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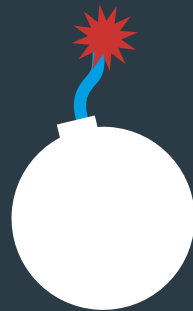
FROM
SUPERPOWER
TO
INSURGENT

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MASTHEAD

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INTRODUCING TNSR'S THIRD ISSUE: FROM SUPERPOWER TO INSURGENT

Francis J. Gavin

What role do academic journals play in fostering and disseminating new knowledge and understanding of national and international security, statecraft, and strategy? At the *Texas National Security Review*, we ask ourselves this question a lot. There are so many good outlets generating terrific work. How can we best contribute?

This issue of the journal demonstrates at least three ways we believe we can make a difference.

First, academic outlets should provide a platform for people in various points in their career. Melvyn Leffler is the dean of Cold War studies, whose work has shaped how we understand international relations after World War II. Senior scholars can offer broad-gauged, synthetic approaches to important questions, as Leffler does here in his reflections on Ronald Reagan and the Cold War. This pairs well with the work of emerging scholars like Adam Liff, who brings new eyes and penetrating insight to the issues surrounding national security reform in Shinzo Abe's Japan. Our hope is to balance the vigor of fresh insights with the wisdom gained from experience, placing rising stars together with established voices.

The second way our journal can be helpful is by bringing divergent intellectual communities together into conversation. In this issue, we are publishing historians, strategists, policymakers, and political scientists of various stripes. Crossing disciplines and bridging gaps is increasingly difficult, but well worth striving for to improve the vibrancy and impact of debates on international affairs. For example, Theo Farrell's impressive exploration of the sources of the Taliban's success would not have been possible without his many years of direct engagement with Western military officers, Afghan officials, and even Taliban leaders. His work cannot easily be defined as belonging to one discipline or another. In a related, but different vein, the important work of dialogue and cross-fertilization between various communities is highlighted in Julie Smith's description of her efforts to engage audiences about America's role in the world beyond the usual suspects in the beltway and ivory tower.

The third contribution is temporal. The articles in this issue blend rigorous exploration of the past as well as contemporary challenges with an eye to understanding the future. The best offer insight on all three: Whether it is the future of statecraft and world order, as laid out by Michael J. Mazarr and Michael Kofman, the fascinating challenges and opportunities of artificial intelligence presented in Michael Horowitz's sharp analysis, Kori Schake's insights into the possibility of a Cold War with China, or Patrick McEachern's cautions on the promises and perils of negotiations with North Korea, this issue reminds us that the future is best viewed through a comprehensive and sophisticated understanding of what is happening right now and what has come before.

We won't always achieve the right balance, and as a journal that includes peer-reviewed contributions, our content is shaped by what people send us and how our referees respond. We are committed, however, to working diligently to expand the range and diversity of voices and ideas contributing to our understanding of strategy and statecraft. To accomplish this mission, we need your help. If you haven't already, please consider submitting your best work to the *Texas National Security Review*.

Francis J. Gavin is the Chairman of the Editorial Board of the Texas National Security Review. *He is the Giovanni Agnelli Distinguished Professor and the inaugural director of the Henry A. Kissinger Center for Global Affairs at SAIS-Johns Hopkins University. His writings include* Gold, Dollars, and Power: The Politics of International Monetary Relations, 1958-1971 (*University of North Carolina Press, 2004*) *and* Nuclear Statecraft: History and Strategy in America's Atomic Age (*Cornell University Press, 2012*).
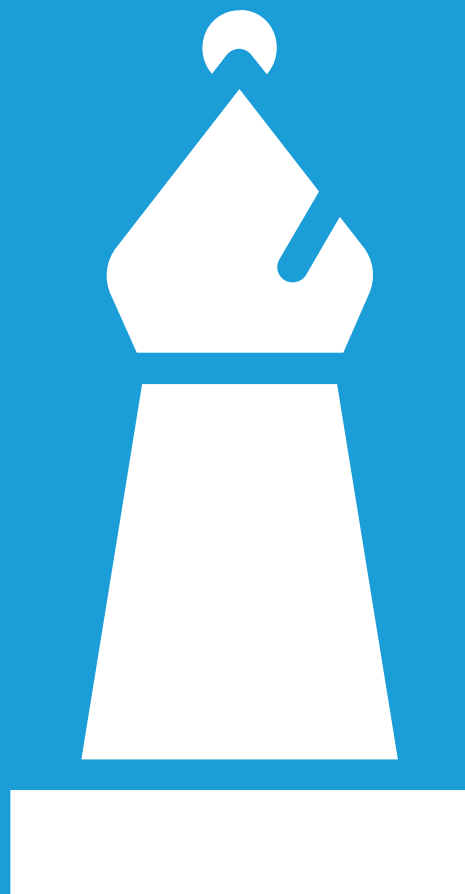
The Scholar

This section is dedicated to publishing the work of scholars. Our aim is for articles published in this journal to end up on university syllabi and policy desks from Washington to Tokyo, and to be cited as the foundational research and analysis on world affairs.

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Japan's Security Policy in the "Abe Era": Radical Transformation or Evolutionary Shift?

JAPAN'S SECURITY POLICY IN THE "ABE ERA": RADICAL TRANSFORMATION OR EVOLUTIONARY SHIFT?

Adam P. Liff

Widely considered Japan's most powerful prime minister in decades, Shinzo Abe has responded to a changing security environment in the Asia-Pacific — including an increasingly powerful and assertive China and a growing North Korean nuclear threat — by pursuing ambitious and controversial reforms. These have been aimed at strengthening executive control over foreign policy decision-making and bolstering deterrence through an expansion of the Japan Self-Defense Forces' roles, missions, and capabilities within and beyond the U.S.-Japan alliance. Those reforms that his administration has achieved have invited claims that Abe is taking Japan on a radical path away from its postwar "pacifism." However, a systematic analysis of both change and continuity during the Abe administration reveals that many of these reforms build on longer-term evolutionary trends that predate Abe and have attracted support from moderates within and outside his conservative Liberal Democratic Party. Just as importantly, several core pillars of Japan's remarkably self-restrained defense posture remain in place, while Abe has pulled back from some of the more ambitious reforms he has championed in the past. Both points have important implications for Japan's strategic trajectory, international relations in East Asia, and the U.S.-Japan alliance. Barring major external or domestic political structural change, Japan's evolutionary reform trajectory is likely to continue. Yet the failure, so far, of Abe's government to achieve its long-coveted, most ambitious reforms also indicates the persistent headwinds future prime ministers can expect to face.

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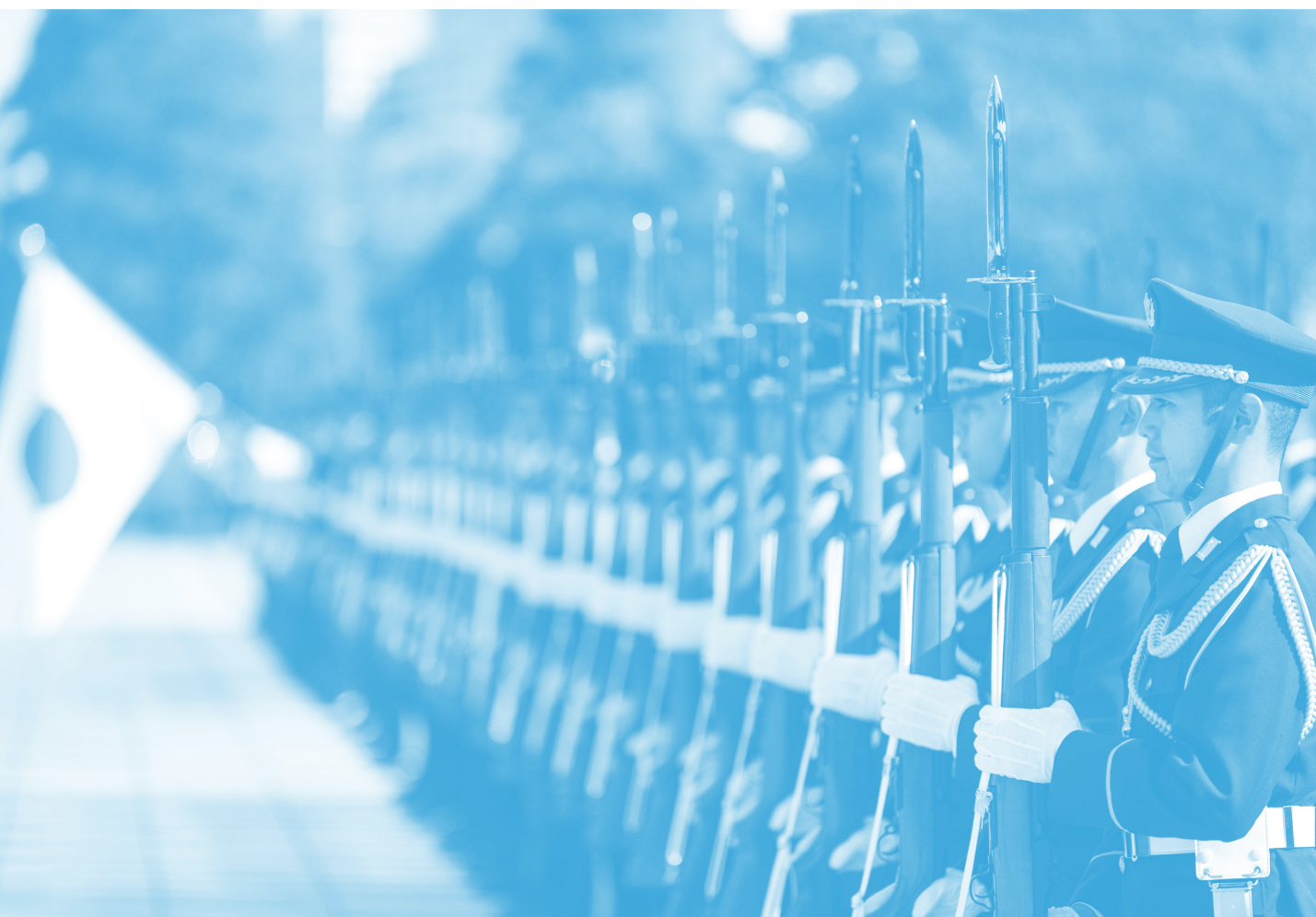
As prime minister I intend to demonstrate my resolution to defend fully people's lives, our territory, and our beautiful ocean. Right now, at this very moment, the Japan Coast Guard and members of the Self-Defense Forces are defending Japan's seas and skies off the coast of the Senkaku Islands. The security of Japan is not someone else's problem; it is a crisis that exists right there and now.[1]

–Shinzo Abe

With these words, part of the opening statement at his inaugural press conference after the December 2012 landslide election victory that returned him and his Liberal Democratic Party (LDP)-Komeito ruling coalition to power, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe made clear that national security reforms would be a top priority for his administration. In the more than five years since, Abe has exercised decisive and pragmatic leadership. From a significant loosening of a decades-old ban on arms exports to a landmark Cabinet decision allowing Japan the limited exercise of collective self-defense, the Abe administration's shifts on security policy have captured global attention.[2] They have also prompted domestic and international controversy. Internal institutional reforms that are less conspicuous but no less significant, especially the establishment of Japan's first National Security Council, have transformed the country's decision-making on security policy.

Given the Abe government's concrete achievements, the prime minister's reputation as an ideological nationalist, and his repeatedly expressed desire for more ambitious changes, there is a robust debate about whether Abe — Japan's longest-serving prime minister since 1972 — has "radically" transformed Japan's security policy and spurred a fundamentally new trajectory for it, as some leading scholars contend.[3] Beyond important

policy shifts directed by the Abe administration, experts have also judged the institutional reforms "the most ambitious reorganization of Japan's foreign and security policy apparatus since the end of World War II."[4] For others, Abe's significant impact on policy suggests that scholars should pay much greater attention to the personal attributes and agency of individual leaders as a variable.[5] Wherever one stands in the debate about the particular significance of his achievements, it is clear that Abe, now in his sixth year in office, is one of Japan's most consequential postwar prime ministers.

With major geopolitical and economic shifts underway in the increasingly prosperous yet potentially volatile Asia-Pacific, a sober and comprehensive assessment of change and continuity in the Abe era, as well as its significance for Japan's long-term strategic trajectory, is crucial. Since at least the mid-1960s, Japan's advanced economy and technological strengths have granted it a unique status as the region's "could-be" military great power. Yet baked into its post-1945 resurgence is the "pacifist" Article 9 of its U.S.-drafted occupation-era Constitution. This article, which has never been amended, says that Japan "forever renounce[s] war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes," and pledges that "land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained."[6] Although the practical policy implications of Article 9 have shifted significantly over 70 years of intense political contestation and in response to perceived changes in Japan's external threat environment, significant self-imposed constraints remain on what Japan's Self-Defense Forces (JSDF), established in 1954, can and cannot do — especially concerning use of lethal force — and what capabilities it can and cannot procure.[7] In what one influential foreign policy voice once called Japan's "grand experiment," since 1945 the country has unilaterally eschewed

"military power politics," robust offensive capabilities, an indigenous nuclear deterrent, and a regional or global security role commensurate with its potential.[8] While gradually developing its robust self-defense forces, for security Tokyo has depended significantly on extended deterrence provided by Washington — its only formal treaty ally. Japan's security trajectory, therefore, has direct implications for the United States and its own posture in Asia. The U.S. Navy's largest forward-deployed fleet and 50,000 personnel from across the U.S. military are based in Japan.

In light of Japan's relatively passive postwar defense posture, a "radical," or fundamental, transformation of the sort some allege is already underway would have significant potential to transform international relations across the Asia-Pacific, especially if other regional players — including the United States — adjust their own postures in response. The region's geopolitical terrain is already shifting. It includes an increasingly powerful and assertive China that the Trump administration's *National Security Strategy* explicitly calls "revisionist"; a nuclear-armed North Korea on the cusp of fielding a credible intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) that H.R. McMaster, the national security adviser who departed the Trump administration this spring, referred to as "the most destabilizing development[...] in the post-World War II period"[9] and deepening concerns about the long-term U.S. commitment to regional primacy, alliances, and the rules-based liberal international order upon which Japan has staked its security. This environment presents an opportune moment to assess the significance of the national security reforms Abe's

administration has enacted since 2012.

This article builds on earlier studies debating the extent and pace of the "normalization" of Japan's defense posture since the end of the Cold War.[10] It focuses on developments since Abe's return to the prime minister's office in 2012 and soberly engages the following core questions: With more than five years of hindsight and a landmark package of security legislation in effect since 2016, how transformative are the Abe government's reforms in the area of national security? In light of what Japan's leaders define as an increasingly "severe" regional security environment, how much has actually changed, and where are there continuities? How has Abe's government been able to pursue its ambitious security agenda while avoiding

> **[I]t is clear that Abe, now in his sixth year in office, is one of Japan's most consequential postwar prime ministers.**

the domestic political backlash that threatened previous prime ministers? After all, trying to do too much too quickly played a major role in the collapse of Abe's first administration, from 2006 to 2007.

This article is divided into three sections aimed at answering the three aforementioned questions, which, in turn, will help answer a more fundamental question: whether the Abe government represents a major turning point in the trajectory of postwar Japan.[11] The first section focuses on change. It identifies and assesses the significance of major

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1   Shusho Kantei, *Abe naikaku sori daijin shunin kisha kaiken [Prime Minister Abe's inaugural press conference]*, Dec. 26, 2012. http://www.kantei. go.jp/jp/96_abe/statement/2012/1226kaiken.html.

2   For an overview of the former, see Heigo Sato, "From the 'Three Principles of Arms Exports' to the 'Three Principles of Defense Equipment Transfer,'" *AJISS-Commentary*, no. 197, May 14, 2014, http://www.iips.org/en/publications/data/AJISS-Commentary197.pdf. For the latter, see Adam P. Liff, "Policy by Other Means: 'Collective Self-Defense' and the Politics of Japan's Postwar Constitutional (Re-)Interpretations," *Asia Policy* 24 (2017): 139-172, http://nbr.org/publications/asia_policy/free/ap24/AsiaPolicy24_Liff_July2017.pdf.

3   Christopher W. Hughes, *Japan's Foreign and Security Policy under the "Abe Doctrine": New Dynamism or New Dead End?* (Basingstoke, U.K.: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2015); Christopher W. Hughes, "Japan's Strategic Trajectory and Collective Self-Defense: Essential Continuity or Radical Shift?" *Journal of Japanese Studies* 43, no. 1 (2017): 93–126, https://muse.jhu.edu/article/646942.

4   Eric Heginbotham and Richard Samuels, "Will Tokyo's Arms Exports Help or Hurt U.S Interests in Asia?" *Cipher Brief*, July 14, 2017, https://www. thecipherbrief.com/will-tokyos-arms-exports-help-or-hurt-u-s-interests-in-asia.

5   Giulio Pugliese, "Kantei Diplomacy? Japan's Hybrid Leadership in Foreign and Security Policy," *Pacific Review* 30, no. 2 (2017): 152–168, 153, doi.1 0.1080/09512748.2016.1201131.

6   The Constitution of Japan, Nov. 3, 1946, https://japan.kantei.go.jp/constitution_and_government_of_japan/constitution_e.html

7   Liff, "Policy by Other Means."

8   Kei Wakaizumi, "Japan's Role in a New World Order," *Foreign Affairs* 51, no. 2 (1973), https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/asia/1973-01-01/ japans-role-new-world-order.

9   The White House, *National Security Strategy of the United States*, December 2017, https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/ uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf; Uri Friedman, "The World According to H.R. McMaster," *Atlantic*, Jan. 9, 2018. https://www. theatlantic.com/international/archive/2018/01/hr-mcmaster-trump-north-korea/549341/.

10   Influential studies include Thomas U. Berger, "Alliance Politics and Japan's Postwar Culture of Antimilitarism," in *The U.S.-Japan Alliance: Past, Present, and Future*, ed. Michael J. Green and Patrick M. Cronin (New York: Council on Foreign Relations Press, 1999), 190–207; Michael J. Green, *Japan's Reluctant Realism: Foreign Policy Challenges in an Era of Uncertain Power* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001); Jennifer M. Lind, "Pacifism or Passing the Buck?: Testing Theories of Japanese Security Policy," *International Security* 29, no. 1 (2004): 92–121, https://www.jstor. org/stable/4137548?seq=1 - page_scan_tab_contents; Richard J. Samuels, *Securing Japan: Tokyo's Grand Strategy and the Future of East Asia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007); Andrew Oros, *Normalizing Japan: Politics, Identity, and the Evolution of Security Practice* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008). More recently, see Michael J. Green, *Japan is Back: Unbundling Abe's Grand Strategy* (Sydney: Lowy Institute, December 2013); Sheila A. Smith, *Japan's New Politics and the U.S.-Japan Alliance* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, July 2014); Adam P. Liff, "Japan's Defense Policy: Abe the Evolutionary," *Washington Quarterly* 38, no. 2 (May 2015): 79–99, https://doi.org/10.1080/016366 0X.2015.1064711; Hughes, *Japan's Foreign and Security Policy*; Andrew Oros, *Japan's Security Renaissance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017).

11   This question captured the major theme of a February 2018 conference on "Japan under the Abe Government" held at Stanford University's Shorenstein Asia-Pacific Research Center, at which an earlier version of this manuscript was presented.

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reforms relevant to national security since 2012 in two areas: policy and domestic institutions. Although the former typically attracts most of the attention, the two are inextricably linked. Constraints imposed by domestic institutions have, for generations, impeded postwar prime ministers from seeking more transformative policy shifts. The second section focuses on continuity. It baselines Abe-era reform efforts in the trends that were present before he returned to office, and highlights persistent pillars of Japan's security posture, several of which the Abe administration has tried, but thus far failed, to overturn. Acknowledging such oft-overlooked "dogs that didn't bark" is crucial for a balanced understanding of Japan's strategic trajectory, and to avoid overstating the pace and scale of the shifts that are underway, as well as the extent to which they are attributable specifically to Abe. To better understand how Abe's government has succeeded where previous administrations (including his own a decade ago) have failed, this study's third section aims to develop a nuanced explanation of the complex external and domestic factors at play. The interaction of these factors has effectively opened political space for the Abe government to go further and faster than its predecessors, yet it has also compelled it to significantly moderate or, in some

cases, abandon key reform objectives. That said, this article's conclusion identifies several policy areas where regional vicissitudes render major shifts more likely than ever before, though by no means inevitable.

This study finds that national security reforms under Abe, in the aggregate, constitute a significant and historic shift for Japan, but also are a pragmatic and evolutionary response to Japan's changing security environment. Important features of this reform program include the centralization of national security decision-making in the executive, the rationalization of force structure and posture to more effectively confront perceived threats, a "doubling-down" on the U.S.-Japan alliance coupled with an effort to expand Japan's role within it, and the gradual deepening of Japan's security ties with third parties.

Though Abe's government has achieved several of its coveted reforms, several other findings have significant implications for Japan's trajectory in a post-Abe era. First, nearly six years into his second term, the story of security reforms since 2012 is hardly "all about Abe." Most of the recent national security shifts build on longer-term trends that predate Abe and attracted support from moderates within and outside his own party. This strongly suggests that idiosyncratic factors such as the

conservative Abe's widely cited "ideology" and "nationalism" are acting, at most, as second-order drivers. Although Abe's decisive leadership has been significant, his agenda also seems to have benefited from his being in the right place at the right time. Second, fundamental and longstanding — though often overlooked — constraints on Japan's defense posture remain in place. On issues such as Article 9 revision, the ambitious agenda of Abe and his allies has been tempered by remarkably strong normative and domestic political headwinds. In short, barring major external or domestic political structural change, backsliding is unlikely and the current incremental reform trajectory is therefore likely to persist. Yet the failure of Abe's government so far to achieve long-desired, ambitious reforms to central pillars of Japan's security posture also demonstrates the persistent headwinds future prime ministers will continue to face.

