traditional armed forces or traditional armed conflict. They will often and even commonly be quite violent. Nonmilitary does not necessarily mean nonstate or disordered.

18. Gates, "A Balanced Strategy."

19. The author first explored a “new unconventional status quo” in the forthcoming CSIS monograph cited earlier.

20. The author describes “threats of purpose and context” in more detail in both the CSIS and PKSIOI/SSI publications cited earlier.

21. On the concept of “excessive overmatch,” see HQDA, *Army Strategic Planning Guidance 2005*, available from <https://army.mil/references/ASPG14Jan05.doc>, accessed November 13, 2008, p. 7. The concept of excessive overmatch grew out of the development process for the 2005 National Defense Strategy. The Army itself acknowledged the concept of excessive overmatch when it observed, in its 2005 strategic planning guidance, “In some areas we have accrued excessive conventional overmatch and will continue to make well-informed decisions to convert excessive overmatch to more relevant capabilities across the active and reserve components.”

22. Here the terms “environment” or “environmental factors” imply those adverse political, social, economic, and physical circumstances that emerge to threaten U.S. interests in the absence of a coherent hostile strategic design.

23. See endnote 4; and the PKSIOI/SSI and CSIS monographs by the author cited earlier.

24. See the forthcoming CSIS monograph by the author.

25. For an expansive discussion of these subjects, see Freier, *Strategic Competition and Resistance in the 21st Century*.

26. For a description of the Chinese concept of “unrestricted warfare,” see Qiao Liang and Wang Xiansui, *Unrestricted Warfare*, Beijing, China: PLA Literature and Arts Publishing House, February 1999, available from [www.terrorism.com/documents/TRC-Analysis/unrestricted.pdf](http://www.terrorism.com/documents/TRC-Analysis/unrestricted.pdf), accessed October 8, 2008.

27. These conditions will be addressed below by the author in a description of a new spectrum of conflict.

28. Michael Mullen, "Striking Balance on National Defense," *The Ambassadors Review*, Fall 2008, available from [www.americanambassadors.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=Publications.article&articleid=148](http://www.americanambassadors.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=Publications.article&articleid=148), accessed December 3, 2008.

29. The term "malign" has become the theme du jour in Iraq when describing Iranian influence. Yet, "malign" influence to the United States and its coalition partners likely has never been reconciled with the Iraqi's concept of "malign" influence.

30. *Ibid.* See also Freier, *Strategic Competition and Resistance in the 21st Century*.

31. Gates, Speech: National Defense University.

32. See Freier, *Known Unknowns*, pp. 29-31.

33. Donnelly and Kagan, 2008, pp. 28-29. In their delineation of "enemies," "threats," and "challenges," Donnelly and Kagan list these among their "current and potential challenges for which [the United States] must be ready."

34. Joby Warrick, "Experts See Security Risks in Downturn: Global Financial Crisis May Fuel Instability and Weaken U.S. Defense," *Washington Post*, November 15, 2008, p. 1.

35. *Ibid.*

36. For a discussion of "stabilization and transformation," see Steven Metz and Raymond Millen, "Intervention, Stabilization, and Transformation Operations: The Role of Landpower in the New Strategic Environment," *Parameters*, Spring 2005, available from [findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_m0IBR/is\\_1\\_35/ai\\_n15674069/print?tag=artBrody:col1](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0IBR/is_1_35/ai_n15674069/print?tag=artBrody:col1), accessed November 6, 2008.

37. These often stem from "best-case," "most manageable-case," or preventive planning.

38. Andrew F. Krepinevich, *Strategy for the Long Haul: An Army at the Crossroads*, Washington, DC: The Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2008, available from [www.csbaonline.org/4Publications/PubLibrary/R.20081117.An\\_Army\\_At\\_The\\_](http://www.csbaonline.org/4Publications/PubLibrary/R.20081117.An_Army_At_The_)

*Cro/R.1117.An\_Army\_At\_The\_Cro.pdf*, accessed November 19, 2008, pp. 4-5.

39. See HQDA, February 2008, p. 1-2. Some version of the phrase “fighting and winning the nation’s wars” remains common in doctrinal pronouncements by the U.S. military. For example, Paragraph 1-1 of the Army’s new operations field manual, FM 3-0, opens with the following: “Army forces are the decisive component of land warfare in joint and multinational operations. *The Army organizes, trains, and equips its forces to fight and win the nation’s wars and achieve directed national objectives.*” Emphasis added here by the author.

40. Antulio J. Echevarria II, *Globalization and the Nature of War*, Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, March 2003, p. 21.

41. Donnelly and Kagan, 2008, p. 12.

42. Freier, *Strategic Competition and Resistance in the 21st Century*, pp. 20-27.

43. See Gates, September 2008.

44. *Ibid.* The current Secretary of Defense agrees. He recently observed, “Let’s be honest with ourselves. The most likely catastrophic threats . . . are more likely to emanate from failing states than from aggressive states.”