Identifying Change: Japan's Security Shift Under Abe

A controversial figure to many in and outside Japan, Abe returned as prime minister in 2012 as one of his generation's most experienced political leaders and foreign policy experts. The grandson of Prime Minister Nobusuke Kishi (1957-1960), one of Japan's most consequential postwar leaders concerning security policy, Abe began his political career in the 1980s as secretary to his father, then-Foreign Minister Shintaro Abe. Immediately before becoming prime minister the first time, Abe the younger served as deputy (2001-2003) and then chief Cabinet secretary (2005-2006) during the administration of Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi, who held the office from 2001 to 2006. Abe's time in Koizumi's Cabinet was significantly shaped by Japan's struggle to respond to growing U.S. calls for the JSDF to do more in a post-9/11 context, both within and outside an alliance framework. Abe emerged as one of Koizumi's key advisers on security affairs and as Koizumi's anointed successor. During his first term as prime minister, from 2006 to 2007, Abe unabashedly championed ambitious national security reforms — in particular, revising the Article 9 "peace clause" of Japan's Constitution or, short of that, reinterpreting it to overturn a self-imposed ban on collective self-defense; establishing a "Japanese-style national security council" (*Nihon-ban NSC*);

and elevating Japan's Defense Agency to ministry-level status. His first administration, however, was ephemeral, collapsing after only 365 days. Abe left office in 2007 having achieved only the last of those three goals.

Five years later, voters rejected the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) after a rare three-year experiment with the LDP in the opposition, and Abe returned as prime minister. As his inaugural press conference in December 2012 makes clear — especially in the context of rapidly worsening tensions with China over contested islands in the East China Sea — Abe considered the ruling coalition's landslide victory a mandate to pursue his ambitious agenda. Yet, perhaps due to lessons learned during his first experience as prime minister, his government's national security reform effort so far appears much more pragmatic and incremental than ideological or radical. Indeed, it has repeatedly dialed back its ambitions when confronted with strong political resistance. The longevity, stability, and moderating effect of key advisers — especially chief Cabinet secretary Yoshihide Suga, who has held the position longer than anyone else in Japan's history — also appear integral. Nevertheless, the Abe government has achieved significant national security reforms.

National Security Policy Shifts

A major push by the Abe government to transform Japan's security policy and the roles and missions of its defense forces culminated in the passage of ambitious "peace and security legislation" in 2015 that formally took effect in March 2016. The legislation included revisions to 10 existing laws as well as a new International Peace Support bill.[12] Among other things, it provided the legal foundation for the controversial 2014 Cabinet decision to reinterpret the Article 9 "peace clause" to allow Japan to exercise the right of collective self-defense under specific conditions, as well as a major revision of the *Guidelines for Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation* in 2015.[13] The legislation, key aspects of which had been in the works for years, effectively accelerated the post-Cold War trend of incremental expansion of the scope of the JSDF's missions in response to Japan's changing regional and global security environment. The primary aims of the legislation were to bolster deterrence to avoid armed conflict, especially through strengthening

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12   For the official overview, see "Outline of the Legislation for Peace and Security," *Defense of Japan 2017*, http://www.mod.go.jp/e/publ/w_paper/pdf/2017/DOJ2017_2-3-2_web.pdf.

13   The *Guidelines* provide a general outline of the scope of and respective responsibilities for operational coordination between the allies. They have been revised in 2015, 1997, and 1978. Full texts are available here: http://www.mod.go.jp/e/d_act/anpo/.

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the U.S.-Japan alliance; to protect Japanese nationals; and to better contribute to international peace and stability under "proactive pacifism" (*sekkyokuteki heiwashugi*).[14] More specifically, the landmark security legislation had implications for three categories of JSDF operations:[15]

"Use of Force" (buryoku koshi)

The security legislation moderately expanded the conditions under which Japan's government may opt to employ the JSDF in response to an armed attack against a third country "that is in a close relationship with Japan," or for "limited" collective self-defense. Before this expansion, it was considered unconstitutional for the JSDF to use force unless responding to a direct armed attack on Japan itself. Although this change is significant, especially for the U.S.-Japan alliance, Japan's right of collective self-defense may be exercised only under three relatively strict, globally unique conditions. Most importantly, the armed attack against a third party must itself pose a "threat to [Japan's] survival" (*kuni no sonritsu*). As Japan's 2017 defense white paper states, "exercise of the right of collective self-defense is not permitted for [...] turning back an attack made against a foreign country."[16] In other words, despite the Abe Cabinet's reinterpretation of Article 9 in 2014, the expanded circumstances under which Japan may exercise the right of collective self-defense, which is afforded to all sovereign states under international law, remain limited on constitutional grounds.[17] Notwithstanding these constraints, and regardless of whether this right is ever exercised, the legislation significantly expanded opportunities for the JSDF to participate in bilateral and multilateral planning, training, and exercises. This is intended to enhance both deterrence and readiness, especially of the U.S.-Japan alliance.

Peace Support Activities

Recognizing that conflicts beyond areas surrounding Japan may have an "important influence on Japan's peace and security," the 2015 legislation also expanded the government's ability to deploy the JSDF overseas in what it calls international peace support activities, albeit primarily in noncombat roles, such as ship inspections, search-and-rescue operations, and logistical support for U.S. forces. For example, since late 2017, Japan Maritime Self-Defense Forces ships have deployed near the Korean

Japan's right of collective self-defense may be exercised only under three relatively strict, globally unique conditions.

Peninsula to forestall attempts by North Korea to bypass international sanctions.[18] This support cannot be provided in combat zones, however, and must be temporarily suspended in the event that fighting breaks out. The legislation also allows for limited use of weapons in certain situations in which JSDF personnel, or others under their supervision, come under attack. Important limitations persist in these cases, too. For example, personnel are expected to evacuate if the area becomes a combat zone.[19]

Peacetime Activities

The 2015 security legislation also enables the JSDF to engage in "asset protection" missions, or to use weapons to protect foreign (presumably, mainly U.S.) military forces involved in peacetime activities that contribute to Japan's defense, such as bilateral/multilateral exercises or intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance operations. The first such maritime escort mission occurred in May 2017, and the first aerial escort (of a U.S. B-1 strategic bomber)

followed that November.[20] The legislation also enables the use of weapons in U.N. peacekeeping operations as well as in the rescue of Japanese nationals overseas under certain conditions, including with the consent of the state in which the operation takes place.[21] As with limited collective self-defense, significant restrictions unique to Japan persist. Nevertheless, these expanded authorities have created opportunities for expanded training, exercises, and contingency planning, thereby enhancing readiness and deterrence within and outside an alliance context.[22]

Overall, the major components of the Abe government's security policies are captured in Japan's first-ever *National Security Strategy*, released in December 2013.[23] Three major pillars of the strategy are "strengthening and expanding Japan's capabilities and roles," "strengthening the Japan-U.S. Alliance," and actively promoting security cooperation with third countries in the Asia-Pacific and beyond,[24] each of which is intended to be mutually reinforcing. A brief overview of how these pillars manifest in terms of specific policies follows:

Strengthening Territorial Defense

The long-term trend of Japan's evolving national security posture — which has accelerated under Abe — has been the gradual reconfiguration of JSDF force structure and posture to strengthen deterrence, improve situational awareness, bolster missile defense, and develop more expeditionary response capabilities. At the same time, the JSDF has sought to improve coordination and interoperability across its ground, maritime, and air services, and its ability to flexibly respond to an array of traditional security threats as well as novel challenges in the "gray zone" — contingencies

that are neither a pure peacetime nor a traditional armed attack situation[25] — and in the realms of cyber and space.

Shifting Southwest

Since major diplomatic crises between Tokyo and Beijing in September 2010 and 2012, and as a significant expansion of the scope and frequency of China's military and paramilitary activities in the East China Sea and western Pacific Ocean presents new and complex challenges, Japanese defense planners have come to see Japan's remote southwestern islands, including the Senkaku Islands, which are claimed by China as the Diaoyu Islands, as more strategically significant yet also as increasingly vulnerable.[26] This operational challenge has prompted moving away from a Cold War-era defense orientation that emphasized a potential Soviet invasion through Hokkaido and toward China-centric challenges to the southwest. Building off landmark changes in the 2010 *National Defense Program Guidelines* released under the Democratic Party of Japan,[27] the Abe government's first — and so far, only — *National Defense Program Guidelines*, issued in 2013, calls for the JSDF to function as a "Dynamic Joint Defense Force" and to significantly improve its capability to deter and, if necessary, to respond effectively to "an attack on remote islands."[28] It has sought to bolster deterrence by improving intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance as well as implementing shifts to force structure and posture of the JSDF and the Japan Coast Guard to strengthen their ability to respond with speed and flexibility.[29]

In response to a surge in Chinese military and paramilitary operations near Japanese territory, a major focus of the Abe government's reorientation has been the incremental militarization of

14 Atsuhiko Fujishige, "New Japan Self-Defense Force Missions under the 'Proactive Contribution to Peace' Policy: Significance of the 2015 Legislation for Peace and Security," Japan Chair Platform, Center for International and Strategic Studies, July 21, 2016, https://www.csis.org/analysis/new-japan-self-defense-force-missions-under-%E2%80%9Cproactive-contribution-peace%E2%80%9D-policy.

15 The following breakdown is adapted from Satoru Mori, "The New Security Legislation and Japanese Public Reaction," *Tokyo Foundation*, Dec. 2, 2015, http://www.tokyofoundation.org/en/articles/2015/security-legislation-and-public-reaction.

16 "Outline of the Legislation for Peace and Security."

17 The practical implications of this reinterpretation are heavily contested, and even Abe's own rhetoric on the issue at times appears contradictory. For a sample of the debate, see Michael J. Green and Jeffrey W. Hornung, "Ten Myths About Japan's Collective Self-Defense Change," *Diplomat*, Jul. 10, 2014, https://thediplomat.com/2014/07/ten-myths-about-japans-collective-self-defense-change/; Hughes, "Japan's Strategic Trajectory and Collective Self-defense"; Liff, "Policy by Other Means."

18 "In new role, MSDF patrolling waters around Koreas to foil oil smuggling," *Japan Times*, Jan. 13, 2018, https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2018/01/13/national/previously-undisclosed-role-self-defense-force-ships-watching-north-korea-smuggling-sea/.

19 Mori, "The New Security Legislation and Japanese Public Reaction."

20 "Analysis: Low-risk mission aimed at inuring public to SDF's new role," *Asahi Shimbun*, May 2, 2017, https://article.wn.com/view-lemonde/2017/05/02/ANALYSIS_Lowrisk_mission_aimed_at_inuring_public_to_SDF_s_ne/ - /related_news; "Japan-U.S. joint operations increase amid regional uncertainty," *Yomiuri Shimbun*, March 30, 2018, http://www.standard.net/World/2018/03/30/Japan-US-joint-defense-operations-increase-amid-regional-uncertainty.

21 Mori, "The New Security Legislation and Japanese Public Reaction."

22 Japan Ministry of Defense, *Guidelines*.

23 Naikaku Kanbo, *Kokka anzen hoshō senryaku ni tsuite [About the National Security Strategy]*, Dec. 17, 2013. https://www.cas.go.jp/jp/siryou/131217anzenhoshou/nss-j.pdf.

24 Japan Ministry of Defense, *Defense of Japan 2014*, 133–38, http://www.mod.go.jp/e/publ/w_paper/2014.html.

25 Japan Ministry of Defense, *Defense of Japan 2017*, 63, http://www.mod.go.jp/e/publ/w_paper/2017.html.

26 To minimize confusion, this chapter follows U.S. Board of Geographic Names convention and refers to the contested islands as the Senkakus.

27 Japan Ministry of Defense, *National Defense Program Guidelines for FY 2011 and beyond*, Dec. 17, 2010, http://www.mod.go.jp/e/d_act/d_policy/pdf/guidelinesFY2011.pdf (English translation is provisional).

28 Japan Ministry of Defense, *National Defense Program Guidelines for FY 2014 and beyond*, Dec. 17, 2013, http://www.mod.go.jp/j/approach/agenda/guideline/2014/pdf/20131217_e2.pdf (English translation is provisional).

29 For an overview of these operations and Japan's response, see Adam P. Liff, "China's Maritime Gray Zone Operations in the East China Sea and Japan's Response," in *China's Maritime Gray Zone Operations*, ed. Ryan D. Martinson and Andrew S. Erickson (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, Forthcoming, 2018).

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Japan's remote southwestern islands, including installing radar sites and anti-ship and surface-to-air missile units; procuring rapidly deployable capabilities closer to major western JSDF bases; significantly bolstering intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance; doubling the number of F-15s stationed in Okinawa, the major southwestern hub for JSDF and U.S. forces in Japan; and, in the most distinct break with past practice, establishing Japan's first amphibious forces since 1945. Japan's new 2,100-strong Amphibious Rapid Deployment Brigade, which was formally stood up in Nagasaki in April 2018, has trained to retake remote islands occupied by foreign forces. Its establishment coincided with a major restructuring of Japan's Ground Self-Defense Forces, including the creation of a Ground Component Command tasked with controlling ground forces across Japan and bolstering their ability to deploy rapidly in various contingencies, including humanitarian assistance and disaster relief.[30] Finally, and consistent with the 2013 *National Security Strategy's* call to "enhance the capabilities of the law enforcement agencies responsible for territorial patrol activities and reinforce its maritime surveillance capabilities,"[31] the Abe government has prioritized expanding the situational awareness, presence operations, and rapid-response capabilities of the front-line Coast Guard. In particular, it has built and deployed new ships to the Coast Guard's regional headquarters in Okinawa to enable 24/7 patrols of the Senkakus, including establishing a dedicated 12-vessel Senkakus Territorial Waters Guard based in Ishigaki.[32]

Spaces to Watch

An update of *Japan's National Defense Program* Guidelines, expected later this year, may herald important additional changes. The same goes for the Mid-Term Defense Program, which was also last revised in 2013. In response to a perceived

worsening of the North Korean threat in 2017, the Abe administration recently green-lighted the purchase of two Aegis Ashore batteries.[33] Other prominent and more controversial capabilities that Japan is reportedly considering include long-range cruise missiles and the remodeling of *Izumo*-class destroyers so that F-35Bs — not just helicopters — can land on their decks. Japan's fiscal 2018 budget reportedly includes expenditures related to the introduction of some longer-range joint-strike missiles.[34] Although technically constitutional based on a 1950s government interpretation of Article 9, a long-range strike missile capable of hitting "enemy bases" in North Korea would be unprecedented.[35] So would landing U.S. F-35Bs on Japan's large "helicopter-carrying destroyers."[36] Depending on how this hypothetical policy shift is implemented, it could effectively turn *Izumo*-class destroyers into strike carriers — potentially an "offensive" (*kogekigata*) platform prohibited under a decades-old official interpretation of Article 9. It is important to emphasize, however, that these potential shifts are only under consideration. Previous governments have considered similar capabilities but ultimately decided not to pursue them.

The U.S.-Japan Alliance

Despite widespread assertions that Abe is pursuing a "nationalist" agenda, the second of three core features of his government's national security strategy has been to reinforce Japan's alliance with Washington, forged in the postwar occupation, as a foundational pillar of national security and the "cornerstone" of regional peace and stability. While bolstering U.S.-Japan defense ties is a long-term trend that predates Abe, it has accelerated since 2012. Indeed, Japan's latest defense white paper, published in 2017, devotes more than 50 pages to the topic of "strengthening the U.S.-Japan alliance."[37] Recent steps include establishing new

institutional linkages, making political and legal commitments to support one another in a wider array of contingencies, and significantly expanding joint training and exercises.

As captured in the 2015 *Guidelines for Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation*, recent institutional changes have strengthened bilateral planning, decision-making, intelligence-sharing, and flexible crisis response across a range of traditional and nontraditional scenarios (including the space and cyber domains) in peacetime, during a gray-zone contingency, or in the event of an armed attack. Less heralded but highly significant for allied coordination are the upgraded Bilateral Planning Mechanism and the new standing Alliance Coordination Mechanism, the latter of which enables frequent, real-time communication among civilian and uniformed alliance managers.[38] In 2014, as Chinese military and paramilitary operations in the East China Sea were surging and Beijing appeared to be probing U.S. commitments, President Barack Obama reaffirmed the alliance's applicability to an armed attack situation over the Senkakus. President Donald Trump reaffirmed this commitment in 2017. Key Japanese developments include the aforementioned expansion of authorities under the 2015 security legislation enabling the JSDF to come to the aid of foreign (especially U.S.) forces under attack, albeit conditionally, and to engage in a wider array of training and exercises. In 2017, the first major Abe-Trump alliance joint statement included a U.S. "commitment to the security of Japan through the full range of capabilities, including U.S. nuclear forces."[39]

Finally, the changes in the alliance over the past six years have occurred in the context of a continuing broader U.S. strategic commitment, across several administrations, to the Asia-Pacific, captured most conspicuously in the widely-cited

Obama administration's rhetoric of a "rebalance" of U.S. military forces to the region.[40] A series of U.S. administrations have deployed America's most capable military assets to the Asia-Pacific and to bases in Japan in particular. For example, the first overseas deployment of F-35s was to southwestern Japan in 2017. The United States has also expanded bilateral and trilateral training and exercises involving Japan, exported some of its most advanced platforms to Japan, and continues

> [R]ecent institutional changes have strengthened bilateral planning, decision-making, intelligence-sharing, and flexible crisis response across a range of traditional and nontraditional scenarios.

to work closely with Japan on advanced technical cooperation such as missile defense. In addition to new JSDF peacetime maritime and air escort missions, the 2015 security legislation facilitated a significant expansion of U.S.-Japan joint exercises. They increased from 19 in 2015 to 62 in 2017.[41]

Bolstering Ties with Third Parties

A third focus of national security strategy under Abe has been to build on the outreach of previous administrations and significantly expand Japan's security ties with countries other than the United States, albeit with a clear focus on U.S. security partners in the region — such as Australia, the Philippines, India, and Vietnam — as well as further abroad, e.g., the United Kingdom and France.[42] In addition to complementing U.S.-led efforts to incrementally consolidate a "web"

30 "GSDF to undergo biggest realignment since founding," *Yomiuri Shimbun*, Mar. 23, 2018, http://www.standard.net/World/2018/03/23/Japan-s-ground-defense-force-to-undergo-biggest-realignment-since-founding.

31 Cabinet Secretariat, *National Security Strategy*, December 2013, 16, http://www.cas.go.jp/jp/siryou/131217anzenhoshou/nss-e.pdf.

32 Katsuji Iwao, "Genchi rupo 11.11 Senkaku Kinpaku Kaijo Hoancho 'Ishigaki Hoanbu' wa ima" ["Frontline Report 11/11: Senkaku Strains, JCG's 'Ishigaki Security Division' Now"], FACTA, January 2017, https://facta.co.jp/article/201701028.html.

33 "Japan to expand ballistic missile defense with ground-based Aegis batteries," *Reuters*, Dec. 18, 2017, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-northkorea-missiles-japan-aegis/japan-to-expand-ballistic-missile-defense-with-ground-based-aegis-batteries-idUSKBN1ED051.

34 "Having long-range missiles a matter of deterrence," *Yomiuri Shimbun*, Mar. 31, 2018.

35 James L. Schoff and David Song, *Five Things to Know About Japan's Possible Acquisition of Strike Capability* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Aug. 14, 2017), http://carnegieendowment.org/2017/08/14/five-things-to-know-about-japan-s-possible-acquisition-of-strike-capability-pub-72710.

36 "Goeikan 'Izumo', Kuboka he zenshin [Izumo Destroyer, Progressing Toward an Aircraft Carrier]," *Jiji*, Apr. 27, 2018, https://www.jiji.com/jc/article?k=2018042701534&g=pol.

37 Japan Ministry of Defense, *Defense of Japan 2017*, http://www.mod.go.jp/e/publ/w_paper/2017.html.

38 Japan Ministry of Defense, *Guidelines for Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation*, Apr. 27, 2015, http://www.mod.go.jp/e/d_act/anpo/pdf/shishin_20150427e.pdf. For a critical overview of alliance institutions, see Jeffrey W. Hornung, *Managing the U.S.-Japan Alliance: An Examination of Structural Linkages in the Security Relationship* (Washington, D.C.: SPF USA, 2017), https://spfusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Managing-the-U.S.-Japan-Alliance.pdf.

39 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, "Joint Statement of the Security Consultative Committee," Aug. 17, 2017, https://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2017/08/273504.htm.

40 The basic contours of the strategy and emphasis on alliances as central to regional peace and stability, however, date back at least to the Clinton administration's "engage-and-balance" posture vis-à-vis China. Michael J. Green, *By More Than Providence: Grand Strategy and American Power in the Asia Pacific Since 1783* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017), 526.

41 "Japan-U.S. joint operations increase amid regional uncertainty," *Yomiuri Shimbun*, Mar. 30, 2018, http://www.standard.net/World/2018/03/30/Japan-US-joint-defense-operations-increase-amid-regional-uncertainty.

42 For a non-exhaustive list of recent agreements beyond the United States, see Reference 46 "Situations Concerning the Conclusion of Agreements" in Japan Ministry of Defense, *Defense of Japan 2017*.

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of mutually beneficial security ties among like-minded Asia-Pacific countries, Abe's initiative also demonstrates Japan's increasingly "proactive" contribution to regional security, creates opportunities for cooperation on priorities such as defense technology, and helps to emphasize Japan's support for a rules-based regional order at a moment when the United States and its allies are increasingly concerned about the challenges posed by Beijing. Especially with regard to China's policies toward territorial disputes, the Abe administration appears to see all maritime nations as having a fundamental shared interest in standing up to coercion from Beijing.[43]

As Abe emphasized in a widely cited 2013 address,

> Japan must work even more closely with the U.S., Korea, Australia and other like-minded democracies throughout the region. A rules-promoter, a commons' guardian, and an effective ally and partner to the U.S. and other democracies, are all roles that Japan MUST fulfill.[44]

The Abe administration has since continued to promote deeper Japanese and U.S. security ties with Australia, with which Japan's links have expanded significantly over the past two decades, India, and member nations of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), several of which also have territorial disputes with Beijing.[45] Last year also brought a major revival of Abe's 2007 call for a "free and open Indo-Pacific" — an initiative inspired at least in part by concerns about China's trajectory. Although the Trump administration appears to have signed on to this initiative, its concrete policy implications are as yet unclear.[46]

In this spirit, the 2015 *Guidelines for Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation* emphasize "cooperation with regional and other partners, as well as international organizations," and "the global nature of the U.S.-Japan alliance."[47] Additional manifestations of Japan's more proactive international security cooperation include enabling JSDF personnel involved in U.N. peacekeeping operations to use small arms to defend peacekeepers from other countries and to jointly protect base camps,[48] as well as expanding partner capacity building and defense technology transfers, especially with Southeast Asian nations. One example is Japan's first-ever proposal for an ASEAN-wide defense framework.[49] Japan's recent deployment as part of a U.N. peacekeeping operation to South Sudan marked the first time the JSDF was allowed to provide small arms ammunition transfers to foreign peacekeepers and exercise new protection authorities.[50] Most recently, U.S. allies Australia and Canada have announced that they will deploy from U.S. bases in Japan in support of military activities that aim to catch evaders of sanctions imposed on North Korea.[51] Visiting forces agreements and expanded bilateral exercises with other countries, such as Australia and the United Kingdom, are also reportedly under consideration and would constitute a major development.[52]

Also notable is the Abe government's move in 2014 to significantly loosen a decades-old ban on arms exports. This shift, though it has yet to bear much concrete fruit, opened up significant space for high-end defense technology cooperation with, and exports to, U.S. allies and partners. Japan's *National Security Strategy* identifies defense equipment and technology cooperation as a means to strengthen indigenous defense capabilities,

in particular by reinvigorating Japan's struggling defense industrial base, as well as strengthening the U.S.-Japan alliance.[53] High-profile results include an (ultimately unsuccessful) attempt to sell Japanese submarine technology to Australia. Tokyo has also signed defense technology cooperation agreements with various countries beyond the United States, including Britain and France.

Institutional Reforms: Strengthening Political Leadership of Decision-Making

The unifying theme of the Abe government's national security-relevant institutional reforms has been a concerted effort to consolidate executive (Cabinet-level) and prime ministerial control over foreign policy and national security decision-making. This focus is consistent with a general decades-old trend — also accelerated under Abe — of expanding prime ministerial power.[54] The goals for consolidating national security decision-making have been twofold: first, to ameliorate perceived institutional weaknesses, especially with regard to interagency coordination, strategic planning, and crisis management; and, second, to improve the government's ability to expeditiously and flexibly cope with the increasingly complex security environment, which many in Japan view as uncertain — and worsening.[55] Since 2012, Abe and the prime minister's office have played a more direct role in foreign policy decision-making than any previous administration.[56]

Establishment of Japan's National Security Council

The single most significant reform to national security-relevant institutions since 2012 has been the establishment of Japan's first National Security Council (NSC) in December 2013.[57] Announcing his

plans that February, Abe said that the NSC "control tower" would be "centered on the prime minister" and tasked with "flexible and regular discussions of diplomatic and security affairs from a strategic perspective." Its purpose would be to provide "an environment for rapid responses based on strong political leadership."[58]

Creation of the NSC was part of a much longer-term effort by previous prime ministers to more directly shape national security policy, in particular by strengthening the prime minister's office and Cabinet relative to Japan's bureaucracy, improving interagency coordination, and more directly involving JSDF officers in security policy

Creation of the NSC was part of a much longer-term effort by previous prime ministers to more directly shape national security policy.

discussions.[59] It also flows from an expansion of Japan's conception of "national security" to encompass issues related to space, cyber, and the financial system as well as terrorism, nuclear counterproliferation, and gray-zone challenges. Accordingly, Abe has frequently convened the NSC to deliberate national security issues, broadly defined, and to make decisions. The council has also facilitated interagency coordination on matters of diplomacy, security, economics, and crisis management.[60]

The NSC's most important feature is its "four-minister meeting," which brings together the prime minister, chief Cabinet secretary, minister of foreign affairs, and minister of defense for regular discussions of long- and short-term security

43 Green, *Japan Is Back*.

44 Shinzo Abe, "Japan Is Back," policy speech at Center for Strategic and International Studies, Feb. 22, 2013, https://csis-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/legacy_files/files/attachments/130222_speech_abe.pdf.

45 Michael Heazle and Yuki Tatsumi, "Explaining Australia-Japan Security Cooperation and Its Prospects: 'The Interests that Bind?'" *Pacific Review* 31, no. 1 (2018): 38–56, https://doi.org/10.1080/09512748.2017.1310750.

46 Yuki Tatsumi, "Is Japan Ready for the Quad?" *War on the Rocks*, Jan. 9, 2018, https://warontherocks.com/2018/01/japan-ready-quad-opportunities-challenges-tokyo-changing-indo-pacific/.

47 Japan Ministry of Defense, *Guidelines*.

48 "GSDF to join PKO exercise of first time under new security law," *Asahi Shimbun*, June 30, 2017, http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201706300037.html.

49 Japan Ministry of Defense, "Vientiane Vision: Japan's Defense Cooperation Initiative with ASEAN," November 2016, http://www.mod.go.jp/e/d_act/exc/vientianevision/. For an overview of recent developments, see Catharin Dalpino, "Japan-Southeast Asia Relations: Both Push and Pull: Japan Steps Up in Southeast Asia," *Comparative Connections* 19, no. 1 (May 2017): 123–130, http://cc.csis.org/2017/05/push-pull-japan-steps-southeast-asia/."

50 Michael Bosack, "What Did Japan Learn in South Sudan?" *Diplomat*, June 10, 2017, https://thediplomat.com/2017/06/what-did-japan-learn-in-south-sudan/.

51 "Australia, Canada to join surveillance on N. Korea sanctions evaders," *Mainichi Japan*, Apr. 28, 2018, https://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20180428/p2g/00m/0in/064000c.

52 Grant Wyeth, "Will Australia and Japan Finally Conclude a Visiting Forces Agreement?" *Diplomat*, Jan. 2, 2018, https://thediplomat.com/2018/01/will-australia-and-japan-finally-conclude-a-visiting-forces-agreement/.

53 Taisuke Hirose, "Japan's New Arms Export Principles: Strengthening U.S.-Japan Relations," Japan Chair Platform, Center for International and Strategic Studies, Oct. 14, 2014, https://csis-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/legacy_files/files/publication/141014_Hirose_NewArmsExportPrinciples_JapanPlatform.pdf.

54 Harukata Takenaka, "Expansion of the Power of the Japanese Prime Minister and the Transformation of the Japanese Political System," Working Paper, 2018.

55 Adam P. Liff and Andrew S. Erickson, "From Management Crisis to Crisis Management? Japan's Post-2012 Institutional Reforms and Sino-Japanese Crisis Instability," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 40, no. 5 (2017): 604–638, doi.10.1080/01402390.2017.1293530.

56 For a recent general overview of this trend drawing on English- and Japanese-language studies, see Aurelia George Mulgan, *The Abe Administration and the Rise of the Prime Ministerial Executive* (New York: Routledge, 2017), ch. 3.

57 For a focused English-language analysis of the form, function, and significance of Japan's NSC, see Adam P. Liff, "Japan's National Security Council: Policy Coordination and Political Power," *Japanese Studies* (Forthcoming).

58 Shusho Kantei, *Kokka anzen hosho kaigi no sosetsu ni kansuru yushikisha kaigi* [Meeting of Experts Concerning NSC Establishment], Feb. 15, 2013, http://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/96_abe/actions/201302/15ka_yusiki.html.

59 On related points, see Yasuhiro Matsuda and Hideki Hosono, "Nihon: Anzen Hosho Kaigi to Naikaku Kanbo [Japan: Security Council and Cabinet Secretariat]," in *NSC Kokka Anzen Hosho Kaigi*, ed. Yasuhiro Matsuda (Tokyo: Sairyusha, 2009), 279–281.

60 Ken Kotani, "Nihon-ban Kokka Anzen Hosho Kaigi (NSC) no kinoteki tokucho [Japan-style National Security Council (NSC) and its Functional Features]," *Kokusai Anzen Hosho*, March 2015, 61–75, 61–62.

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concerns. Unlike its institutional predecessors (e.g., the 1986 Security Council), Japan's NSC was set up to serve as an advisory committee and as a de facto decision-making body.[61] Having convened on a roughly weekly basis over its first four years — far outpacing that of any other postwar security institution — the council appears to be proving its mettle as a venue for regular and frequent top-level political deliberations on, and centralized leadership of, Japan's national security affairs.[62]

To support the NSC the Abe government created a National Security Secretariat in January 2014. Headed by a secretary-general and housed within the Cabinet secretariat, its staff averages 70 to 80 personnel. Most are civil servants seconded from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Defense, including some uniformed JSDF personnel. Each individual is assigned to one of six teams — three with functional and three with regional focuses. The secretary-general — widely considered Japan's de facto national security adviser — sometimes functions as Abe's personal emissary to foreign leaders.[63]

Over the past four years, the secretariat has taken the lead on interagency coordination for major national security documents, most prominently, Japan's comprehensive *National Security Strategy*. Replacing the *Basic Defense Policy*, written in 1957, and reflecting the NSC's more expansive conceptualization of national security affairs, the *National Security Strategy* runs the gamut from territorial defense to international energy and cyberspace matters. The strategy's existence and content reflect the "politics-led, top-down" whole-of-government approach that motivated the creation of the NSC. So, too, does the secretariat's function as a nexus within the Cabinet for consolidating the policies of Japan's manifold agencies into a comprehensive national strategy.[64]

After nearly five years, Japan's NSC appears to have achieved a handful of key objectives. It has done much to address long-standing issues in Japan's policy decision-making through advancing centralization, political leadership, and whole-of-government approaches to national security. For these reasons, it is already considered one of the most significant security-relevant institutional reforms in Japan's postwar history.[65]

Politicization of Bureaucratic Posts Relevant to National Security

A second defining feature of the Abe government's effort to consolidate political control of national security decision-making — one that has received less attention outside Japan — is its more assertive political review of bureaucratic personnel decisions and its willingness to intervene.[66] This effort is part of a broader push reflected in the establishment in 2014 of the Cabinet Bureau of Personnel Affairs. The bureau, which subjects high-level administrative positions (e.g., deputy vice-minister and higher) to review by the chief Cabinet secretary and prime minister, has been domestically controversial.[67] Yasuo Fukuda, a former prime minister from Abe's party, lambasted the bureau's politicization of administrative appointments as tantamount to the "ruination of the state" (*kokka no hametsu*), even calling it the Abe Cabinet's "greatest failure."[68]

Even before establishing the bureau, however, Abe had demonstrated a willingness to take a proactive role in bureaucratic appointments. Although such decisions are a matter of course in the United States and many other countries, in Japan, critics see the growing politicization of government appointments as violating well-established norms. Some of the concerns include fears of a "spoils system" or policy inconsistency, especially in light of what some refer to as the "revolving door" prime ministership — Japan had six prime ministers between 2006 and 2012. On the other hand, advocates of the Bureau of Personnel Affairs contend that ministerial control of personnel appointments has historically exacerbated pervasive bureaucratic "turf consciousness" (*nawabari no ishiki*), which in turn has incentivized powerful bureaucrats to prioritize ministerial interests over the "national interest." In short, advocates see the bureau and the NSC as necessary countermeasures to these perceived weaknesses.[69]

When it comes to national security appointments specifically, the Abe government has tapped individuals whose views and experiences appear compatible with its policy objectives. During Abe's first administration, he opted for a more indirect approach.[70] Since 2012, however, his government has been more hands-on. In 2013, the Abe administration appointed an active-duty Coast Guard officer as commandant — the first time this had ever happened. Previous commandants had been career bureaucrats with the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport, and Tourism.[71] Not coincidentally, the officer had operational experience in the waters surrounding the contested Senkaku Islands — the object of a long-running territorial dispute with Beijing that had worsened significantly by the time Abe returned to office in December 2012.[72]

Perhaps Abe's most controversial and security-policy-significant intervention was his late-2013 appointment of a new director-general of the Cabinet Legislation Bureau — the powerful body of legal experts that effectively determines the official interpretation of Japan's Constitution. Abe's decision came as he was seeking the bureau's blessing for the Cabinet's effort to effectively "reinterpret" Article 9 to make constitutional what the bureau had for decades deemed unconstitutional: the exercise of Japan's right of collective self-defense under international law.[73] Sidestepping the norm that outgoing directors-general of the Cabinet Legislation Bureau be replaced by their deputies, Abe appointed an outsider: the former head of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs's International Legal Affairs Bureau. Reportedly, this official shared Abe's view that the Cabinet had the authority to fulfill the prime minister's desire to render collective self-defense constitutional.[74] The appointment was widely criticized by opposition parties and constitutional scholars as an affront to past precedent and on constitutional grounds.[75]

Plus ça Change…? Abe's Incrementalism Amid Persistent Constraints

Although the Abe government's security policy and institutional reforms constitute significant shifts, it is important to also acknowledge the foundational security principles and policies that have remained unchanged, to avoid conflating Abe's rhetoric and his stated (or imputed) desires with *actual policy changes*, and to assess with appropriate measure the significance of specific policy shifts. Far from constituting a radical shift, even in the instances of major and significant reforms undertaken since 2012, in most cases the Abe government's successes build on longer-term efforts that predate his administration. That these shifts have, in key instances, attracted supra-partisan support — as reflected in associated developments during the leadership of the DPJ, from 2009 to 2012 — and have not fomented a major popular backlash at the ballot box suggests mainstream, if at times grudging, popular support. In the aggregate, these findings carry important implications for Japan's likely trajectory after Abe leaves office.

Policy: More Status Quo than Revisionist

When evaluating the cumulative significance of Abe-era national security revisions through a lens of continuity, rather than change, the durability of decades-old, fundamental pillars of Japan's security posture emerges as strongly as the evolutionary nature of the post-2012 changes. Especially when considered against the backdrop of the transformative changes reshaping Japan's regional security environment, the persistence of Japan's self-imposed constraints on the development and employment of military power

61 Masafumi Kaneko, "Iyoiyo shido Nihon-ban NSC [Finally…Japan-style NSC Activates]," *PHP Kenkyujo*, 2013, https://thinktank.php.co.jp/kaeruchikara/939/.

62 Liff, "Japan's National Security Council."

63 Liff, "Japan's National Security Council."

64 Kotani, "Japan-style National Security Council (NSC)," 61, 70–72; Matsuda and Saitō, "What's the Ideal for Japan's NSC?" 57.

65 Heginbotham and Samuels, "Tokyo's Arms Exports"; Liff, "Japan's National Security Council."

66 For a focused study on related issues, see Pugliese, "Kantei Diplomacy?"

67 "*Naikaku jinjikyoku, 5gatsu ni secchi* [Cabinet Personnel Bureau to be established in May]," *Nikkei Shimbun*, Apr. 11, 2014, https://www.nikkei.com/article/DGXNASFS11002_R10C14A4MM0000/; "Japan's powerful government personnel body blamed amid cronyism scandals," *Japan Times*, Mar. 24, 2018, https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2018/03/24/national/japans-powerful-government-personnel-body-blamed-amid-cronyism-scandals/.

68 "Kanryo ga kantei no kaoiro mite shigoto; Fukuda moto shusho Abe seiken hihan [Bureaucrats taking cues from Kantei, former PM Fukuda criticizes Abe administration]," *Tokyo Shimbun*, Aug. 3, 2017, http://www.tokyo-np.co.jp/article/politics/list/201708/CK2017080302000136.html.

69 "Seijika shudo de kanryo no jinji wo ugokasu 'naikaku jinjikyoku' tte nani? [What is this cabinet personnel bureau (enabling) politicians' leadership of bureaucratic personnel affairs?]," *Page*, Apr. 16, 2014, https://thepage.jp/detail/20140416-00000004-wordleaf.

70 For some examples from the 2006-2007 period, see Pugliese, "Kantei Diplomacy?" esp. 158–160.

71 "Kaijo Hoanchokan ni hatsu no genba shusshin [First-ever JCG commandant from the front lines]," *Nikkei Shimbun*, Jul. 18, 2013.

72 Yuji Sato, "The Japan Coast Guard protects the Senkaku Islands to the last," *Discuss Japan* 35, Oct. 18, 2016, http://www.japanpolicyforum.jp/archives/diplomacy/pt20161018235004.html.

73 Though the U.N. Charter has afforded all sovereign states this right since the 1950s, the Cabinet Legislation Bureau had previously interpreted Article 9 to allow the exercise of individual self-defense only, stipulating that although Japan had the *right* under international law to exercise collective self-defense, doing so would be unconstitutional.

74 "Abe's Legal Aide on Defense Reform Steps down due to Ill Health," *Kyodo*, May 16, 2014.

75 For an overview of Article 9's evolving interpretation over time, including this particular development specific to the 2014 reinterpretation, see Liff, "Policy by Other Means."

is striking. Appreciating these external factors and internal limits is essential to understanding Japan's strategic trajectory, as well as the prospects for major change moving forward. On key issues where Abe's government has sought major changes and faced domestic political resistance, it has either moderated its ambitions significantly, such as introducing globally unique limitations on exercising collective self-defense, or abandoned them, as was the case with collective security. When it comes to fundamental mainstays of Japan's national security — such as the centrality of the U.S.-Japan alliance or Japan's non-nuclear principles — continuity is the defining feature of government policy. Absent more fundamental changes to these core pillars, the idea that the Abe era thus far represents a radical inflection point in Japan's postwar security trajectory loses significant credibility.

First, and most essentially, Article 9's original text remains untouched. Despite repeated declarations since 2012 that amending Article 9 is his government's "historic task," Abe has not only failed to achieve revisions, but by 2017 had dialed back his stated ambitions to such a degree that he was prominently criticized within his own Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) for abandoning past LDP positions.[76] The Abe government's plan, announced in May 2017, aims to leave Article 9's existing clauses untouched and proposes adding a new clause that states merely that the "existence" of the JSDF is constitutional.[77] Since the JSDF has existed for 64 years, and an overwhelming majority of the Japanese public already believes it is constitutional, one is hard-pressed to conceive of a less ambitious revision. Furthermore, though to many contemporary observers the first revision of Japan's 1947 Constitution seems more likely than ever before, public opinion remains, at best, ambivalent.[78] Faced with various domestic political headwinds — including the reemergence of festering, though unrelated, scandals in spring 2018 — it is unclear whether Abe's government will be able to achieve even the modest addition it proposed last year.

Article 9 is the linchpin of Japan's national security policy, and without a more ambitious revision of its first and/or second clauses, other core aspects of national security policy are far less likely to be radically changed. The persistence of Article 9 in its current form is both a symptom and cause of Japan's continued reluctance to employ JSDF personnel overseas, especially in operations that may require the use of lethal force. Since 1954, no JSDF personnel have died in combat. Even after six years of Abe's leadership and changes, globally unique conditions remain on the use of force outside an unambiguous armed attack on Japan, and "exclusive defense" (*senshu boei*) remains Japan's "fundamental policy."[79] To be sure, the Cabinet's 2014 reinterpretation of Japan's Constitution to enable the "limited" exercise of collective self-defense represents a historic policy shift. But even under the new interpretation, the Abe government agreed to impose three strict conditions bounding the circumstances under which Japan could actually exercise its collective self-defense right under international law. Most significantly, the armed attack suffered by the other state must itself pose an existential threat *to Japan* (*kuni no sonritsu*). What's more, in the debate leading up to the Cabinet's decision, Abe abandoned his hand-picked advisory panel's recommendation to enable the JSDF to use force in U.N. Security Council-authorized collective security operations (such as the 1991 Persian Gulf War).[80]

Although new and historically significant legal authorities came into effect in 2016, severe restrictions remain on allowing JSDF personnel to use weapons in peacetime, and there is significant political reluctance to do so.[81] In the historic deployment as part of the U.N. peacekeeping operation to South Sudan, Abe's government withdrew the JSDF once the security situation deteriorated, presumably to avoid casualties abroad. The JSDF were withdrawn, then, without actually utilizing the new authority to "rush to rescue" (*kaketsuke-keigo*) — or using lethal (small-arms) force to come to the aid of other nations'

76 Reiji Yoshida, "Former defense chief courts controversy by questioning Abe plan to revise Constitution," *Japan Times*, May 24, 2017, https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2017/05/24/national/politics-diplomacy/former-defense-chief-courts-controversy-questioning-abe-plan-to-revise-constitution/.

77 "'9jo ni Jieitai Meiki' 'Kaiken 20nen shiko mezasu' ['Article 9 JSDF existence' 'Aiming for Constitutional Revision in 2020']," *Mainichi Shimbun*, May 3, 2017, https://mainichi.jp/articles/20170504/k00/00m/010/077000c.

78 "Kenpo kaisei, sansei 51%...Jieitai 'goken' 76% [51% agree with constitutional revision...76% believe JSDF constitutional]," *Yomiuri Online*, Apr. 30, 2018, http://sp.yomiuri.co.jp/politics/20180429-OYT1T50099.html.

79 Japan Ministry of Defense, *Guidelines*.

80 Liff, "Japan's Defense Policy," 86–87.

81 "Gov't Outlines SDF's Use of Weapons in Helping Foreign Troops under Attack," *Mainichi*, Apr. 15, 2015.

When it comes to fundamental mainstays of Japan's national security — such as the centrality of the U.S.-Japan alliance or Japan's non-nuclear principles — continuity is the defining feature of government policy.

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personnel.[82] Article 9's second clause has particular significance for Japan's force development options. A Cold War-era self-imposed ban on the JSDF's acquisition of "offensive" (*kogekigata*) platforms of the sort that major military powers such as the United States, China, and Russia procure as a matter of course (aircraft carriers, ICBMs, strategic bombers) has been sustained based on a judgment that these platforms would constitute "war potential" and exceed the "minimum necessary" for *self*-defense.