45. See Department of Defense Directive Number 3000.05, SUBJECT: Military Support to Stability, Security, Transition, and Reconstruction (SSTR) Operations, Washington, DC: Department of Defense, November 28, 2005, p. 2.

46. See Department of Defense Directive Number 3000.07, December 1, 2008, p. 2, available from *smallwarsjournal.com/documents/dodidirective.pdf*, accessed December 3, 2008. In the manner of the early DoD Directive on stability operations, the new irregular warfare directive asserts, “It is DoD policy to: a. Recognize that IW is as strategically important as traditional warfare.”

47. Metz and Hoffman, p. 2.

48. See J-7 Operational Plans and Interoperability Directorate, *Military Operations Other Than War*, available from [www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jrm/mootw.pdf](http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jrm/mootw.pdf), accessed November 17, 2008, p. 9. The now dated and admittedly limited conception of MOOTW is instructive in this regard. A Joint Staff briefing on MOOTW observed, "In spite of efforts to promote peace, conditions within a country or region may result in armed conflict. When other instruments of national power are unable to influence a deteriorating or potentially hostile situation, military force or threat of its use may be required. The focus of US military operations during such periods is to support national objectives – to deter war and return to a sustainable state of peace."

49. A recent *New York Times* op-ed underscored this point. See "A Military for a Dangerous New World," *New York Times*, November 16, 2008, p. WK11. The editorial observed, "But the Army's structure and institutional bias are still weighted toward conventional war-fighting. Some experts fear that, as happened after Vietnam, the Army will in time reject the recent lessons and innovations."

50. See *Joint Vision 2020*, Washington, DC: Department of Defense, available from [www.fs.fed.us/fire/doctrine/genesis\\_and\\_evolution/source\\_materials/joint\\_vision\\_2020.pdf](http://www.fs.fed.us/fire/doctrine/genesis_and_evolution/source_materials/joint_vision_2020.pdf), accessed November 25, 2008, p. 6. Italics added by the author.

51. See *Quadrennial Defense Review Report*, Washington, DC: Department of Defense, available from [www.defenselink.mil/qdr/report/Report20060203.pdf](http://www.defenselink.mil/qdr/report/Report20060203.pdf), accessed September 26, 2008. The 2006 QDR recognized this explicitly when it observed, "The Department of Defense conducted the 2006 *Quadrennial Defense Review* (QDR) in the 4th year of a long war, a war that is irregular in its nature."

52. See HQDA, February 2008, p. 3-1. The new Army operations doctrine states, "The Army's operational concept is **full-spectrum operations: Army forces combine offense, defense, and stability or civil support operations as part of an interdependent joint force to seize, retain, and exploit the initiative.**"

53. Michele A. Flournoy and Tammy S. Schulz, "Shaping U.S. Ground Forces for the Future: Getting Expansion Right," Washington, DC: Center for a New American Security, June 2007, p. 4.

54. Jack Kem, "Future Face of Conflict: The Army's Doctrinal Renaissance," *World Politics Review*, available from [www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articlePrint.aspx?ID=2773](http://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articlePrint.aspx?ID=2773), accessed November 4, 2008.

55. *Ibid.*

56. *Ibid.*

57. HQDA, February 2008, p. 3-1.

58. *Ibid.*

59. Carter, p. 5.

60. Krepinevich.

61. HQDA, February 2008, p. vii.

62. Commander Todd Kiefer, "Capabilities Based Planning and Concepts," Joint Staff J-7 briefing dated September 22, 2004, available from [www.dtic.mil/jointvision/ideas\\_concepts/cpb\\_concepts.ppt](http://www.dtic.mil/jointvision/ideas_concepts/cpb_concepts.ppt), accessed November 18, 2008. Emphasis added by the author.

63. See Sandra I. Erwin, "In the Latest Pentagon Strategy, Uncertainty Rules," *National Defense Magazine, DefenseWatch*, March 2006, available from [www.nationaldefensemagazine.org/archive/2006/March/Pages/defense\\_watch3022.aspx](http://www.nationaldefensemagazine.org/archive/2006/March/Pages/defense_watch3022.aspx), accessed November 18, 2008. Erwin quotes then Principal Deputy Undersecretary of Defense Ryan Henry.

64. *2006 Quadrennial Defense Review Report*, pp. vi-vii.

65. Krepinevich, p. 65.

66. For a doctrinal depiction of the "spectrum of conflict," see HQDA, February 2008, p. 2-1.

67. Gates, January/February 2009.

68. *Ibid.*

69. Daniel L. Byman, Matthew C. Waxman, and Jeremy Shapiro, "Chapter Three: The Future of U.S. Coercive Airpower," in Zalmay Khalilzad and Jeremy Shapiro, eds., *Strategic Appraisal: United States Air and Space Power in the 21st Century*, Santa Monica, CA: The RAND Corporation, available from [www.rand.org/pubs/monograph\\_reports/MR1314/](http://www.rand.org/pubs/monograph_reports/MR1314/), accessed November 24, 2008, pp. 52-53. Byman, Waxman, and Shapiro observe: "Coercion . . . is defined as the threat of force, as well as the limited use of actual force to back up the threat. . . [C]oercion succeeds when the adversary gives in while it still has the power to resist."

70. *Ibid.*

71. A common argument against this general view is that just when the United States identified four critical areas in the *2001 Quadrennial Defense Review*, it was forced by circumstances to fight a war in a fifth region—South/Central Asia.

72. See United States Code, Title 10, Subtitle A, Chapter 2, Section 118, available from [www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/10/usc\\_sec\\_10\\_00000118--000-.html](http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/10/usc_sec_10_00000118--000-.html), accessed November 17, 2008. Precise timing and content of the QDR are enshrined in Title 10 of U.S. Code.

73. See Gates, 2008. With an eye on contemporary traditional challenges specifically, the current Secretary of Defense hinted at this when he observed, "We have ample, untapped striking power in our air and sea forces should the need arise to deter or punish aggression – whether on the Korean Peninsula, in the Persian Gulf, or across the Taiwan Strait."

74. For example, presumably this option would be less manpower-intensive. See Josh Rogin, *After War, A Military Budget Crunch Looms*, *CQ.com*, May 21, 2007, available from [public.cq.com/docs/cqt/news110-000002516524.html](http://public.cq.com/docs/cqt/news110-000002516524.html), accessed October 2, 2008. Last year, Rogin in the *Congressional Quarterly* observed,

After the Iraq War winds down and emergency defense spending subsides, the effects of long-term force structure decisions made during wartime likely will ripple through future defense budgets and could have significant implications for defense transformation. . . . With significantly fewer resources, the Pentagon would be forced to choose between paying soldiers or purchasing new weapons.

75. Shawn Brimley and Vikram Singh, "Averting the System Reboot," *Armed Forces Journal*, 2007, available from [www.armedforcesjournal.com/2007/12/2981245](http://www.armedforcesjournal.com/2007/12/2981245), accessed November 20, 2008.

76. Ryan Henry, Philip Grone, William Sullivan, "Statement to the House Armed Services Committee," June 20, 2006, available from [www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/congress/2006\\_hr/060620-henry-grone-sullivan.pdf](http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/congress/2006_hr/060620-henry-grone-sullivan.pdf), accessed November 20, 2008.

77. There are hints of this even in current Army doctrine. See, for example, U.S. Army Field Manual (FM) 3.0: *Operations*, Washington, DC: Department of the Army, February 2008, available from [downloads.army.mil/fm3-0/FM3-0.pdf](http://downloads.army.mil/fm3-0/FM3-0.pdf), accessed September 22, 2008, p. 2-10. First defining "irregular warfare" as "a violent struggle among state and nonstate actors for legitimacy and influence over a population," it then goes on to observe that "[s]pecial operations conduct most irregular warfare operations. Sometimes conventional forces support them, other times special operations forces operate alone."

78. Brimley and Singh, 2007.

79. See Greg Jaffe, "Rumsfeld Aides Seek Deep Personnel Cuts In Armed Forces to Pay for New Weaponry," *The Wall Street Journal*, August 8, 2001, available from [www.maebrussel.com/Articles%20and%20Notes/Rumsfeld%20Aides%20Seek%20Cuts%20in%20Armed%20Forces.html](http://www.maebrussel.com/Articles%20and%20Notes/Rumsfeld%20Aides%20Seek%20Cuts%20in%20Armed%20Forces.html), accessed December 15, 2008, p. A3.

80. See HQDA, February 2008, p. 2-1.

81. John T. McGrath, "The Conflict Manifold," *Air University Review*, May-June 1981, available from [www.airpower.maxwell.af](http://www.airpower.maxwell.af).

*mil/airchronicles/aureview/1981/may-jun/mcgrath.htm*, accessed November 24, 2008.

82. Jack Kem, "Future Face of Conflict: The Army's Doctrinal Renaissance," *World Politics Review*, available from *www.worldpoliticsreview.com/ArticlePrint.aspx?ID=2773*, accessed November 4, 2008.

83. The author added the "permissive"/"non-permissive" consideration after discussions with Mr. Tom Dempsey of the U.S. Army's Peacekeeping and Stability Operations Institute.