Another fundamental pillar of Japan's national security posture — the centrality of the U.S.-Japan alliance — not only remains in place but the Abe government has doubled down upon it. Relative to declarations from leaders in the 1970s, especially Yasuhiro Nakasone, who would become prime minister in the 1980s and who famously referred to the alliance earlier in his career as a "semi-permanent necessity" (*haneikyuteki ni hitsuyo*) and called for autonomous defense (*jishu boei*),[83] calls for marginally more independent capabilities are hardly radical or even unique to Abe. In fact, they are generally supported in Washington. Even so, the 2015 revision of the *Guidelines for Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation* stipulates that the allies' basic respective obligations under the 1960 security treaty remain unchanged. Deterring and, if necessary, responding to "an armed attack against either Party *in the territories under the administration of Japan*" remains the alliance's primary mandate.[84] Japan is still under no treaty obligation to support the U.S. militarily. This of course does not necessarily mean that it would not. And the 2015 security legislation does enable, based on a political judgment, significant expansion of JSDF logistical support for U.S. operations, involvement in bilateral planning and exercises, and use of weapons in various peacetime contingencies. The aforementioned and now explicitly authorized "asset protection" mission reflected in the 2015 legislation expands the circumstances under which Japan can use weapons to defend a U.S. vessel

under attack or that of other friendly nations if two conditions are met: that it is peacetime, and that the vessel is engaged in activities contributing to Japan's defense. Even so, the JSDF can use weapons only to the extent necessary to repel the attack or to create an opportunity for retreat.[85]

As a practical matter, Japan's defense spending is not rapidly increasing and remains a major hurdle to any ambitious expansion of JSDF capabilities, roles, or missions. Despite widespread media hype about the Abe government's "record high" defense budgets since 2013, in nominal yen terms, Japan's 2018 defense budget is roughly commensurate with its 1997 spending. By comparison, during the intervening two decades, China's official defense budget surged from one-quarter of Japan's spending to four times the size of Japan's defense budget. Regardless of Abe and other political leaders' stated ambitions, without significant increases in defense funding, more fundamental changes to JSDF force structure or employment will be difficult. One recent study suggested that at least 40 percent of the defense priorities delineated in the Abe government's 2018 budget request are underfunded.[86] The loosening of a long-standing ban on arms exports, which, in part, was intended to allow greater "bang for the buck" through economies of scale, has yet to attract any purchases of major platforms.[87]

Other longtime, self-imposed constraints have remained more or less in place. Perhaps most salient, in light of recent developments on the Korean Peninsula, is that Japan continues to rely on the U.S. nuclear umbrella. The Abe government has repeatedly said that Japan's long-standing "three non-nuclear principles" (*hikaku san gensoku*) — non-possession, non-production, and non-introduction of nuclear weapons into Japanese territory — remain the country's "fundamental policy."[88] To be sure, in technical terms, Japan has long hedged against fears of U.S. abandonment and, in recent years, discussion has been more open about the possible need to move beyond

these principles.[89] But these debates are hardly unprecedented. Prime ministers since the 1950s have held that "defensive" nuclear weapons would be constitutional.[90] Japan's policies in this regard have not changed.

This list, while not exhaustive, demonstrates that, despite important policy shifts initiated by the Abe administration since 2012, central pillars of Japanese security policy basically remain in place. Although significant in practical terms and historic in a national context, the Abe government's alterations to Japan's defense posture — up to and including *limited* collective self-defense — are best understood as evolutionary steps in response to a rapidly changing strategic environment. Despite Japan's potentially volatile region, there is, as of yet, no clear evidence that the public would support more radical changes to Japan's fundamental security principles, such as revising Article 9's first or second clause to enable the abandonment of "exclusive defense" (*senshu boei*), much less pursuing autonomous military power outside a U.S.-Japan alliance framework, significantly ramping up defense spending, or acquiring nuclear weapons.

Institutional Reforms: Evolutionary and Mainstream

As discussed earlier, another major focus of national security reforms under Abe has been institutional; specifically, consolidating policy decision-making in the Cabinet, and the prime minister's office in particular. Yet this trend also has a long legacy that predates Abe and is not unique to the LDP.[91] Previous long-serving LDP prime ministers have been proactive champions of administrative reforms, including Nakasone, who was prime minister from 1982 to 1987, Ryutaro Hashimoto, who held the office from 1996 to 1998,

and Koizumi, who led from 2001 to 2006. Abe has built on the legacy of these and other predecessors, including former DPJ prime ministers.[92] Most prominently, the bills to establish the National Security Council (NSC) and the Bureau of Personnel Affairs received significant support from the DPJ.[93]

The founding of Japan's NSC was an outgrowth

> **Placed in historical context, Abe-era institutional reforms appear far less outside the mainstream than much of the contemporary discourse would indicate.**

of a reform movement dating at least to the 1970s. That movement accelerated significantly after the September 11, 2001, attacks as Japan was called on to adopt a more proactive role in international security affairs and as its regional security environment grew more complicated. In 1986, Nakasone had established a "Security Council" (now defunct) with similar objectives to those that motivated the establishment of the NSC in 2013. Subsequent administrations reformed it incrementally.[94] Koizumi's post-9/11 efforts, in which Abe played a central role as deputy and later chief Cabinet secretary, were of particular significance in centralizing foreign policy decision-making.[95] After additional reforms during the leadership of the DPJ, the March 2011 "triple disaster" (the strongest earthquake in Japan's history triggered the tsunami that led to the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant disaster) and other crises revealed the deficiencies of existing crisis management and other national security-relevant institutions. In 2013, Abe, the ruling coalition, and the DPJ joined forces to establish the NSC.[96]

82 Yuki Tatsumi, "Japan Self-Defense Force Withdraws From South Sudan," *Diplomat*, Mar. 13, 2017, https://thediplomat.com/2017/03/japan-self-defense-force-withdraws-from-south-sudan/.

83 Diet testimony cited in Samuels, *Securing Japan*, 7.

84 Japan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Japan-U.S. Security Treaty," Jan. 19, 1960, http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/n-america/us/q&a/ref/1.html.

85 Liff, "Policy by Other Means," esp. 170.

86 "Nearly half of Japan's defense priorities underfunded," *Nikkei Asian Review*, Jan. 6, 2018, https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics-Economy/Policy-Politics/Nearly-half-of-Japan-s-defense-priorities-underfunded?n_cid=NARAN012.

87 Michael Hadlow and Crystal Pryor, "Japan's Defense Exports: 'Three Years Sitting on a Stone,'" SPF USA Forum 12, Mar. 26, 2018, https://spfusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Crystal-Pryor-Japans-Defense-Exports-FINAL-1.pdf.

88 Japan Ministry of Defense, *Guidelines*.

89 On the former, see Richard J. Samuels and James L. Schoff, "Japan's Nuclear Hedge: Beyond 'Allergy' and Breakout," in *Strategic Asia 2013-2014: Asia in the Second Nuclear Age*, ed. Ashley J. Tellis, Abraham M. Denmark, and Travis Tanner (Seattle: National Bureau of Asian Research, 2013), 233–264. For a widely cited recent call to discuss Japan's nuclear options by a former ambassador to Washington, see Ryozo Kato, "What's at stake in allowing Japan a nuclear arsenal?" *Japan Forward*, Feb. 15, 2018, https://japan-forward.com/ambassador-kato-whats-at-stake-in-allowing-japan-a-nuclear-arsenal/.

90 For example, see Samuels and Schoff, "Japan's Nuclear Hedge," 237.

91 For a recent analysis incorporating a review of a much larger English- and Japanese-language literature, see Mulgan, *The Abe Administration*; Tomohito Shinoda, *Koizumi Diplomacy: Japan's Kantei Approach to Foreign and Defense Affairs* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2007).

92 Mulgan, *The Abe Administration*.

93 "Cabinet Personnel Bureau to be established in May," *Nikkei Shimbun*; "Nihon-ban NSC Raishu Hassoku [Japan-style NSC to Launch Next Week]," *Yomiuri Shimbun*, Nov. 27, 2013.

94 Liff, "Japan's National Security Council."

95 Shinoda, "Koizumi Diplomacy."

96 Liff, "Japan's National Security Council." On vote total, see "Nihon-ban NSC Raishu Hassoku," *Yomiuri Shimbun*.

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Note also that with several high-profile exceptions mentioned earlier, most of Abe's appointments related to national security have been relatively conventional. Although Article 68 of the Japanese Constitution requires only a majority of Cabinet ministers to be members of the Diet, all of Abe's Cabinet-level national security appointments have been LDP politicians. Both foreign ministers in his second administration are generally considered to be more moderate than he is. Meanwhile, Abe's chief foreign policy adviser, the National Security Secretariat secretary-general, is a retired Ministry of Foreign Affairs career diplomat.

Although Abe's most controversial intervention in bureaucratic personnel decisions, the appointment of the Cabinet Legislation Bureau director-general in 2013, was unprecedented, this Cabinet position has not historically been immune to political pressure. As Richard Samuels notes in a seminal 2004 study, powerful prime ministers in the past had pressured the bureau to achieve desired ends in national security policy. Most significantly, in the 1950s the bureau was pressured to declare that the establishment of the JSDF and, later, the possession of nuclear weapons would be constitutional, as long as they were for purposes of "self-defense." In the 1980s, it judged arms exports to the United States constitutional. Nor has political frustration with the bureau been rooted strictly in the LDP. Since the end of the Cold War, influential politicians, including at least three who later became presidents of the erstwhile leading-opposition DPJ — Ichiro Ozawa, Naoto Kan, and Yoshihiko Noda — have criticized what they saw as overreach by the bureau. As Japan struggled to figure out its international role after 9/11, a LDP Diet member went so far as to introduce a bill in 2003 to disband the bureau. In Diet testimony, one of his colleagues told then-Prime Minister Koizumi, also a member of the LDP, "When interpretations of a bureaucratic agency of the government dominate the legislative process on such an issue as national security, it is a violation of the separation of powers among the three branches of government." Perhaps most telling in the context of this study is the fact that, during his leadership campaign in 2002, Noda, a member of the DPJ who would later be Abe's immediate predecessor as prime minister in 2011-2012, reportedly advocated for collective self-defense *and* pledged to appoint a sympathetic director-general of the Cabinet Legislation Bureau. Noda's predecessor as prime minister, Kan, a fellow member of the DPJ who led

from 2010 to 2011, had previously argued that "the fact that the CLB serves as the highest interpretive authority on the Constitution is itself a violation of the Constitution." [97]

Abe's government has implemented major changes and flouted some norms concerning political influence over the bureaucracy. In particular, Abe was the first to decisively assert his will so conspicuously over bureaucrats of the Cabinet Legislation Bureau. But the sentiment that inspired him was neither unique to him nor limited to his party. Placed in historical context, Abe-era institutional reforms appear far less outside the mainstream than much of the contemporary discourse would indicate. This suggests that Abe may not be as exceptional as is often assumed — a finding with significant implications for the era that follows his administration.

Accounting for Change … and Continuity: Japan's Shifting Strategic and Political Context

To properly assess the significance of security shifts under the Abe administration and their longer-term implications for Japan's trajectory, they must be considered in their international and domestic contexts. Failure to do so risks excessive, or unwarranted, attribution of causality to specific individuals, like Abe, or to idiosyncratic factors, such as ideology. The available evidence suggests that any explanation of developments in the Abe era requires a nuanced assessment of the complex factors at play. A perceived worsening of Japan's external security environment has created political space for incremental rationalization of security policy shifts and decision-making to confront these challenges, even as long-standing, if contested and weakening, normative and domestic factors continue to provide powerful incentives for ambitious leaders to moderate their policy goals.

Japan's Increasingly "Severe" External Security Environment

Abe's return to power in late 2012 occurred as major changes were developing in Japan's regional security environment, creating a strategic context distinctly different from his first stint in office. Then, from 2006 to 2007, he failed to achieve most of his proposed national security reforms. More recently, of particular salience from

Tokyo's perspective have been the worsening threat from a nuclear-armed North Korea, China's rapidly expanding military capabilities and newly provocative rhetoric and policies in the East China Sea, the growing prominence of qualitatively novel security challenges, including in the "gray zone" and cyber and space domains, and developments affecting alliance politics.

North Korea

From Japan's perspective, over the past five years North Korea's nuclear and missile programs have evolved from longer-term security concerns to clear and present dangers. To some observers, most notably Abe himself, the despotic, internationally isolated regime of Kim Jong Un poses a threat that is unprecedented in Japan's postwar history.[98] Since 2011, Pyongyang has conducted four nuclear tests, the most recent of which had an estimated yield of more than 100 kilotons (by comparison, the Hiroshima bomb in 1945 was roughly 15 kilotons). The previous North Korean regime sparked global alarm when it tested missiles in 1998, 2006, and 2009, but the Kim Jong Un regime has tested missiles at a rate that dwarfs that of its predecessor: 19 in 2014, 15 in 2015, 24 in 2016, and 20 in 2017.[99] North Korean missiles have also become qualitatively more advanced and more mobile (making them easier to hide and more difficult to destroy). They are also longer-ranged, and capable of delivering larger — potentially nuclear — payloads. In 2017 alone, Pyongyang conducted its first thermonuclear test, provocatively launched missiles *over Japanese territory* and into Japan's exclusive economic zone, and tested two intercontinental ballistic missiles it claimed could hit anywhere in the world, including Washington, D.C. North Korea also made specific threats against Japanese and U.S. bases. In January 2018, Abe summarized his take on the implications by saying "the security environment surrounding Japan is its most severe since World War II."[100]

China

Over the past decade, the degree to which Japanese elites and the public see China as a national security concern has increased significantly. At

the time of Abe's first term, from 2006 to 2007, few outside national security circles paid attention to Beijing's quiet development of the world's most robust arsenal of conventionally-tipped ballistic missiles, or to various other "anti-access/area-denial" capabilities aimed at deterring U.S. intervention in a regional conflict. Fewer still paid attention to China's vast sovereignty claims in the South and East China Seas — including of five islands administered by Japan. Furthermore, until a political crisis with Beijing over the contested islands in 2010, the concept of "gray-zone situations" was not a major concern of most Japanese strategists.[101]

Times have changed, and concerns about the security challenge posed by China are now mainstream and less abstract. In particular, those concerns deepened among the Japanese elite and broader public from 2009 to 2012, when Abe and his party, the LDP, were part of the opposition. Coupled with China's symbolic replacement of Japan in 2010 as the world's second-largest national economy, years of double-digit defense spending increases provided easily digestible evidence that the military balance of power was shifting. The day Abe's first administration collapsed in 2007, Beijing's official defense budget — widely considered to underreport actual military spending — was 356 billion yuan (about $45 billion), roughly the same as Japan's. By 2017, it was more than one trillion yuan (or $151 billion) — nearly quadruple Japan's. Beyond Beijing's long-standing nuclear arsenal, of particular concern to Japanese strategists is China's world-leading arsenal of advanced, conventionally-tipped ballistic missiles, which are capable of hitting Japanese territory, including U.S. bases on Japan, as well as its increasingly modernized air force, navy, and marines, all of which dwarf Japan's in quantitative terms and are, in some cases, already superior qualitatively.

Beyond these broad trends, Beijing's coercive rhetoric and policies following major political contretemps in 2010 and 2012 over the contested Senkakus presented to many Japanese observers a concrete and high-profile China-specific contingency scenario that would pose a direct potential threat to Japanese territory. Since September 2012 — just three months before Abe returned to office — Beijing's employment

97 Richard J. Samuels, "Politics, Security Policy, and Japan's Cabinet Legislation Bureau: Who Elected These Guys, Anyway?" *Japan Policy Research Institute*, Working Paper, March 2004, http://www.jpri.org/publications/workingpapers/wp99.html.

98 Shusho Kantei, "Abe Naikaku Sori Daijin nento kisha kaiken [Prime Minister Abe's New Year Address]," Jan. 4, 2018, https://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/98_abe/statement/2018/0104kaiken.html.

99 "The CNS North Korea Missile Test Database," *Nuclear Threat Initiative*, Nov. 30, 2017, http://www.nti.org/analysis/articles/cns-north-korea-missile-test-database/.

100 Shusho Kantei, "Abe Naikaku Sori Daijin nento kisha kaiken."

101 A search for keywords "gray-zone" and "Senkaku" in the online database of the Japanese edition of *Yomiuri Shimbun*, Japan's most widely circulated newspaper, returned no results for the 1997–2009 period. The first usage occurred in 2010, with a peak of 48 occurrences in 2014.

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of military and paranaval forces (especially its Coast Guard) to coercively challenge Japan's effective administrative control of the islands has transformed the operational environment, introducing a major source of uncertainty and risk, and creating circumstances to facilitate a potential *fait accompli*.[102] In response, Japan nearly tripled the frequency with which it scrambled fighters against approaching Chinese planes between 2012 and 2017, reaching an all-time annual high of 851 by April 2017.[103] In the "gray zone," between late 2012 and December 2017 Chinese government vessels entered the Senkakus' territorial waters more than 600 times to assert Beijing's sovereignty claim.[104]

> **Times have changed, and concerns about the security challenge posed by China are now mainstream and less abstract.**

For these reasons and others, such as concerns about Chinese military activities elsewhere in the East China Sea and Western Pacific, Japan's 2017 defense white paper devotes 34 pages to commentary on concerns about China, including Beijing's "attempts to change the status quo by coercion."[105]

In short, during Abe's time out of office and since his return in 2012, the nature and scope of the perceived challenge that China poses to Japan's national security has transformed in highly visible ways.[106] A wide array of political leaders, not just Abe, have called for countermeasures. Indeed, major shifts were adopted by the DPJ while Abe's party was out of power from 2009 to 2012, and in the September 2012 LDP presidential election that Abe won, all five candidates campaigned on the importance of adopting a harder line against China.[107]

Changing Military Technology and the Growing Prominence of Cyber and Space

Technological transformations have also shaped Japanese leaders' perceptions of the regional security environment since Abe's first administration. In particular, the proliferation of extremely fast ballistic and cruise missiles in Northeast Asia and the growing prominence of new security domains — space and cyber, in particular — have fundamentally changed the nature of and speed at which a security contingency could manifest and a political decision would need to be made about how to respond, as well as the national security interests that are potentially at risk. Meanwhile, China's demonstrated willingness to use paramilitary forces to assert its territorial claims has introduced other novel deterrence challenges in the "gray zone." Although public discourse often overlooks these key trends in favor of more conspicuous metrics, such as the construction of aircraft carriers or defense budgets, these changing aspects of the regional security environment are a major driver of reforms to Japan's security policies and institutions, most of which were designed for far more conventional military threats during the Cold War.

Alliance Politics

The United States, Japan's sole treaty ally, has played an important role in shaping Japan's recent security reforms: First, for decades, Washington has called for Japan to adopt a more proactive security posture. This long-term trend found global impetus after 9/11. More recently, however, rapid changes to the security environment in East Asia have caused U.S. policymakers to return their focus to ways Japan can "do more," not in terms of global operations (such as in Iraq and Afghanistan) but in the Asia-Pacific. Second, the emergence of qualitatively new threats combined with the relative decline in U.S. power have deepened long-standing Japanese insecurities. Although this trend significantly predates 2016, the Trump administration's saber-rattling toward Pyongyang and its rhetorical ambivalence regarding U.S. global security commitments, coupled with North Korea's rapidly advancing nuclear and missile capabilities, have exacerbated the uncertainties. Pyongyang's apparent ability to threaten Los Angeles or Washington, D.C. with a nuclear-armed missile in particular has raised concerns about "decoupling" and the possible undermining of U.S. extended deterrence.[108]

One important consequence of this changing strategic environment can be seen in the tension inherent in Japan's "alliance dilemma":[109] between Japan's long-standing concerns about possible entrapment in U.S.-led wars if it gets too close and its fears that Washington may abandon its ally if it does not. In recent years, anxiety has shifted even further toward the latter. This concern about abandonment, in turn, has incentivized Tokyo to signal its commitment to a more "balanced" alliance (collective self-defense; asset protection) and to support U.S. Asia-Pacific strategy more broadly. The Abe administration supported key components of the erstwhile Obama-era "rebalance to Asia" such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership, and has proactively expanded ties with U.S. security partners in the Asia-Pacific and beyond. It has also championed the concept of the "Free and Open Indo-Pacific." Thus, Japan's strategic alignment decisions appear to be aimed at pulling the United States closer while Tokyo diversifies economic and security ties with other U.S. allies and partners. This stands in stark contrast to several other states in the region — the Philippines under the Duterte administration, for example — that appear to be hedging between China and the United States. After a brief flirtation with a more "independent diplomacy" by the short-lived administration of Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama from 2009 to 2010,[110] the foreign policies of Abe and his immediate predecessors manifest little ambivalence at either the popular or elite levels concerning which way Japan should align itself strategically.[111]

102 Liff, "China's Maritime Gray Zone Operations in the East China Sea and Japan's Response."

103 Joint Staff Press Release,"*Heisei 28nendo no kinkyu hasshin jisshi jyokyo ni tsuite* [About Circumstances Concerning Emergency Scrambles in 2016]," Japan Ministry of Defense, Apr. 13, 2017, 3, http://www.mod.go.jp/js/Press/press2017/press_pdf/p20170413_01.pdf.

104 "Senkaku Shoto Shuhen Kaiiki ni okeru Chugoku kosen to no doko to Wagakuni no Taisho [Activities of Chinese government vessels in the waters surrounding the Senkakus and Japan's Response]," Japan Coast Guard, http://www.kaiho.mlit.go.jp/mission/senkaku/senkaku.html.

105 Japan Ministry of Defense, *Defense of Japan 2017*.

106 For an overview of Japan's complex policy concerns about China, see Sheila A. Smith, *Intimate Rivals* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015).

107 "LDP Candidates Take Tough Line against China," *Kyodo News*, Sept. 18, 2012.

108 Mira Rapp-Hooper, "Decoupling Is Back in Asia," *War on the Rocks*, Sept. 7, 2017, https://warontherocks.com/2017/09/decoupling-is-back-in-asia-a-1960s-playbook-wont-solve-these-problems/.

109 Glenn H. Snyder, "The Security Dilemma in Alliance Politics," *World Politics* 36, no. 4 (July 1984): 461–95, doi.10.2307/2010183.

110 Leif-Eric Easley, Tetsuo Kotani, and Aki Mori, "Electing a New Japanese Security Policy? Examining Foreign Policy Visions Within the Democratic Party of Japan," *Asia Policy* 9 (2010): 45–66, http://www.nbr.org/publications/element.aspx?id=394.

111 Adam P. Liff, "Hedging to Balance: The Paradox of Japan's China Strategy in the Abe Era," Working Paper, 2018.

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The Domestic Politics of National Security

In light of this rapidly changing strategic environment, an emerging elite near-consensus among moderates and conservatives on the necessity of some reforms and greater public permissiveness regarding key security issues have created domestic political space for the Abe government to pursue its agenda. Nevertheless, widespread domestic political sensitivities concerning military affairs,[112] combined with the deceptive limits of Abe and his party's political mandate, also counsel pragmatic and significant restraint. The interaction of these domestic forces helps explain why Abe has achieved more than his predecessors yet still fallen short of his most ambitious objectives.