84. The author added this axis after discussions with Mr. Sam Brannen.

85. The author acknowledges his debt to CSIS's Sam Brannen, and expresses appreciation for Mr. Brannen's assistance on other aspects of the model and the discussion.

86. FATA is an acronym for "Federally Administered Tribal Areas."

87. Theresa Whelan, "Africa's Ungoverned Space—A New Threat Paradigm," available from *ftp://ftp.jhuapl.edu/nsadrethink/121905/121905\_Whelannotes.pdf*, accessed December 2, 2008. Ms. Whelan, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for African Affairs, describes physical "ungoverned and exploitable areas" as: (1) "ungoverned territories," and (2) areas of "competing governance."

88. Michele A. Flournoy, "Chapter One—Introduction: Twelve Strategy Decisions," in Michele A. Flournoy, ed., *QDR 2001: Strategy-Driven Choices for America's Security*, available from *www.ndu.edu/inss/press/qdr\_qdr\_2001/sdcascont.html*.

89. See Freier, *Known Unknowns*, p. 29. The five categories are WMD states; states possessing important strategic resources, economic capacity, or geographic leverage; large states in close proximity to the U.S. or a key U.S. ally/partner; states whose destabilization could trigger contagious instability in a key region; and allies or key strategic partners.

90. Peter Bergen and Laurie Garrett, "Report of the Working Group on State Security and Transnational Threats," Princeton, NJ: Princeton University, The Princeton Project on National Security, available from [www.princeton.edu/~ppns/conferences/reports/fall/SSTT.pdf](http://www.princeton.edu/~ppns/conferences/reports/fall/SSTT.pdf), accessed November 18, 2008, p. 9.

91. Metz and Hoffman, p. 5.

92. Gates, January/February 2009.

93. *Ibid.* Secretary Gates continues, "Whether in the midst of or in the aftermath of any major conflict, the requirement for the U.S. military to maintain security, provide aid and comfort, begin reconstruction, and prop up local governments and public services will not go away."

94. *Ibid.*, p. 7.

95. Under the most difficult circumstances, this will include the defeat of organized elements of a fallen state's traditional armed forces that, after the onset of disorder, remain under some coherent command and control.

96. Carter, p. 3.

97. *2006 Quadrennial Defense Review Report*, p. 36.

98. Carter, p. 6.

99. Metz and Hoffman, p. 2.

100. DoD, February 2006, p. 38.

101. *Ibid.*

102. Carter, p. 4. Carter identifies the conduct of "Irregular Stability Operations in Difficult Politico-Military Circumstances" as one of five critical mission areas for the future force.

103. On the latter point, see The Carr Center for Human Rights Policy and The U.S. Army Peacekeeping and Stability Operations Institute, *MARO: Mass Atrocity Response Operations, Annotated*

*Planning Framework*, Version 2.0, August 1, 2008, p. 2. According to groundbreaking work on military responses to mass human rights violations, the MARO report observes, “The MARO Project aims to equip the United States, other states, and regional and international actors with military planning tools for an effective response to genocide and mass atrocity when directed by national leadership.”

104. Carter, p. 3.

105. See HQDA, Field Manual No. 1-01, *Generating Force Support Operations*, Washington, DC: Department of the Army, April 2, 2008, available from <https://rdl.train.army.mil/soldierPortal/atia/adlsc/view/public/24657-1/FM/1-01/TOC.HTM>, accessed December 12, 2008, Preface.

106. DoD, February 2006, p. 37.

107. See HQDA, February 2008, pp. 3-12 to 3-20. Stability operations are described as military activities “conducted outside the United States in coordination with the other instruments of national power to maintain or reestablish a safe and secure environment, provide essential government services, emergency infrastructure reconstruction, and humanitarian relief” (p. 3-12). Primary civil support tasks are: provide support in response to disaster or terrorist attack; support civil law enforcement; and provide other support as required (p. 3-18). The “purposes of civil support tasks” are to: save lives; restore essential services; maintain or restore law and order; protect infrastructure and property; maintain and restore local government; shape the environment for interagency success (p. 3-18). Finally, the Army defines its role in homeland defense, as “protect[ing] the United States from direct attack or a threat by hostile armed forces” (p. 3-19). All of these are consistent with the author’s description of the *homeland defense and security* mission set. Colonel Lorelei Copen, Chief of the Policy Branch at the U.S. Army’s Peacekeeping and Stability Operations Institute, was particularly helpful in the author’s conclusions here.

108. See HQDA, February 2008, p. 3-17. Army doctrine states, “Army forces perform civil support tasks under U.S. law. However, U.S. law carefully limits actions that military forces,

particularly regular Army units, can conduct in the United States and its territories.”

109. *Ibid.*

110. *Ibid.*, p. 35.

111. *Ibid.*, p. 36.