Deepening Pragmatism

A major trend of post-Cold War Japanese national security politics has been the replacement of the ideological, pacifist left as the major anti-LDP political force with a moderate, pragmatic center-left. Even before Abe returned in 2012, a basic consensus on the need for some national security reforms was coalescing among mainstream parties, whereas decades before there was much less support: Japan's domestic institutions and policies were not up to the challenge of its increasingly complicated security environment. Accordingly, though they disagree on many specifics, and while resistance exists even within the LDP to some of the more ambitious efforts at change, in recent years support has grown across the political spectrum for incrementally rationalizing Japan's institutions and force structure and posture in response to a changing threat environment, strengthening the U.S.-Japan alliance, and expanding security ties with other U.S. security partners. For example, between the end of the Cold War and the Koizumi administration, Japan's Diet passed more than a dozen pieces of security-related legislation, significantly expanding the JSDF's roles and missions as well as Japan's ability to participate in international security affairs. Since 2012, the intermittent "salami slicing" has accelerated.[113]

The institutional and policy legacy of the left-of-center DPJ's years in power from 2009 to 2012 provides compelling evidence that political support for many of these reforms not only predates Abe but is not exclusive to his conservative party. For example, it was the Noda administration, from 2011 to 2012, that initiated the review process that ultimately resulted in the landmark 2015 *Guidelines for Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation* revision and that significantly loosened the 1976 "arms export ban" before the Abe government's more conspicuous policy shift later. The DPJ had also been discussing establishing an institution like the NSC — something called for by the DPJ's 2010 *National Defense Program Guidelines*. That 2010 document was also responsible for changing Japan's basic defense orientation toward active deterrence and a highly mobile "dynamic defense force" able to expeditiously counter a threat anywhere in the country — including its remote southwestern islands — both shifts that the Abe government has built upon. It also mainstreamed the concept of gray-zone contingencies in Japan's security lexicon, especially concerning a possible conflict in the East China Sea.[114] Furthermore, the NSC — widely associated with Abe and considered his administration's most significant post-2012 institutional reform — was actually part of a supra-partisan reform movement aimed at bolstering political leadership over the bureaucracy. After its landslide defeat in 2012, the DPJ even reportedly shared a draft NSC proposal with Abe, cooperated in compiling the bill that established the council in 2013, and voted in support of it (the legislation passed the Diet 213-18).[115]

Despite general support for certain incremental changes, since 2012 Japan's domestic politics have been in disarray, with potentially significant implications for future reform efforts. On politically incendiary issues such as Article 9, major fault lines still exist between Abe and the opposition parties and, though less appreciated, within the ruling coalition itself. Most recently, opposition party alignments have also been quite volatile, further clouding the waters. The erstwhile leading opposition left-of-center DPJ dissolved into smaller parties in 2016, a landmark event that has prompted a series of realignments across the opposition, with the dust yet to fully settle. On security affairs, key former members of the successor Democratic Party (which itself dissolved in May 2018) align more closely with the conservative LDP than with the nascent, more liberal offshoot Constitutional Democratic Party.

Regardless of how opposition parties ultimately realign, however, significant backsliding on security reforms seems unlikely. The stark ideological "left-right" divide on security policy that defined Cold War-era national security politics is dying. Even the 2014 surge in voters who supported the left-

> ## Despite this more permissive environment, however, public concerns about external security hardly give the Abe government a blank check.

wing Communist Party — which some pointed to as a resurgence of the ideological, pacifist left — appears to have been largely an artifact of formerly *right-wing* voters signaling opposition to the big two mainstream parties, not a backlash against Abe's security agenda per se.[116]

Public Opinion

The precipitous collapse of Abe's first administration in 2007 indicates the risks of Cabinet instability and excessive prime-ministerial ambition in a country where pacifist and anti-militarist sentiments, however amorphous, remain strong.[117] Yet the Japanese public's views on security affairs — long a "third rail" of postwar politics — have moderated significantly over time, still more so in light of regional security developments. This has created a more permissive political environment for Abe's agenda than was available a decade ago. Most remarkably, despite widely reported public protests and controversy, the backlash against the security reforms his administration has achieved so far has been ephemeral. Although the controversial July 2015 security legislation caused a major dip in his Cabinet's support rating, within four months it was net positive again and remained so until unrelated political scandals emerged two years later.[118]

Meanwhile, especially since 2012, public opinion data suggest four important trends related to national security: widespread identification of China and North Korea as "critical" or "important" threats to Japan's "vital interests," exceptional affinity toward America and confidence in U.S. economic and military strength, persistent and deepening antagonism and threat perceptions regarding China (the obvious alternative alignment partner), and increasing certainty that the U.S.-Japan alliance and the JSDF are the best ways to ensure Japan's security. Generally speaking, Abe's moves have been more or less consistent with these trends.[119] There was a striking drop in Japanese public confidence in the U.S. president after the 2016 election, but there is as of yet no clear indication it is translating into a major reduction of confidence in, or support for, the bilateral alliance.[120]

Despite this more permissive environment, however, public concerns about external security hardly give the Abe government a blank check. On high-salience issues where public opinion is more ambivalent or actively opposed — e.g., a fundamental revision of Article 9's first two clauses or enabling the JSDF to use force in a scenario that does not constitute a clear threat to Japan — Abe appears to have significantly dialed back. Had the 2015 security legislation reflected what had been reported in months prior as Abe's original ambitions concerning collective self-defense or collective security, public backlash probably would have been much more severe. The Abe government's ability to read the political winds appears to have significantly improved since 2007. Rhetoric or personal ambitions aside, the defining feature of his administration's national security policy agenda since 2012 appears to be pragmatic incrementalism.

112 For seminal discussions of related normative factors, see Thomas U. Berger, "From Sword to Chrysanthemum: Japan's Culture of Anti-Militarism," *International Security* 17, no. 4 (1993): 119–50, https://muse.jhu.edu/article/447066; Oros, *Normalizing Japan*.

113 Generally associated with the seminal scholarship of Richard Samuels, Samuels himself credits Leonard Schoppa for introducing him to the "salami slicing" metaphor and notes its usage elsewhere. Samuels, *Securing Japan*, 226, endnotes 3–4.

114 Liff, "Japan's Defense Policy,": 81–83.

115 Sunohara, *Nihon-ban NSC*, 124–30; "Nihon-ban NSC Raishu Hassoku," *Yomiuri Shimbun*.

116 Ko Maeda, "Explaining the Surges and Declines of the Japanese Communist Party," *Asian Survey* 57, no. 4 (2017), doi.10.1525/as.2017.57.4.665.

117 For example, in a 2015 Gallup poll, only 11 percent of Japanese respondents expressed a willingness to fight for their country — dead last (the average among the 64 countries surveyed was 61 percent). "WIN/Gallup's global survey shows three in five willing to fight for their country," *Gallup International*, 2015, http://gallup-international.bg/en/Publications/2015/220-WIN-Gallup-International%E2%80%99s-global-survey-shows-three-in-five-willing-to-fight-for-their-country.

118 See aggregated poll data at "Japan Political Pulse," *Sasakawa USA*, https://spfusa.org/category/japan-political-pulse/.

119 Poll data cited in Liff, "Hedging to Balance."

120 A summer 2017 poll showed confidence in the U.S. president to "do the right thing in world affairs" declining from 78 percent to 24 percent after Trump's election. "U.S. Image Suffers as Publics Around World Question Trump's Leadership," *Pew Research Center*, June 26, 2017, http://www.pewglobal.org/2017/06/26/u-s-image-suffers-as-publics-around-world-question-trumps-leadership/.

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Japan's Security Policy in the "Abe Era": Radical Transformation or Evolutionary Shift?

Domestic Political Headwinds and the Paradox of Abe's Electoral "Success"

Based on the most conspicuous metrics cited by many observers — Diet seat totals and Cabinet support rates — the LDP-Komeito ruling coalition's five consecutive national election victories since 2012 appear to have given Abe's government a sizable mandate. Meanwhile, the enervation and fractiousness of the opposition, coupled with widespread public frustration after the three-year experiment without the LDP in power from 2009 to 2012, would suggest the elimination of an otherwise potentially potent political constraint. Yet the reality is different: The LDP's Diet strength masks significant domestic political weakness, which itself belies the widespread and simplistic narrative of Abe and the LDP as "all-powerful" (*Abe ikkyo*).

Paradoxically, the ruling coalition's electoral success does not evince majority public support for the Abe administration, much less its national security agenda. In recent elections, the LDP has benefited significantly from historically low voting participation across all age groups and apparent widespread public disillusionment with the options. Turnout in the "landslide" election in 2012 that enabled Abe's return as prime minister was the lowest of the postwar period (59 percent) — a more than ten-point drop from the 2009

election. Turnout fell a further seven points in the 2014 general election.[121] Meanwhile, between 1992 and 2012 voters who preferred the LDP over other parties shrank from a majority of the public to less than 20 percent. Voters with no party affiliation now make up the majority of the electorate.[122] And a recent public opinion poll showed that among those who support the Abe Cabinet, the primary reason is a lack of alternatives.[123] In short, while election results have granted Abe and the LDP robust backing among members of the Diet, other factors caution against making swift policy changes — especially on traditionally sensitive matters.

Despite the LDP's dominance of contemporary Japanese politics in terms of Diet seats, a significant minority of its Lower House candidates depend on Komeito, the LDP's junior coalition partner, to get elected — a detail not widely appreciated outside Japanese journalistic and academic circles. It is no coincidence that the LDP and Komeito have cooperated in every national election since 1999 and ruled together in coalition whenever in power. Mutual stand-down agreements in single-member electoral districts are a vital source of both parties' electoral success — and they inject a powerful codependence into the relationship. Given Komeito's largely lay-Buddhist, pacifistic base, LDP ambitions on national security are constrained by a junior coalition partner that, despite its relatively small size, can exercise a virtual veto power.[124] As Komeito brags to its supporters, this effectively makes it, though a much smaller party, a kind of "opposition within the ruling coalition" and a powerful internal "brake" on the Abe administration's ambitions in the security domain.[125]

Although it is often overlooked outside Japan, Komeito's role restraining the LDP's security

> Security reforms in the Abe era are in large part a reaction to objectively identifiable, rapid changes to Japan's external security environment.

agenda is not new. This could be seen when Koizumi pursued a more ambitious global security agenda immediately after 9/11.[126] In the Abe era, Komeito helped water down the Abe Cabinet's 2014 resolution formally "reinterpreting" Article 9. In particular, it pressured the administration to impose the three aforementioned conditions on the exercise of collective self-defense, and to abandon a push to enable collective security operations. The Abe government's May 2017 proposal for a revision of Article 9, which would leave its existing clauses untouched and add a new clause asserting the constitutionality of the JSDF's existence, surprised many commentators for its lack of ambition. Even within the LDP, Abe was criticized for abandoning the party's far more transformative 2012 revision proposal. In stark contrast, his 2017 proposal was based not on the longtime position of his party but, rather, on a proposal tabled a decade earlier by Komeito, which has long opposed changing Article 9's existing clauses. These two high-profile, behind-the-scenes concessions to Komeito indicate the smaller party's influence not only because Abe has said multiple times that enabling collective self-defense and revising Article 9 rank among his administration's highest priorities but also because they constitute core goals written into the LDP's founding charter 63 years ago. The implication seems clear: Barring the fracturing of the ruling coalition or some kind of major structural change, the LDP's electoral dependence on Komeito is likely to continue to hamstring Abe and future LDP leaders in the security domain.[127]

Although the external security environment and Abe and his allies' ambitions are undoubtedly major drivers of Japan's evolving security posture, it is important to recognize the role that Komeito and other domestic political obstacles play as constraints on the administration's agenda. It is also crucial for evaluating the prospects for major change in the years to come. With a transition to a new imperial reign in 2019 and the 2020 Tokyo Olympics just around the corner, the deck may be stacked against Abe achieving the more fundamental reforms he and his party have long sought — even if he is reelected in the September 2018 LDP presidential election.[128]

Conclusion: The Evolution Continues

Where one comes down in the debate about change versus continuity in Japan's post-2012 security trajectory depends greatly on research design and definition of key terms, such as "radical" or "revolutionary." Narrowly focusing on perceived (or imputed) policy shifts — especially without factoring in their precise content, causes, strategic context, and historical precedents — while overlooking significant continuities risks exaggerating the pace and scale of change, as well as the centrality of idiosyncratic factors such as a particular leader or ideology. A "radical" shift or a national security "revolution" in Japan would entail fundamental, transformative changes to the core pillars of its post-Cold War security policy. So far, at least, there is limited unambiguous evidence of this.

What emerges from a more balanced, historically-baselined assessment of change *and* continuity over the past half-decade is a frustratingly nuanced picture: Abe is simultaneously the most consequential prime minister in decades in terms of national security reforms, yet one whose individual significance and degree of success in achieving his ambitions is often overstated. A defining feature of Abe's approach during his second stint as prime minister has been a kind of evolutionary pragmatism. Abe has been remarkably decisive at crucial moments yet also cautious — pulling back when confronted with significant domestic political resistance.

Security reforms in the Abe era are in large part a reaction to objectively identifiable, rapid changes to Japan's external security environment. Baselined appropriately, those reforms embody a series of important shifts that build on a longer-term trajectory that precedes Abe's time as prime minister, including the DPJ era. Key achievements of this reform effort include an increasingly powerful Cabinet and prime minister's office to strengthen political control of foreign policy decision-making, the rationalization of force structure and posture to more effectively confront perceived threats, a doubling-down on the U.S.-Japan alliance, a central pillar of Japan's security, and the gradual expansion of Japan's security ties with third parties. These reforms facilitate an increase in the independent development and

121 Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, "Kokusei senkyo no tohyoritsu no suii ni tsuite (Heisei 28nen 9gatsu) [Changes in national election voter turnout]," September 2016, http://www.soumu.go.jp/main_content/000255919.pdf; Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, "Kokusei senkyo no nendaibetsu tohyoritsu no suii ni tsuite (Heisei 28nen 9gatsu) [Changes in national election voter turnout by age group]," September 2016, http://www.soumu.go.jp/senkyo/senkyo_s/news/sonota/nendaibetu/index.html.

122 Aiji Tanaka, "Japan's Independent Voters, Yesterday and Today," *Nippon*, Aug. 16, 2012, https://www.nippon.com/en/in-depth/a01104/.

123 "NHK poll: Cabinet support rate at 46%," *NHK*, Jan. 9, 2017, https://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/en/news/20180109_32/.

124 In the 2014 election, the LDP may have lost as many as a quarter of the single-member districts it won. Adam P. Liff and Ko Maeda, "Explaining a Durable Coalition of Strange Bedfellows: Evidence from Japan," Working Paper, 2018.

125 Quote comes from Levi McLaughlin, Axel Klein, and Steven R. Reed, "The Power of Japan's Religious Party," *Wilson Center*, Dec. 4, 2014, https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/the-power-japans-religious-party.

126 J. Patrick Boyd and Richard J. Samuels, *Nine Lives? The Politics of Constitutional Reform in Japan* (Washington, D.C.: East-West Center, 2005), esp. 27–61.

127 Liff and Maeda, "Explaining a Durable Coalition of Strange Bedfellows."

128 Tobias Harris, "Scandal Raises Doubts About Abe's Ability to Win a Third Term," *Japan Political Pulse*, Mar. 16, 2018, https://spfusa.org/category/japan-political-pulse/.

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implementation of a comprehensive national strategy and create space for Japan to adopt a more active role in regional and global security, within and beyond an alliance context. As for the practical implications of arguably the most significant shift — the 2014 reinterpretation of Article 9 to allow for "limited" collective self-defense — much remains hypothetical. How Japan will respond in the event of an armed attack against an ally will inevitably hinge on the nature of the contingency and specific domestic and international political circumstances at the time.[129] At a minimum, the reinterpretation significantly expands the allies' ability to plan bilaterally and exercise and train together in peacetime.

Analytically, the empirical record thus far suggests another important takeaway: the importance of differentiating between Abe the individual and Abe the prime minister. To be sure, some of the content and speed of recent reforms appears attributable to Abe's past experience, personal ambition, and decisiveness, as well as the exceptional stability of his Cabinets over the past six years. Whereas Japan's "leadership deficit" and the frequent turnover of Cabinets before 2012 has been a near-constant point of contemporary political analysis,[130] the combination of assertiveness and pragmatism on display since 2012 suggests that Abe and his allies learned from political missteps during his first administration.[131] This may be one reason Abe appointed a "stabilizer," Yoshihide Suga, as his first, and so far only, chief Cabinet secretary.[132]

The "Abe era" is in its sixth year. As of this writing, a decline in public support due to several festering scandals unrelated to national security has raised questions about whether Abe will be able to continue as prime minister beyond a scheduled LDP presidential election in September 2018. Regardless, this study's findings suggest potentially significant implications for Japan's strategic trajectory *after* Abe. On the one hand, significant changes, reflected in robust new institutions (e.g., the NSC and its supporting 70-80 strong National Security Secretariat), laws, and policies, are already in place and are unlikely to be reversed. Many of these attracted supra-partisan

support while domestic political backlash against key reforms, such as the controversial security legislation, has not translated into a major popular swing toward an opposition party that would seek to undo them. Barring transformative external or domestic political structural changes, backsliding is unlikely and the current trajectory of evolutionary reform is likely to persist.

On the other hand, the fact that Abe's government has not achieved more fundamental reforms despite his clear personal ambition for more radical changes, a security environment seen by the administration and public as increasingly severe, relatively high Cabinet support ratings for most of the past six years, and five major national election victories for the ruling coalition evinces the persistent political headwinds even very ambitious future prime ministers will continue to face. Particularly salient are the facts that the LDP continues to cooperate electorally and rule in coalition with Komeito, that Article 9's first two clauses remain untouched, and that transformative increases to Japan's defense budget appear unlikely.

Including the years since 2012, the post-Cold War trajectory of Japan's security posture seems best characterized not as a shift from "pacifism" to "militarism" — two deeply problematic terms permeating the discourse — but as an evolution from a fairly passive, isolationist Japan toward one that seeks to be more "proactive," yet remains subject to self-imposed constraints. In 2018, Japan remains a remarkable outlier among major powers, especially in terms of restrictions on military force development and employment. Widespread claims of assertive "nationalism" and even alleged "militarism" in Japan's foreign policy under Abe — ill-defined memes remarkably widespread within and outside Japan (especially in China and Korea) — create a lot of heat and very little light.[133]

The first six years of national security reforms under the Abe administration hardly constitute a radical revolution. Yet past is not necessarily prologue. Japanese leaders' assessments of the regional strategic environment will continue to be a fundamental variable in shaping national security debates. In particular, over the past 18 months

North Korea's testing of ICBMs it claims are capable of reaching Washington, and various aspects of Trump's "America First" foreign policy, have raised anxieties in Japan and emerged as factors with the potential to disrupt Japan's foreign policy status quo.[134] These factors, coupled with the risk of a contingency on the Korean Peninsula, heighten the ever-present possibility of more fundamental shifts to Japan's security trajectory in the years ahead. ⚓

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129 For an argument that the 2014 reinterpretation entails a "genuinely radical trajectory" for Japan, see Hughes, "Japan's Strategic Trajectory and Collective Self-Defense."

130 Aurelia George Mulgan, "Japan's Political Leadership Deficit," *Australian Journal of Political Science* 35, no. 2 (2000): 183–202, https://doi.org/10.1080/713649327; see also Ryo Sahashi and James Gannon, eds., *Looking for Leadership: The Dilemma of Political Leadership in Japan* (New York: Japan Center for International Exchange, 2015).

131 Mulgan, *The Abe Administration*, ch. 3.

132 On Suga, see Izuru Makihara, "Abe's Enforcer: Suga Yoshihide's Stabilizing Influence on the Cabinet," *Nippon*, Sept. 25, 2014, https://www.nippon.com/en/currents/d00135/.

133 For a critical engagement of associated claims, see Jennifer Lind and Chikako Kawakatsu Ueki, "Is Japanese Nationalism on the Rise?" Paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Studies Association in Atlanta, March 2016.

134 Alastair Gale, "Japan's Abe to Meet Trump, With North Korea Testing Their Ties," *Wall Street Journal*, Apr. 15, 2018, https://www.wsj.com/articles/japans-abe-to-meet-trump-with-north-korea-testing-their-ties-1523790006.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE, INTERNATIONAL COMPETITION, AND THE BALANCE OF POWER

Michael C. Horowitz

World leaders, CEOs, and academics have suggested that a revolution in artificial intelligence is upon us. Are they right, and what will advances in artificial intelligence mean for international competition and the balance of power? This article evaluates how developments in artificial intelligence (AI) — advanced, narrow applications in particular — are poised to influence military power and international politics. It describes how AI more closely resembles "enabling" technologies such as the combustion engine or electricity than a specific weapon. AI's still-emerging developments make it harder to assess than many technological changes, especially since many of the organizational decisions about the adoption and uses of new technology that generally shape the impact of that technology are in their infancy. The article then explores the possibility that key drivers of AI development in the private sector could cause the rapid diffusion of military applications of AI, limiting first-mover advantages for innovators. Alternatively, given uncertainty about the technological trajectory of AI, it is also possible that military uses of AI will be harder to develop based on private-sector AI technologies than many expect, generating more potential first-mover advantages for existing powers such as China and the United States, as well as larger consequences for relative power if a country fails to adapt. Finally, the article discusses the extent to which U.S. military rhetoric about the importance of AI matches the reality of U.S. investments.

In early September 2017, Russian President Vladimir Putin brought artificial intelligence from the labs of Silicon Valley, academia, and the basement of the Pentagon to the forefront of international politics. "Artificial intelligence is the future, not only for Russia, but for all humankind," he said. "It comes with colossal opportunities, but also threats that are difficult to predict. Whoever becomes the leader in this sphere will become the ruler of the world."[1]

Putin's remarks reflect a belief, growing in sectors and regions across the world, that advances in artificial intelligence will be critical for the future — in areas as varied as work, society, and military power. Artificial intelligence is a critical element of what Klaus Schwab, head of the World Economic Forum, calls the Fourth Industrial Revolution.[2] Eric Schmidt, the former CEO of Google, argues that artificial intelligence is so important to the future of power that the United States needs a national strategy on artificial intelligence, just as it had one for the development of space technology during the Cold War.[3] Elon Musk, the head of Tesla and SpaceX, has even said that growth in artificial intelligence technology, left unchecked, could risk sparking World War III.[4] These statements suggest that artificial intelligence will have a large and potentially deterministic influence on global politics and the balance of power.[5]

Whether artificial intelligence has revolutionary consequences or merely incremental effects, it is critical to grasp how and why it could matter in the national security arena. Despite a wave of articles about artificial intelligence in the popular press and trade journals, there has been less in the way of systematic academic work on the national security consequences of such developments. This article attempts to fill that gap by examining the effects on national security of narrow artificial intelligence, or systems designed to do deliberately constrained tasks, such as the Jeopardy-playing version of IBM's Watson or AlphaGo, designed to play the board game Go. Specifically, it assesses the issues AI stands to raise for the balance of power and international competition through the lens of academic research on military innovation, technological change, and international politics.

Popular writing on AI tends to focus almost exclusively on technology development. Technology has played a vital role in shaping global politics throughout history.[6] Hundreds of years ago, technologies such as the printing press allowed the written word to flourish. These set the stage for new forms of political protest and activity.[7] In the 20th century, nuclear weapons significantly increased the destructive capabilities of numerous countries.[8]

Yet the relative impact of technological change often depends as much or more on how people, organizations, and societies adopt and utilize technologies as it does on the raw characteristics of the technology.[9] Consider the aircraft carrier, which the British Navy invented in 1918. As the best in the world at using battleships, the Royal Navy initially imagined the utility of aircraft carriers as providing airplanes to serve as spotters for the battleship. The Japanese and U.S. navies, however, innovated by using the aircraft carrier as a mobile airfield, fundamentally transforming naval warfare in the 20th century.[10] Or, consider the printing press again: Its role in accelerating nationalist political movements depended on the incentives that originally motivated those movements and the movements' ability to take advantage of the new technology's capability to spread information.[11]

What role will artificial intelligence play? In many ways it is too soon to tell, given uncertainty about the development of the technology. But AI seems much more akin to the internal combustion engine or electricity than a weapon. It is an enabler, a general-purpose technology with a multitude of applications. That makes AI different from, and broader than, a missile, a submarine, or a tank.

Advances in narrow AI could create challenges as well as opportunities for governments and military organizations. For example, narrow AI applications such as image recognition would help those militaries that are already wealthy and powerful and that can afford to keep up. It is harder to predict how AI applications could affect the heart of military organizations, influencing planning as well as questions of recruiting, retention, and force structure. What happens as militaries increasingly need soldiers who have training in coding and who understand how algorithms work? Or if swarming, uninhabited systems make large conventional military platforms seem costly and obsolete? Leading militaries often struggle in the face of organizationally disruptive innovations because it is hard to make the bureaucratic case for change when a military perceives itself as already leading.

What countries benefit from AI will depend in part on where militarily-relevant innovations come from. Non-military institutions, such as private companies and academic departments, are pushing the boundaries of what is possible in the realm of artificial intelligence. While some AI and robotics companies, such as Boston Dynamics, receive military research and development funding, others, such as DeepMind, do not, and actively reject engaging with military organizations.[12] Unlike stealth technology, which has a fundamentally military purpose, artificial intelligence has uses as varied as shopping, agriculture, and stock trading.

If commercially-driven AI continues to fuel innovation, and the types of algorithms militaries might one day use are closely related to civilian applications, advances in AI are likely to diffuse more rapidly to militaries around the world. AI competition could feature actors across the globe developing AI capabilities, much like late-19th-century competition in steel and chemicals.

The potential for diffusion would make it more difficult to maintain "first-mover advantages" in applications of narrow AI. This could change the balance of power, narrowing the gap in military capabilities not only between the United States and China but between others as well.

Experts disagree about the potential trajectory of the technology, however, which means that forecasts of the consequences of AI developments

> **AI seems much more akin to the internal combustion engine or electricity than a weapon.**

for the international security environment are necessarily tentative.[13] While the basic science underlying AI is applicable to both civilian and military purposes, it is plausible that the most important specific military uses of AI will not be dual use. Technological advances that are more exclusively based in military research are generally harder to mimic. It follows that military applications of AI based more exclusively in defense research will then generate larger first-mover advantages for early adopters. Moreover, if the computational power necessary to generate new, powerful algorithms prices out all but the wealthiest companies and countries, higher-end AI capabilities could help the rich get richer from a balance-of-power perspective. On the other hand, if leading militaries fail to effectively incorporate AI, the potential for disruption would also be larger.

This article defines artificial intelligence and examines what kind of technology AI is. It then turns to key questions and assumptions about the trajectory of narrow AI development that will influence potential adoption requirements for military applications of AI, a factor critical to shaping AI's influence on the balance of power. The paper then assesses how narrow artificial intelligence will affect the balance of power in a

1   James Vincent, "Putin Says the Nation That Leads in AI 'Will Be the Ruler of the World,'" *Verge*, Sept. 4, 2017, https://www.theverge.com/2017/9/4/16251226/russia-ai-putin-rule-the-world.

2   Klaus Schwab, *The Fourth Industrial Revolution* (New York: Crown Business, 2017).

3   Colin Clark, "Our Artificial Intelligence 'Sputnik Moment' Is Now: Eric Schmidt & Bob Work," *Breaking Defense*, Nov. 1, 2017, https://breakingdefense.com/2017/2011/our-artificial-intelligence-sputnik-moment-is-now-eric-schmidt-bob-work/.

4   Seth Fiegerman, "Elon Musk Predicts World War III," *CNN*, Sept. 4, 2017, http://money.cnn.com/2017/09/04/technology/culture/elon-musk-ai-world-war/index.html.

5   On technological determinism, see Merritt R. Smith and Leo Marx, *Does Technology Drive History? The Dilemma of Technological Determinism* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1994).

6   William H. McNeill, *The Pursuit of Power: Technology, Armed Force, and Society Since A.D. 1000* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982).

7   Jeremiah E. Dittmar, "Information Technology and Economic Change: The Impact of the Printing Press," *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 126, no. 3 (August 2011): 1133-1172, https://doi.org/10.1093/qje/qjr035.

8   Robert Jervis, *The Meaning of the Nuclear Revolution: Statecraft and the Prospect of Armageddon* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989).

9   In the military dimension, see Michael C. Horowitz, *The Diffusion of Military Power: Causes and Consequences for International Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010). For a critique of technology-focused thinking about the future of war, see Paul K. Van Riper and Frank G. Hoffman, "Pursuing the Real Revolution in Military Affairs: Exploiting Knowledge-Based Warfare," *National Security Studies Quarterly* 4, no. 3 (1998): 4; H.R. McMaster, "Continuity and Change: The Army Operating Concept and Clear Thinking About Future War," *Military Review* (2015), https://www.westpoint.edu/scusa/SiteAssets/SitePages/Keynote Speakers/Continuity and Change by LTG McMaster.pdf.

10   Clark G. Reynolds, *The Fast Carriers; The Forging of an Air Navy*, 1st ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1968); Mark R. Peattie, *Sunburst: The Rise of Japanese Naval Air Power, 1909-1941* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2001).

11   Marshall McLuhan, *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1962).

12   Clemency Burton-Hill, "The Superhero of Artificial Intelligence: Can This Genius Keep It in Check?" *Guardian*, Feb. 16, 2016, https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2016/feb/16/demis-hassabis-artificial-intelligence-deepmind-alphago.

13   Katja Grace et al., "When Will AI Exceed Human Performance? Evidence from AI Experts," arXiv (May 2017), https://arxiv.org/abs/1705.08807.

world where dual-use AI has great military relevance and diffuses rapidly as well as a scenario in which military AI developments are more "excludable," limiting diffusion and generating more first-mover advantages.

How all this will play out over the next decade or more is unclear. Already, China, Russia, and others are investing significantly in AI to increase their relative military capabilities with an eye toward reshaping the balance of power. As the field of AI matures, and more implementations become plausible in arenas such as logistics, personnel, and even deployable units, countries will need to figure out how to use AI in practical ways that improve their ability to generate military power. The risk for the United States in terms of balance of power thus lies in taking its military superiority for granted and ending up like Great Britain's Royal Navy with the aircraft carrier in the mid-20th century — a technological innovator that is surpassed when it comes to organizational adoption and use of the technology.

What Is Artificial Intelligence?

What is artificial intelligence? There is no broad consensus on the specific meanings of terms such as artificial intelligence, autonomy, and automation. For the purposes of this article, artificial intelligence refers to the use of computers to simulate the behavior of humans that requires intelligence.[14] Put another way, AI can be thought of as the ability of an artificial agent to achieve goals in a "wide range of environments."[15] A system with artificial intelligence is distinct from a robot or robotic system, which can be remotely piloted or autonomous.[16] For example, the Boston Dynamics SpotMini, which can open a door, is remotely piloted by a human operator so would not qualify as AI.[17] *Automatic* systems, such as a toaster in the civilian world or, to use a military example, an explosive triggered by a tripwire, respond mechanically to environmental inputs.[18] *Automated* systems, by contrast, operate based on multiple pre-programmed logic steps as opposed to the simplicity of a tripwire.[19] *Autonomous* systems have more latitude and are programmed, within constraints, to achieve goals, optimizing along a set of parameters.[20]

There are two main approaches to AI, broadly conceived. The first is symbolic artificial intelligence — the creation of expert systems and production rules to allow a machine to deduce behavioral pathways. IBM's Deep Blue, which defeated Garry Kasparov in chess in 1997, used a symbolic approach.[21] Computational, or connectionist, approaches to artificial intelligence, in contrast, typically attempt to allow for problem recognition and action by machines through calculations rather than symbolic representation.[22] Machine learning represents a key computational approach to artificial intelligence. Multiple computational techniques are used to create machine-learning algorithms, including Bayesian networks, decision trees, and deep learning. Deep learning, now popularly associated with artificial intelligence, is a technique that harnesses neural networks to train algorithms to do specified tasks, such as image recognition.[23] Some researchers are pursuing hybrid approaches that integrate both symbolic and computational approaches to AI. The hope behind hybrid approaches is that creating common languages will enable algorithms that can employ multiple pathways to learn how to do particular tasks, making them more effective.[24]

For the purposes of this article, the specific methods of AI that generate particular capabilities are less critical than understanding the general trajectory of the technology. In many cases, it is too soon to tell which methods will generate which capabilities.

AI Is an Enabler, Not a Weapon

The impact of the invention of a new technology depends, in part, on its potential basic uses.[25] Some communication technologies, such as the telegraph or telephone, were designed to more rapidly connect people in different locations. Munition technologies, such as missiles and bullets, are designed to inflict damage on a target. Railroads are a transportation technology, as is a bicycle. These broad categories of technologies have subcomponents that draw on various technologies themselves. For example, more than 300,000 parts go into an F-35.[26] Another category might then be called "enabling technologies," which are designed not specifically for a single purpose like the examples above but, instead, are general-purpose, with broad applications across many other types of technologies. Electricity is an enabling technology.

So what kind of technology is artificial intelligence? While the rhetoric of the "Third Offset"[27] and other discussions in the defense community sometimes make artificial intelligence seem like a munition, AI is actually the ultimate enabler. AI can be part of many specific technologies, analogous to the internal combustion engine as well as electricity.[28] Andrew Ng of Stanford University argues that, like the invention of electricity, AI could enable specific technologies in fields as diverse as agriculture, manufacturing, and health care.[29]

Artificial intelligence can operate in several dimensions. First, it can be used to direct physical objects, such as robotic systems, to act without human supervision. Whether in tanks, planes, or ships, AI can help reduce the need to use humans, even remotely, or as part of human-machine teams.[30] Swarm techniques, for example, generally involve the creation of supervised algorithms that direct platforms such as drones. Second, artificial intelligence can assist in processing and interpreting information. Image-recognition algorithms can be used for tagging vacation photos and identifying products in stores as well as in Project Maven, a U.S. military program that seeks to develop algorithms to automate the process of analyzing video feeds captured by drones.[31] While the applications in each case are different, the underlying algorithmic task — rapid image identification and tagging — is consistent. Third, overlapping narrow AI systems could be used for new forms of command and control — operational systems, including battle management, that analyze large sets of data and make forecasts to direct human action — or action by algorithms.[32]

What Type of Artificial Intelligence?

It is useful to think about the degree of artificial intelligence as a continuum. On one end are narrow AI applications such as AlphaGo, able to beat the best human Go players in the world. These are

14   This is based on the Russell and Norvig definition that artificial intelligence is about the construction of artificial rational agents that can perceive and act. See Stuart Russell and Peter Norvig, *Artificial Intelligence: A Modern Approach*, 3rd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2009). Also see Calum McClelland, "The Difference Between Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning, and Deep Learning," *Medium*, Dec. 4, 2017, https://medium.com/iotforall/the-difference-between-artificial-intelligence-machine-learning-and-deep-learning-3aa67bff5991.

15   Shane Legg and Marcus Hutter, "Universal Intelligence: A Definition of Machine Intelligence," arXiv, (December 2007): 12, https://arxiv.org/abs/0712.3329.

16   Michael C. Horowitz, "Military Robotics, Autonomous Systems, and the Future of Military Effectiveness," in *The Sword's Other Edge: Tradeoffs in the Pursuit of Military Effectiveness*, ed. Dan Reiter (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

17   Matt Simon, "Watch Boston Dynamics' SpotMini Robot Open a Door," *Wired*, Feb. 12, 2018, https://www.wired.com/story/watch-boston-dynamics-spotmini-robot-open-a-door/.

18   This is based on the discussion in Paul Scharre and Michael C. Horowitz, "An Introduction to Autonomy in Weapon Systems," *Center for a New American Security working paper* (February 2015): 5, https://www.cnas.org/publications/reports/an-introduction-to-autonomy-in-weapon-systems.

19   Michael C. Horowitz, Paul Scharre, and Alex Velez-Green, "A Stable Nuclear Future? The Impact of Automation, Autonomy, and Artificial Intelligence" (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2017).

20   Scharre and Horowitz, "Autonomy in Weapon Systems," 6.

21   Murray Campbell, A. Joseph Hoane Jr., and Feng-hsiung Hsu, "Deep Blue," *Artificial Intelligence* 134, no. 1-2 (2002): 57-83, https://doi.org/10.1016/S0004-3702(01)00129-1.

22   Ryszard S. Michalski, Jaime G. Carbonell, and Tom M. Mitchell, eds., *Machine Learning: An Artificial Intelligence Approach* (New York: Springer, 2013); Allen Newell and Herbert Alexander Simon, *Human Problem Solving* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1972).

23   Robert D. Hof, "Deep Learning," *MIT Technology Review* (2013), https://www.technologyreview.com/s/513696/deep-learning/; Anh Nguyen, Jason Yosinski, and Jeff Clune, "Deep Neural Networks Are Easily Fooled: High Confidence Predictions for Unrecognizable Images" (Paper presented at the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers conference on computer vision and pattern recognition, 2015), https://arxiv.org/abs/1412.1897.

24   Antonio Lieto, Antonio Chella, and Marcello Frixione, "Conceptual Spaces for Cognitive Architectures: A Lingua Franca for Different Levels of Representation," *Biologically Inspired Cognitive Architectures* 19 (January 2017), https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bica.2016.10.005.

25   Calestous Juma, *Innovation and Its Enemies: Why People Resist New Technologies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

26   Lockheed Martin, "Building the F-35: Combining Teamwork and Technology," accessed May 8, 2018, https://www.f35.com/about/life-cycle/production.

27   The "Third Offset" was a Department of Defense initiative led by Deputy Secretary of Defense Robert Work that was designed to preserve U.S. military superiority through exploiting a generation of emerging technologies. Robert O. Work, *Deputy Secretary of Defense Remarks to the Association of the U.S. Army Annual Convention*, Oct. 4, 2016, https://www.defense.gov/News/Speeches/Speech-View/Article/974075/remarks-to-the-association-of-the-us-army-annual-convention/.

28   Walter Frick, "Why AI Can't Write This Article (Yet)," *Harvard Business Review*, July 24, 2017, https://hbr.org/cover-story/2017/07/the-business-of-artificial-intelligence#/2017/07/why-ai-cant-write-this-article-yet.

29   Andrew Ng, "Artificial Intelligence Is the New Electricity," *Medium*, April 28, 2017, https://medium.com/@Synced/artificial-intelligence-is-the-new-electricity-andrew-ng-cc132ea6264.

30   Mick Ryan, "Building a Future: Integrated Human-Machine Military Organization," *Strategy Bridge*, Dec. 11, 2017, https://thestrategybridge.org/the-bridge/2017/12/11/building-a-future-integrated-human-machine-military-organization; Paul Scharre, *Army of None: Autonomous Weapons and the Future of War* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2018).

31   Gregory C. Allen, "Project Maven Brings AI to the Fight Against ISIS," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, Dec. 21, 2017, https://thebulletin.org/project-maven-brings-ai-fight-against-isis11374.

32   Note that this illustrates the importance of data in training algorithms. While there is some promise to synthetic data for training algorithms, there is not currently a substitute for data based on real-world experience. Thus, access to large quantities of useful data will be critical to designing successful algorithms in particular arenas. For an example of basic defense research on using AI to increase situational awareness, see Heather Roff, "COMPASS: A new AI-driven situational awareness tool for the Pentagon?" *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, May 10, 2018, https://thebulletin.org/compass-new-ai-driven-situational-awareness-tool-pentagon11816.

machine-learning algorithms designed to do one specific task, with no prospect of doing anything beyond that task. One can imagine narrow AI as relatively advanced forms of autonomous systems, or machines that, once activated, are designed to complete specific tasks or functions.[33]

On the other end of the spectrum is a "super-intelligent" artificial general intelligence. This kind of AI would consist of an algorithm, or series of algorithms, that could do not only narrow tasks but also could functionally think for itself and design solutions to a broader class of problems. Describing an extreme version of this, Nick Bostrom writes about the risk of a superintelligent AI that could plausibly take over the world and perhaps even decide to eliminate humans as an inadvertent consequence of its programming.[34] In the middle of this spectrum, though perhaps leaning toward artificial general intelligence, is "transformative AI," or AI that can go beyond a narrow task such as playing a video game but falls short of achieving superintelligence.[35]

This article focuses on the potential effect that narrow applications of artificial intelligence could have on the balance of power and international competition. Among current AI technologies and advances, narrow applications are most likely to affect militaries — and with them the balance of power — over the next two decades. Moreover, even experts disagree about whether artificial general intelligence of the type that could outpace human capabilities will emerge in the short to medium term or whether it is still hundreds of years away. AI experts also disagree about the overall trajectory of advances in AI.[36] Surveys have found that only 50 percent of AI researchers believe that an AI system will be capable of writing a best-selling book by 2049. About 75 percent of AI researchers thought it could be 2090 before an AI system could write a best-selling book. That even highly trained experts disagree about these development issues illustrates a high degree of uncertainty in the field.

Given these questions about which AI technologies will be developed, this article focuses on the capabilities that are most likely to emerge in the next generation.

Technology and the Balance of Power

Emerging technologies primarily shape the balance of power through military and economic means.[37] Technologies can directly influence countries' abilities to fight and win wars. They can also indirectly affect the balance of power by impacting a country's economic power. After all, countries cannot maintain military superiority over the medium to long term without an underlying economic basis for that power.[38] Recall the decline of the Ottoman Empire or Imperial China.

However, it is not yet clear how the invention of specific AI applications will translate into military power. Despite continuing investment, efforts to integrate AI technologies into militaries have been limited.[39] Project Maven is the first activity of an "Algorithmic Warfare" initiative in the U.S. military designed to harness the potential of AI and translate it into usable military capabilities. Still, many investments in the United States and elsewhere are in early stages. As Missy L. Cummings writes:

> Autonomous ground vehicles such as tanks and transport vehicles are in development worldwide, as are autonomous underwater vehicles. In almost all cases, however, the agencies developing these technologies are struggling to make the leap from development to operational implementation.[40]

It is important to distinguish these potential technological innovations from military innovations. While military innovations are often linked to changes in technology,[41] it is not always the case. Military innovations are significant changes in organizational behavior and ways that a military fights that are designed to increase its ability to

effectively translate capabilities into power.[42] The use of aircraft carriers as mobile airfields by the United States and Japan is a prototypical example. While AI could potentially enable a number of military innovations, it is not a military innovation itself, and no applications of AI have been used in ways that would count as a military innovation at this point.

Because AI research and technology are still in their early stages, usage of AI in warfare is not even yet analogous to the first use of the tank in World War I, let alone effective use of combined arms warfare by the Germans in World War II (the military innovation now known as blitzkrieg). This limits analyses about how narrow AI might one day affect the balance of power and international politics. Most research on technology and international politics focuses on specific, mature technologies, such as nuclear weapons, or on military innovations.[43] Since AI is at an early stage, examining it requires adapting existing theories about military technology and military innovation.[44]

My adoption capacity theory provides insight

into how developments in AI will affect the balance of power.[45] This theory argues that the relative financial and organizational requirements for adopting a military innovation influence the rate of diffusion of that innovation and its impact on the balance of power. Financial considerations include calculating the unit costs of the hardware involved and determining whether the underlying capability is based on commercial or militarily-exclusive technology. Other considerations include assessing the extent to which adopting

the innovation requires disrupting the critical task of the military (i.e., what an organization views itself as attempting to achieve) or the status of key organizational elites (for example, fighter pilots in an air force). Given that adoption capacity theory focuses on major military innovations, however, it requires adaptation to be applied to artificial intelligence at present.

To determine how technological changes will shape the balance of power, adoption capacity theory suggests that three questions must be answered. First, while technology itself is rarely, if ever, determinative, how might use of a technology influence the character of warfare? Consider the machine gun. When deployed asymmetrically, it proved useful for the offense. But in combination with barbed wire, when possessed symmetrically, this technological advance helped create the trench-warfare stalemate of World War I.[46] More broadly, the Industrial Revolution and the shift in manufacturing to factories and mass production were behind the rifle's evolution from a niche, craft weapon possessed by a small number of forces to a widely available capability. This change influenced the relative lethality of battles as well as how militaries organized themselves and developed tactics.[47]

Second, how might different actors implement a given technology or be bureaucratically constrained from implementation, and what possibilities for military innovation will that generate? This question is particularly relevant because the challenges of organizational adoption and implementation of a technological innovation are closely linked with effectiveness. Those challenges are critical to determining how an innovation will impact international politics.

Decades of research demonstrates that the impact of technological change on global politics — whether it is change in economics, society at large, diplomacy, or military power — depends much more on how governments and organizations

While AI could potentially enable a number of military innovations, it is not a military innovation itself.

33   Scharre and Horowitz, "Autonomy in Weapon Systems," 5.

34   Nick Bostrom, *Superintelligence: Paths, Dangers, Strategies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

35   Allan Dafoe, "Governing the AI Revolution: The Research Landscape" (New Haven, CT: Yale University, 2018), https://machine-learning-and-security.github.io/slides/Allan-Dafoe-NIPS-s.pdf.

36   Grace et al., "When Will AI Exceed Human Performance?"

37   McNeill, *The Pursuit of Power*.

38   David A. Baldwin, "Power Analysis and World Politics: New Trends versus Old Tendencies," *World Politics* 31, no. 2 (January 1979): 161-194, https://www.jstor.org/stable/2009941; Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

39   Scharre and Horowitz, "Autonomy in Weapon Systems."

40   Missy L. Cummings, "Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Warfare," *Chatham House*, January 2017, https://www.chathamhouse.org/publication/artificial-intelligence-and-future-warfare.

41   Napoleonic warfare, or levée en masse, is an example of a military innovation not considered tied to technological innovations.

42   On military innovation in general, see Adam Grissom, "The Future of Military Innovation Studies," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 29, no. 5 (2006): 905-934, https://doi.org/10.1080/01402390600901067.

43   Bernard Brodie et al., eds., *The Absolute Weapon: Atomic Power and World Order* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1946); Stephen P. Rosen, *Winning the Next War: Innovation and the Modern Military* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991); Barry R. Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine: France, Britain, and Germany Between the World Wars* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1984).

44   Posen, *Sources of Military Doctrine;* Rosen, *Winning the Next War;* Dima Adamsky, *The Culture of Military Innovation: The Impact of Cultural Factors on the Revolution in Military Affairs in Russia, the U.S., and Israel* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010); Theo Farrell, "World Culture and Military Power," *Security Studies* 14, no. 3 (2005): 448-488, https://doi.org/10.1080/09636410500323187; Emily O. Goldman and Leslie C. Eliason eds., *The Diffusion of Military Technology and Ideas* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003).

45   Horowitz, *Diffusion of Military Power*, 10-11.

46   This relates to questions about the offense/defense implications of technology, though technology itself is rarely predictive. See Keir A. Lieber, *War and the Engineers: The Primacy of Politics Over Technology* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005).

47   Stephen D. Biddle, *Military Power: Explaining Victory and Defeat in Modern Battle* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004).

make choices about the adoption and use of new capabilities than on the technologies themselves.[48] Scholarship on military innovation by Barry Posen, Stephen P. Rosen, and others shows that technological innovation alone rarely shapes the balance of power.[49] Instead, it is *how* militaries use a technology that makes a difference.[50] A military's ability to employ a technology depends in part on the complexity of the technology, how difficult it is to use, and whether it operates in predictable and explainable ways. These factors influence the trust that senior military leaders have in the technology and whether they use it.[51] Additionally, the more bureaucratically disruptive it is to adopt a technology, the more challenging it can be for older, more established organizations to do so — particularly if the organization is underinvested in research and development designed to integrate new technologies and ideas.[52]

Consider that every country in Europe in the mid-19th century had access to railroads, rifles, and the telegraph around the same time. But it was the Prussian military that first figured out how to exploit these technologies, in combination, to rapidly project power. After that, other militaries adapted their organizations to take similar advantage.[53]

The example of the British Navy and the aircraft carrier further illustrates how organizational processes determine the impact of technology on military power.[54] As referenced above, despite having invented the aircraft carrier, the Royal Navy's institutional commitment to the battleship meant that it initially saw the value of this new technology almost exclusively in its ability to facilitate the use of airplanes to act as "spotters" for battleships. The United States and Japan, as rising naval powers with less invested in the importance of the battleship, thought more creatively about this innovation and realized that the aircraft carrier's real value lay in the independent striking power it offered.[55] Since battleships — and admirals with experience and comfort operating them — dominated the navies of many countries, thinking about the aircraft carrier as a mobile airfield required a difficult conceptual shift.[56]

Even after it became clear that the optimal use of aircraft carriers was as a mobile airfield, adopting carrier warfare proved challenging. The Chinese navy has been working on carrier operations for two decades and is only just starting to build real competency. The Soviet Union attempted to adopt carrier warfare for decades and failed. Simply put, the systems integration tasks required to operate the ship, launch and recover airplanes from the ship, and coordinate with other naval assets are very difficult to execute.[57] The larger the change within the organization required for a military to effectively utilize new technologies, the greater the bureaucratic challenges and, with them, the likelihood that powerful countries will not have the organizational capability to adopt. This is a key mechanism through which the balance of power can change.

Third, how will a new technology spread? The answer to this question will help determine relative first-mover advantages gained from adopting the technology.[58] While Kenneth Waltz initially suggested that emulation of military technologies happens quickly, subsequent research demonstrates that it is far more complicated.[59] The rate of diffusion matters: In the case of technologies that diffuse slowly, the country that first implements will have a sustainable edge over its competitors. But when other countries can rapidly adopt a new technology, the relative advantages of being first diminish.[60]

The diffusion of military technology occurs through multiple mechanisms, just like the diffusion of technologies in general.[61] Adoption capacity theory suggests a few factors that will be key in influencing the diffusion of narrow AI. The first is the unit cost of creating AI systems. The greater the hardware and compute costs associated with creating militarily-relevant algorithms, the higher the barrier to entry will be. Alternatively, once the algorithms have been created, they become software and can more easily diffuse.

Moreover, technologies that have only military purposes tend to spread more slowly than technologies where commercial incentives drive their development. If a technology has only military uses — such as stealth technology — and it has a high unit cost and level of complexity, the number of actors who can emulate or mimic that technology is minimized.[62]

On the other hand, technologies with commercial incentives for development generally spread much faster. In the 19th century, the railroad, used as a "military technology," enabled rapid power projection and the massing of military forces to a greater degree than had previously been possible. Yet it was the commercial incentives for the fast shipping of goods that helped speed the construction of dense railroad networks around the world, making it difficult for countries to gain sustainable advantages in railroad capabilities.[63]

The Impact of AI on the Balance of Power

If Eric Schmidt, Vladimir Putin, Elon Musk, and others are correct that AI is a competitive battleground, what will be the character of that competition?[64] The United States and China seem to be furthest ahead in the development of AI. As the two most powerful countries in the world, the competition for global leadership in AI technology evokes, for many, 20th-century competitions such as the space race. Retired Marine Corps Gen. John Allen and SparkCognition CEO Amir Husain have argued that the United States therefore needs to do more to get and stay ahead.[65]

Global investments in artificial intelligence for economic and national security purposes are increasingly described as an arms race.[66] China published a national strategy on artificial intelligence in 2017 that said AI represents a "major strategic opportunity" and proposed a coordinated strategy to "build China's first mover advantage" and lead the world in AI technology.[67] Russia is investing heavily as well, especially in the military domain. Reports suggest that the Russian military is designing autonomous vehicles to guard its ballistic missile bases as well as an autonomous submarine that could carry nuclear weapons. In

48   This is not meant to endorse or reject the notion of technology as a social construction. On that point, see Trevor J. Pinch and Wiebe E. Bijker, "The Social Construction of Facts and Artefacts: Or How the Sociology of Science and the Sociology of Technology Might Benefit Each Other," *Social Studies of Science* 14, no. 3 (1984): 399-441, http://www.jstor.org/stable/285355. What is key is that it is in the context of organizational behavior that the impact of technological change becomes clearest.

49   Posen, *Sources of Military Doctrine;* Rosen, *Winning the Next War;* Adamsky, *The Culture of Military Innovation.*

50   Nuclear weapons are arguably an exception to this pattern, given their unique destructive power. But they may be the exception that proves the rule.

51   Andrea Gilli and Mauro Gilli, "Military-Technological Superiority: Systems Integration and the Challenges of Imitation, Reverse Engineering, and Cyber-Espionage," *International Security* (forthcoming).

52   Mancur Olson, *The Rise and Decline of Nations: Economic Growth, Stagflation, and Social Rigidities* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1982); Horowitz, *Diffusion of Military Power.*

53   Dennis E. Showalter, *Railroads and Rifles: Soldiers, Technology, and the Unification of Germany* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1975); Geoffrey L. Herrera and Thomas G. Mahnken, "Military Diffusion in Nineteenth-Century Europe: The Napoleonic and Prussian Military Systems," in *The Diffusion of Military Technology and Ideas*, ed. Emily O. Goldman and Leslie C. Eliason (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003).

54   Another example is the tank. Applied to AI and drones, see Ulrike E. Franke, "A European Approach to Military Drones and Artificial Intelligence," *European Council on Foreign Relations,* June 23, 2017, http://www.ecfr.eu/article/essay_a_european_approach_to_military_drones_and_artificial_intelligence. In general, see David E. Johnson, *Fast Tanks and Heavy Bombers: Innovation in the U.S. Army, 1917–1945* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998).

55   Horowitz, *Diffusion of Military Power.*

56   Horowitz, *Diffusion of Military Power.*

57   Horowitz, *Diffusion of Military Power.*

58   See Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics;* Daniel R. Headrick, *The Tools of Empire: Technology and European Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981); Horowitz, *Diffusion of Military Power.*

59   Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979).

60   Marvin B. Lieberman and David B. Montgomery, "First-Mover Advantages," *Strategic Management Journal* 9, no. 1 (1988): 41-58, https://doi.org/10.1002/smj.4250090706; Marvin B. Lieberman and David B. Montgomery, "First-Mover (Dis)Advantages: Retrospective and Link with the Resource-Based View," *Strategic Management Journal* 19, no. 12 (1998): 1111-1125, https://doi.org/10.1002/(SICI)1097-0266(1998120)19:12<1111::AID-SMJ1>3.0.CO;2-W; Gerard J. Tellis and Peter N. Golder, *Will and Vision: How Latecomers Grow to Dominate Markets* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2002).

61   Everett M. Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations,* 5th ed. (New York: Free Press, 2003).

62   Horowitz, *Diffusion of Military Power.* For a recent argument about the complexity of stealth and the challenges of adoption, see Gilli and Gilli, "Military-Technological Superiority."

63   Showalter, *Railroads and Rifles;* Geoffrey L. Herrera, *Technology and International Transformation: The Railroad, the Atom Bomb, and the Politics of Technological Change* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2006).

64   Eric Schmidt, "Keynote Address at the Center for a New American Security Artificial Intelligence and Global Security Summit," *Center for a New American Security,* Nov. 13, 2017, https://www.cnas.org/publications/transcript/eric-schmidt-keynote-address-at-the-center-for-a-new-american-security-artificial-intelligence-and-global-security-summit.

65   John R. Allen and Amir Husain, "The Next Space Race Is Artificial Intelligence," *Foreign Policy,* Nov. 3, 2017, http://foreignpolicy.com/2017/2011/2003/the-next-space-race-is-artificial-intelligence-and-america-is-losing-to-china/.

66   Tom Simonite, "For Superpowers, Artificial Intelligence Fuels New Global Arms Race," *Wired,* Sept. 8, 2017, https://www.wired.com/story/for-superpowers-artificial-intelligence-fuels-new-global-arms-race/; Zachary Cohen, "US Risks Losing Artificial Intelligence Arms Race to China and Russia," *CNN,* Nov. 29, 2017, https://www.cnn.com/2017/11/29/politics/us-military-artificial-intelligence-russia-china/index.html; Julian E. Barnes and Josh Chin, "The New Arms Race in AI," *Wall Street Journal,* Mar. 2, 2018, https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-new-arms-race-in-ai-1520009261.

67   Graham Webster et al., "China's Plan to 'Lead' in AI: Purpose, Prospects, and Problems," *New America Foundation,* Aug. 1, 2017, https://www.newamerica.org/cybersecurity-initiative/blog/chinas-plan-lead-ai-purpose-prospects-and-problems/.

robotics, Russia is deploying remotely piloted tanks, such as the Uran-9 and Vehar, on the battlefield.[68]

China and Russia are not the only actors outside the United States interested in national security applications of AI. The character of AI technology, like robotics, makes many countries well-positioned to design and deploy it for military purposes.[69] Commercial incentives for AI developments and the dual-use character of many AI applications mean that countries with advanced information economies are poised to be leaders in AI or at least fast followers.[70] In Southeast Asia, Singapore is on the cutting edge of AI investments (both military and non-military). Other Southeast Asian nations are making advances in AI research as well.[71] In the military domain, South Korea has developed the SGR-A1, a semi-autonomous weapon system designed to protect the demilitarized zone from attack by North Korea.[72]

AI also provides opportunities for capital-rich countries, which creates incentives to develop the technology. Wealthy, advanced economies that have high levels of capital but also have high labor costs or small populations — middle powers such as Australia, Canada, and many European countries — often face challenges in military recruiting. For these countries, technologies that allow them to substitute capital for labor are highly attractive. Indeed, Gen. Mick Ryan, commander of Australia's Defence College, argues that countries can take advantage of the intersection of AI and robotics to overcome the problems caused by a small population.[73] France's 2017 defense strategy review points to the development and incorporation of artificial intelligence as critical to the French military's

ability to maintain "operational superiority."[74] Israel, a classic example of an advanced economy with more capital than labor, also funds military AI investments that would predict rocket launches and analyze video footage.[75] Lt. Col. Nurit Cohen Inger,

[T]echnologies that have only military purposes tend to spread more slowly than technologies where commercial incentives drive their development.

who heads the unit of the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) in charge of assessing the military relevance of AI, said in 2017 that, for the IDF, AI "can influence every step and small decision in a conflict, and the entire conflict itself."[76]

Given these investments, how might developments in AI affect military organizations and the character of war, and how might they diffuse?

AI and the Character of War

The "character of warfare" in a period can be defined as the dominant way to fight and win conflicts given existing technologies, organizations, and polities. The character of warfare changes in concert with the tools that become available and how they influence the ways militaries organize

themselves to fight wars.[77] The shift to mass mobilization in the Napoleonic era exemplifies a non-technological development that changed the character of warfare.

Applications of AI have the potential to shape how countries fight in several macro ways. On the broadest level, autonomous systems, or narrow AI systems, have the potential to increase the speed with which countries can fight, yet another similarity between AI and the combustion engine. Even if humans are still making final decisions about the use of lethal force, fighting at machine speed can dramatically increase the pace of operations.[78]

There are several military applications of AI currently in development or under discussion that can be considered, though many are at early stages. For example, some research shows that the way that neural networks can utilize imagery databases and classify particular scenes (such as a mountain), allows for a more accurate assessment of specific locations.[79] Additionally, the processing power that is possible with narrow AI systems has the potential to increase the speed of data analysis, as Project Maven in the United States aims to do. Investments in image recognition offer the hope of achieving faster, more accurate results than humans can achieve today, and is a likely avenue for continued investment and application (setting aside the questions of accidents, hacking, and other ways that systems could go awry[80]).

Successful implementation of AI beyond areas such as image recognition might lead to new concepts of operation that could influence force

structure and force employment, or how militaries organize themselves and plan operations. One possibility is the use of large numbers of smaller platforms, known as swarms, for military operations. Algorithms and control systems designed to enable "swarming" already exist in the private sector and in academia.[81] Military-grade algorithms would require coordination with other military systems, including early-warning aircraft, inhabited aircraft, satellites, and other sensors. Deployed swarms in a combat environment would have to be capable of real-time adaptation to optimize operations if some elements of the swarm were shot down — a challenge that commercial applications would not necessarily face. Methods for developing swarming algorithms could include behavior trees or deep learning.[82]

Another potential application for narrow AI that could shape the character of war is coordination through layers of algorithms that work together to help manage complex operations. These algorithms could be expert systems that generate decision trees. Or they could involve algorithms developed through generative adversarial networks. In this approach, algorithms compete against each other to teach each other how to do various tasks. Some algorithms will need to be trained to assist in coordinating multiple military assets, both human and machine. In that case, adversarial learning could help compensate for the unique character of decision-making in individual battles and the problem of learning to adapt beyond the available training data.[83]

The ability to operate faster through algorithms

68   Samuel Bendett, "Russia Is Poised to Surprise the US in Battlefield Robotics," *Defense One*, Jan. 25 2018, https://www.defenseone.com/ideas/2018/01/russia-poised-surprise-us-battlefield-robotics/145439/; Barnes and Chin, "The New Arms Race in AI"; Samuel Bendett, "Red Robots Rising," *Strategy Bridge*, Dec. 12, 2017, https://thestrategybridge.org/the-bridge/2017/12/12/red-robots-rising-behind-the-rapid-development-of-russian-unmanned-military-systems; Valerie Insinna, "Russia's nuclear underwater drone is real and in the Nuclear Posture Review," *Defense News*, Jan. 12, 2018, https://www.defensenews.com/space/2018/01/12/russias-nuclear-underwater-drone-is-real-and-in-the-nuclear-posture-review/.

69   For an overview of AI and national security, see Daniel S. Hoadley and Nathan J. Lucas, "Artificial Intelligence and National Security," *Congressional Research Service*, Apr. 26, 2018, https://fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/R45178.pdf. Also see Benjamin Jensen, Chris Whyte, and Scott Cuomo, *Algorithms at War: The Promise, Peril, and Limits of Artificial Intelligence*, Working Paper (2018).

70   This is similar to what is going on in robotics. See Horowitz, "Military Robotics, Autonomous Systems, and the Future of Military Effectiveness."

71   Sachin Chitturu et al., "Artificial Intelligence and Southeast Asia's Future," *McKinsey Global Institute*, September 2017, 1, https://www.mckinsey.com/~/media/McKinsey/Global Themes/Artificial Intelligence/Artificial-intelligence-and-Southeast-Asias-future.ashx; Ng Eng Hen, "Speech at Committee of Supply Debate," Ministry of Defense, Singapore, Mar. 7, 2014, https://www.mindef.gov.sg/web/portal/mindef/news-and-events/latest-releases/article-detail/2014/march/2014mar06-speeches-00341/!ut/p/z0/fY07D4IwFIV_iwNjcy-IMKMOalQWNNjFVLxKFcqjDei_t8hq3M53ch7AIQWuRCfvwshKicLyiQfnMF4uVuh7-3iWuBgdk2Q7m-_XhzCADfD_Abs.

72   Mark Prigg, "Who Goes There? Samsung Unveils Robot Sentry That Can Kill From Two Miles Away," *Daily Mail (UK)*, Sept. 15, 2014, http://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-2756847/Who-goes-Samsung-reveals-robot-sentry-set-eye-North-Korea.html.

73   Ryan, "Building a Future: Integrated Human-Machine Military Organization."

74   "Strategic Review of Defence and National Security: 2017," French Ministry of Defense, Dec. 22, 2017, 3, https://www.defense.gouv.fr/dgris/politique-de-defense/revue-strategique/revue-strategique. On the European approach to drones and AI, also see Franke, "A European Approach to Military Drones and Artificial Intelligence."

75   Eliran Rubin, "Tiny IDF Unit Is Brains Behind Israeli Army Artificial Intelligence," *Haaretz*, Aug. 15, 2017, https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/tiny-idf-unit-is-brains-behind-israeli-army-artificial-intelligence-1.5442911; Yaakov Lappin, "Artificial Intelligence Shapes the IDF in Ways Never Imagined," Aglemeiner, Oct. 16, 2017, https://www.algemeiner.com/2017/10/16/artificial-intelligence-shapes-the-idf-in-ways-never-imagined/.

76   Lappin, "Artificial Intelligence Shapes the IDF in Ways Never Imagined."

77   One could also argue AI has the potential to go beyond shaping the character of war and change the nature of war itself. From a Clausewitzian perspective, that war is human fundamentally defines its nature. Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989). Thus, the nature of war is unchanging. In theory, could AI alter the nature of war itself because wars will be fought by robotic systems, not people, and because of AI's potential to engage in planning and decision-making that were previously human endeavors? U.S. Defense Secretary James Mattis speculated in February 2018 that AI is "fundamentally different" in ways that raise questions about the nature of war. See "Press Gaggle by Secretary Mattis En Route to Washington, D.C.," *Department of Defense*, Feb. 17, 2018, https://www.defense.gov/News/Transcripts/Transcript-View/Article/1444921/press-gaggle-by-secretary-mattis-en-route-to-washington-dc/. This is an important debate but one beyond the scope of this paper. For elements of this debate, see Kareem Ayoub and Kenneth Payne, "Strategy in the Age of Artificial Intelligence," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 39, no. 5-6 (2016): 793-819, https://doi.org/10.1080/01402390.2015.1088838; Frank G. Hoffman, "Will War's Nature Change in the Seventh Military Revolution?" *Parameters* 47, no. 4, (2018): 19-31, https://ssi.armywarcollege.edu/pubs/parameters/issues/Winter_2017-18/5_Hoffman.pdf. Also see Kenneth Payne, *Strategy, Evolution, and War: From Apes to Artificial Intelligence* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2018).

78   Robert O. Work, *Deputy Secretary of Defense Speech at Center for a New American Security Defense Forum*, Dec. 14, 2015, http://www.defense.gov/News/Speeches/Speech-View/Article/634214/cnas-defense-forum; John R. Allen and Amir Husain, "On Hyperwar," *Proceedings of the United States Naval Institute* 143, no. 7 (July 2017), https://www.usni.org/magazines/proceedings/2017-07/hyperwar.

79   Bolei Zhou et al., "Places: A 10 Million Image Database for Scene Recognition," *IEEE Transactions on Pattern Analysis and Machine Intelligence* (July 2017), https://doi.org/10.1109/TPAMI.2017.2723009.

80   Miles Brundage et al., "The Malicious Use of Artificial Intelligence: Forecasting, Prevention, and Mitigation," Working Paper (2018), https://arxiv.org/abs/1802.07228; Stephanie Carvin, "Normal Autonomous Accidents", *Social Science Research Network* (2018), http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3161446.

81   For example, see Vijay Kumar, Aleksandr Kushleyev, and Daniel Mellinger, "Three-Dimensional Manipulation of Teams of Quadrotors," Google Patents, 2017, https://patents.google.com/patent/US20150105946.

82   Simon Jones et al., "Evolving Behaviour Trees for Swarm Robotics," in *Distributed Autonomous Robotic Systems*, ed. Roderich Grob, et al. (Boulder, CO: Springer, 2018).

83   Tero Karras et al., "Progressive Growing of GANs for Improved Quality, Stability, and Variation," published as a conference paper at *International Conference on Learning Representations 2018* (2018), https://arxiv.org/abs/1710.10196.

that assist human commanders in optimizing battle plans, including real-time operations, could shift force employment and force structure, especially in the air and at sea. Since World War II, modern militaries have been engaged in a shift from quantity to quality in military systems. The thinking is that smaller numbers of expensive, high-quality systems are more likely to lead to victory in battles. AI could accelerate trends that challenge these long-running force-structure imperatives, such as the need to defeat adversaries with advanced anti-access, area-denial (A2/AD) networks with tolerable costs.

If algorithms and coordination at machine speed become critical to success on the battlefield, expensive, high-quality platforms could become vulnerable to swarms of sensors and lower-cost weapons platforms that are effectively networked together. AI could thus help bring quantity back into the equation in the form of large numbers of robotic systems. In the near to mid-term, however, optimal use of AI may lie in leveraging machine learning to improve the performance of existing platforms.

Incentives exist for nearly all types of political regimes to develop AI applications for military purposes. For democracies, AI can decrease the relative burden of warfare on the population and reduce the risk to soldiers, even more so than with remotely piloted systems, by reducing the use of personnel. For autocracies, which do not trust their people in the first place, the ability to outsource some elements of military decision-making to algorithms, reducing reliance on humans to fight wars, is inherently attractive.[84]

Organizational Politics and Artificial Intelligence

Despite uncertainty about specific military applications of AI, the examples of how AI can be used in a military context described above reveal that these capabilities have the potential to significantly disrupt organizational structures. Take the example of battle management coordination (whether in human-machine teams or not): Successfully operating even semi-autonomous battle management systems is likely to require new occupational specialties and shifts in recruiting, training, and promotion to empower individuals who understand both military operations and how particular AI systems function. Rosen shows that altering the promotion of military personnel to empower those with expertise in new areas is critical to adopting military innovations in general. AI should be no exception.[85]

As described above, the use of AI systems at the operational level could generate options for how militaries organize and plan to use force, due to the potential to use larger numbers of networked systems operating at machine speed instead of relying exclusively on small numbers of high-quality inhabited aircraft. Implementing such concepts, however, could require disruptive organizational shifts that could threaten to change which military occupations provide the highest status and are gateways to leadership roles. Already, this can be seen with the Air Force, dominated by fighter pilots, which has been relatively hesitant when it comes to investments in uninhabited aerial vehicles. It would also challenge entrenched bureaucratic notions about how to weigh quantity versus quality. Adopting narrow AI in the most optimal way could prove challenging for leading militaries, which will need trained personnel who can do quality and reliability assurance for AI applications to ensure their appropriate and effective use.

Other applications, such as Project Maven in the U.S. Department of Defense, are easier to implement because they are sustaining technologies from the perspective of literature on organizational innovation.[86] Autonomous systems that can rapidly and accurately process drone footage do not disrupt high-status military occupational specialties, nor do they disrupt how military services operate as a whole. It is when optimal uses of narrow AI would require large shifts to force structure that the adoption requirements, and bureaucratic anti-bodies, ramp up. One example of bureaucratic resistance preventing the production of a new technology that could have proved disruptive is the U.S. military's failure to fund the X-47B drone, a next-generation system that could take off from and land on aircraft carriers autonomously. This illustrates the way bureaucratic politics and organizational competition can hinder the adoption of innovative technologies.[87]

The strategic or organizational culture of a military or society can also indicate which will be best positioned to exploit potential advances in AI,[88] specifically, how open those cultures are to innovation. There is a risk of tautology, of course, in cultural arguments at times since it can be hard to measure whether an organization is capable of adopting a technology until it has tried to do so or done it. However, Emily Goldman's work on the Ottoman Empire suggests the value of developing metrics of cultural openness when it comes to predicting willingness to experiment and adopt AI systems.[89]

Interestingly, norms regarding force structure could also play a role in inhibiting the use of AI for certain military tasks. As Theo Farrell's research on the Irish Army after independence shows, militaries often mimic the functional form of more powerful actors even when doing so is not in their interest. Applying his insight in the case of artificial intelligence, some militaries may be less

The character of AI technology, like robotics, makes many countries well-positioned to design and deploy it for military purposes.

likely to use AI in ways that are organizationally disruptive, especially if doing so would involve shifts in visible force structure, such as a move from small numbers of advanced inhabited aircraft to swarming concepts that use cheaper, more disposable aircraft.[90]

Arguments about organizational and strategic culture are generally consistent with adoption capacity theory, since both focus on the challenges that innovations present when they disrupt the identity of an organization.[91] After all, militaries that already spend a lot on research and development, that are younger, and that have broad conceptions of their critical task are more likely to be culturally "open" and able to adopt new technologies or full innovations further down the development line.

The Diffusion of Militarily-Relevant AI: Two Scenarios

There is a fundamental question about the extent to which militarily-relevant uses of narrow AI will diffuse easily. Answering this question is necessary for predicting the first-mover advantages associated with a technological innovation, which in turn helps to determine its relative impact on the balance of power and warfare. To determine how easily a new technology will diffuse, adoption capacity theory suggests looking at the unit cost of the technology, especially the physical hardware.

Designing AI capabilities requires both software and hardware. This influences how to think about the "unit cost" of AI. Military capabilities based in hardware often spread more slowly than those based in software, generating more sustainable advantage for the first adopter of a given capability, especially when the unit costs of that capability are relatively high. The high unit cost of flattop aircraft carriers, for example, means that only wealthy and powerful countries adopt them.[92]

When it comes to platforms, algorithms are software rather than hardware. Take the example of the MQ-9 Reaper, a current-generation U.S. military armed drone. The MQ-9 is remotely piloted, meaning that a pilot at another location directs the airframe and makes decisions about firing weapons against potential targets. The difference between this and an autonomous version that is piloted and operated by an algorithm is software. From the outside, the platform would look the same.

But, if narrow AI is software from the perspective of military technology, it is software that requires substantial hardware for its creation. The associated hardware costs — especially for advanced narrow AI applications — are potentially significant.[93] The more complex the algorithm, the more up-front computational hardware is required to "train" that algorithm.[94] Thus, corporate and academic AI research leaders have to invest in teraflops of computing power. This is a different kind of hardware than a tank or a cruise missile, but it is hardware all the same. Rapid advances in AI through deep learning and neural networks over the last decade have thus required advances

84 Michael C. Horowitz, "The promise and peril of military applications of artificial intelligence," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, Apr. 23, 2018, https://thebulletin.org/military-applications-artificial-intelligence/promise-and-peril-military-applications-artificial-intelligence.

85 Rosen, *Winning the Next War.*

86 Clayton M. Christensen, *The Innovator's Dilemma* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 1997). This also relates to strategies for innovating within militaries. See Peter Dombrowski and Eugene Gholz, *Buying Military Transformation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006).

87 Cummings, "Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Warfare," 9. Also see Lawrence Spinetta and Missy L. Cummings, "Unloved Aerial Vehicles: Gutting Its UAV Plan, the Air Force Sets a Course for Irrelevance," *Armed Forces Journal* (November 2012): 8-12, http://hdl.handle.net/1721.1/86940.

88 Adamsky, *Culture of Military Innovation.*

89 Emily O. Goldman, "Cultural Foundations of Military Diffusion," *Review of International Studies* 32, no. 1 (2006): 69-91, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210506006930.

90 Farrell, "World Culture and Military Power."

91 Horowitz, *Diffusion of Military Power.*

92 Horowitz, *Diffusion of Military Power.*

93 Tim Hwang, "Computational Power and the Social Impact of Artificial Intelligence," Mar. 23, 2018, https://ssrn.com/abstract=3147971.

94 Hof, "Deep Learning."

in computing hardware. Joel Emer, an electrical engineering and computer science professor at MIT, states it plainly: "Many AI accomplishments were made possible because of advances in hardware."[95] After an algorithm has been trained, however, it can be applied without access to that computing environment, and the power necessary to run completed algorithms is dramatically reduced.

How rapidly AI capabilities will diffuse via simultaneous invention or mimicry will depend, in part, on the availability of computing power. If the cost of computing power continues to decline

> Incentives exist for nearly all types of political regimes to develop AI applications for military purposes.

as chips become more efficient, then countries that are already home to advanced technology companies will have more access to AI capabilities faster than other countries without those kinds of technology companies.

If, on the other hand, the hardware costs of developing complex algorithms remain beyond the capacity of companies in most countries, diffusion will happen only deliberately, such as through trade or bilateral agreements at the nation-state level, or via espionage (i.e., hacking). This would likely slow the diffusion of most AI advances, increasing the advantages for innovators.

Determining the extent to which militarily-relevant applications of AI are based on commercial technology versus exclusively military research is also a critical question raised by adoption capacity

theory. While it is hard to know the answer at present, examining both scenarios will illustrate how that answer might shape the way AI affects the balance of power and the structure of international competition.

Dual-Use AI

Research on the future of work suggests that strong commercial drivers are incentivizing the development of AI around the world. A 2017 McKinsey Global Institute report found a midpoint estimate of 400 million people, or 15 percent of the workforce, that are likely to be disrupted by automation before 2030.[96] Widely cited research by Carl B. Frey and Michael A. Osborne estimates that 47 percent of jobs in the United States are at risk of being replaced by automation. That includes lawyers, stock traders, and accountants, not just blue-collar jobs.[97] Companies across the economy have incentives to develop and use algorithms.

Commercial interest in AI is so high that some argue it — and the finite number of talented AI engineers — is holding back military developments.[98] What's more, the higher salaries and benefits that commercial companies can offer mean that militaries may have to turn to civilian companies to develop advanced AI capabilities. Google's decision to partner with the U.S. Defense Department on Project Maven illustrates how the same talent and knowledge that will drive commercial innovation in AI may also be necessary for military technology innovation.[99]

When technology advances derive primarily from the civilian sector, rapid adoption of new technologies around the world becomes more likely. Commercial companies may spread the technology themselves, and the profit motive incentivizes rapid mimicry by related companies in different countries.[100] Companies in Brazil, Germany, Japan, and Singapore could become AI leaders or at least fast followers.

A commitment to open-source development by

many of the major players in AI could also increase the rate of diffusion. In 2015, for example, Google opened up TensorFlow, its artificial intelligence engine, to the public.[101] Elsewhere, researchers committed to the open development of AI to help reduce the safety risk of algorithms that "break" in high-leverage situations publish their findings in ways that advance their cause — and make it easier for their algorithms to be copied.[102]

Even though advanced applications of commercial AI would require significant hardware and expertise, adoption capacity theory suggests that as the underlying basis of a technology gets more commercially oriented, it spreads relatively faster, as explained above. Companies like DeepMind have an edge today. But in such a scenario, there would be more companies around the world with relevant technological capacity. It is also easier for governments to leverage private-sector companies when those private-sector actors have non-governmental market incentives for developing or copying technology.

So how would dual-use AI being critical to military applications of AI shape global power? As noted above, the period in which a technological innovator enjoys a market advantage shrinks when countries and companies can acquire or copy others' advances relatively easily. This makes it hard to stay ahead qualitatively.[103] In the AI and robotics realms, it is possible that this will create yet another incentive for countries to focus on quantity in military systems. If leads in AI development prove difficult to sustain, advanced militaries are likely to have systems of approximately the same quality level, presuming they all reach the same conclusion about the general potential of integrating AI into military operations. In that case, countries may be more likely to try to gain advantage by emphasizing quantity again — this is in addition to the inherent incentives for mass that narrow AI might create.

If dual-use AI is critical to military applications of AI, the ability to design forces, training, and operational plans to take advantage of those dual-use applications will be a differentiating factor for leadership in AI among the great powers. The 1940 Battle of France illustrates what could ultimately

be at stake in the most extreme case. Both the Germans on one side and the British and French on the other had tanks, trucks, radios, and airplanes that they could, in theory, have used for close air support. What gave the Germans such a large edge was blitzkrieg — a new concept of operations that could overwhelm even another advanced adversary.[104]

Let's return to the comparison between AI and the space race. If AI technology diffuses more rapidly because it has both commercial and military purposes, making first-mover advantages more difficult to sustain, comparisons to the space race may be limited. The space race was a bilateral challenge between the United States and the Soviet Union designed to put a person on the moon, which included both developments in rockets and technologies designed to keep humans alive in space, land on the moon, and return safely. The rocket development itself was also part of the creation of intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs). And critical economic spillovers from the space race included development of the satellites that led to GPS and other key enablers of the Information Age. Yet overall, the race to the moon was run by two governments for national purposes — not primarily for dual-use economic gain.

The commercial drivers of AI technology, and the speed with which new algorithms diffuse, would make competition much broader than it was during the bilateral space race. Competition is much more likely to be multilateral, featuring countries and companies around the world. A better analogy might be to the competition surrounding the development of Second Industrial Revolution technologies in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. France, Germany, Britain, Japan, the United States, and others vied for supremacy in steel production, chemicals, petroleum, electricity, and other areas.

For military applications of AI where the underlying technology is driven by commercial developments, the impact of a country getting ahead in AI technology, over time, would have unclear implications for relative power if a rival country was close enough to be a fast follower.

95 Meg Murphy, "Building the Hardware for the Next Generation of Artificial Intelligence," *MIT News*, Nov. 30 2017, http://news.mit.edu/2017/building-hardware-next-generation-artificial-intelligence-1201.

96 James Manyika et al., "What the Future of Work Will Mean for Jobs, Skills, and Wages," *McKinsey Global Institute report*, November 2017, https://www.mckinsey.com/global-themes/future-of-organizations-and-work/what-the-future-of-work-will-mean-for-jobs-skills-and-wages.

97 Carl B. Frey and Michael A. Osborne, "The Future of Employment: How Susceptible Are Jobs to Computerisation?" *Technological Forecasting and Social Change* 114 (January 2017): 254-280, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techfore.2016.08.019.

98 Cummings, "Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Warfare": 10.

99 Kate Conger and Dell Cameron, "Google Is Helping the Pentagon Build AI for Drones," *Gizmodo*, Mar. 6, 2018, https://gizmodo.com/google-is-helping-the-pentagon-build-ai-for-drones-1823464533.

100 Horowitz, *Diffusion of Military Power*.

101 Cade Metz, "Google Just Open Sourced TensorFlow, Its Artificial Intelligence Engine," *Wired*, Nov. 9, 2015, https://www.wired.com/2015/11/google-open-sources-its-artificial-intelligence-engine/.

102 Dario Amodei et al., "Concrete Problems in AI Safety," arXiv, July 25, 2016, https://arxiv.org/abs/1606.06565. This commitment to openness has limits. Google has many proprietary algorithms, and Microsoft's Watson (which first came to fame when it defeated Ken Jennings, the greatest living human Jeopardy player) is also proprietary.

103 In extreme examples where first-mover advantages are difficult to generate, there can be advantages for rapid followers that do not have to pay initial R&D costs. Alexander Gerschenkron, *Economic Backwardness in Historical Perspective: A Book of Essays* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962).

104 The Germans did not call it blitzkrieg, explicitly. Ernest R. May, *Strange Victory: Hitler's Conquest of France* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2000); Posen, *Sources of Military Doctrine*.

Advances in commercially driven AI technology are about building new industries, changing the character of existing industries, and ensuring that the leading corporations in the global economy that emerges are based in one's own country.

Militarily-Exclusive AI

The alternative to military applications of AI that are based in commercial developments is a world where military applications of AI are driven instead by research that is applicable only to militaries. Copying technological innovations of "excludable" technologies — those not based on widely available commercial technology — requires espionage to steal the technology (as the Soviets did with the atomic bomb) or mimicry based on observable

> **China's AI strategy highlights the way many countries increasingly view AI as a global competition that involves nation-states, rather than as a market in which companies can invest.**

principles of the technology.[105] There are several reasons, however, to think that many military applications of narrow AI will be unique in ways that will make them more difficult to copy.

First, the complexity of advanced military systems can make emulation costly and difficult. This is especially true when a number of components are not available on the commercial market and the ability to build them depends, in part, on classified information.[106] The same can also be said for some advanced commercial technology, of course, but this is not the norm. The inability to adapt commercial algorithms for some military purposes could limit the capacity of most states to produce relevant AI-based military capabilities, even if they have advanced commercial AI sectors. It could also mean that systems integration challenges for using

militarily-relevant algorithms are large enough to deter many militaries from investing heavily.[107]

Whatever the uncertainty about how specific AI advances will translate into military capabilities, some of the most important military applications of narrow AI — those with a potentially substantial impact on larger-scale military operations — may not have obvious civilian counterparts. Battle management algorithms that coordinate a military operation at machine speed do not necessarily have commercial analogues — even if supervised by a human with command authority — excluding the development of a narrow AI designed, say, to run a factory or operational system from top to bottom. In these arenas, military-grade algorithms may require conceptual breakthroughs that other countries may find hard to rapidly mimic.

Second, some military AI applications , such as image recognition, do have obvious commercial counterparts. Even in those cases, however, the cybersecurity concerns and reliability associated with military-grade technology can differ from those for civilian applications. Military AI systems deployed in the field may require hardening for electronic warfare and extra protections from spoofing and hacking that would be of relatively less concern in the civilian world. In military environments, adversaries' efforts to hack and spoof increase the need for security.

The potential for countries to have strong commercial AI research sectors may mean that even narrow AI developments with applications geared toward military use may be easier to mimic than, say, stealth technology has been over the last generation. But stealth is an outlier: It has proven uniquely difficult to copy relative to other military technologies over the past few hundred years.

For AI developments that do not have clear commercial analogues, there could be substantial first-mover advantages for militaries that swiftly adopt AI technologies, particularly if they can achieve compute-driven breakthroughs that

are difficult to copy. What would this mean for AI competition? As described above, China's AI strategy highlights the way many countries increasingly view AI as a global competition that involves nation-states, rather than as a market in which companies can invest.[108] As Elsa Kania writes, the People's Liberation Army (PLA)

> is funding a wide range of projects involving AI, and the Chinese defense industry and PLA research institutes are pursuing extensive research and development, in some cases partnering with private enterprises.[109]

Adopting militarily-exclusive AI technologies could also generate significant organizational pressure on militaries. Even if it would be hard for most countries to be fast followers, or mimic the advances of other militaries, great-power competition in AI would generate risk for those powers that are unable to adapt in order to

organizationally exploit advances in AI, even if they are able to make technical advances. Traditionally, this risk is highest for the world's leading military power, in this case the United States. Leading military powers often struggle to envision how to use new technologies in ways that are organizationally disruptive. They can also be blind to that fact, believing they are in the lead right up to the point when their failure of creativity matters.[110]

From a balance-of-power perspective, this scenario would be more likely to feature disruption among emerging and great powers but not a broader leveling of the military playing field. The ability to exclude many countries from advances in AI would concentrate military competition among current leading militaries, such as the United States, China, and Russia. There could be significant disruption within those categories, though. A Chinese military that more rapidly developed critical algorithms for broader battle management, or that was more

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105 The issue of algorithm theft raises questions of cybersecurity. This differs from more common questions about whether cyberweapons are autonomous weapons. On cyber in general, see Thomas Rid, *Rise of the Machines: A Cybernetic History* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2016); Rebecca Slayton, "What Is the Cyber Offense-Defense Balance? Conceptions, Causes, and Assessment," *International Security* 41, no. 3 (2017): 72-109, https://doi.org/10.1162/ISEC_a_00267; Ben Buchanan, *The Cybersecurity Dilemma: Hacking, Trust, and Fear Between Nations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); Nina Kollars, "The Rise of Smart Machines," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Security, Risk, and Intelligence*, ed. Robert Dover, Huw Dylan, and Michael Goodmans (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2016), 195-211.

106 Stephen G. Brooks, *Producing Security: Multinational Corporations, Globalization, and the Changing Calculus of Conflict* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005); Andrea Gilli and Mauro Gilli, "The Diffusion of Drone Warfare? Industrial, Organizational and Infrastructural Constraints," *Security Studies* 25, no. 1 (2016): 50-84, https://doi.org/10.1080/09636412.2016.1134189.

107 Gilli and Gilli, "Military-Technological Superiority." Note this extends the argument to AI.

108 Elsa B. Kania, "Battlefield Singularity: Artificial Intelligence, Military Revolution, and China's Future Military Power," *Center for a New American Security*, Nov. 28, 2017, https://www.cnas.org/publications/reports/battlefield-singularity-artificial-intelligence-military-revolution-and-chinas-future-military-power.

109 Kania, "Battlefield Singularity": 4. .

110 Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics*.

willing to use them than the United States, might gain advantages that shifted power in the Asia-Pacific. This assumes that these algorithms operate as they are designed to operate. All militarily-useful AI will have to be hardened against hacking and spoofing. Operators will use narrow AI applications only if they are as or more effective or reliable as existing inhabited or remotely-piloted options.[111]

While this discussion has focused on narrow AI applications, the notion of bilateral competition in AI may be most pressing when thinking about artificial general intelligence.[112] Although artificial general intelligence is beyond the scope of this paper, it would matter as a discrete competitive point only if there is a clear reward to being first, as opposed to being a fast follower. For example, developing artificial general intelligence first could lock in economic or military leadership. Then others would not have the ability to adopt it themselves, or their adoptions would be somehow less relevant, and that could be a discrete "end

China is spending much more than the United States on AI research.

point" to competition. It seems unlikely, however, that such development would be that discrete or that one country would get a lead in this technology that is so large that it can consolidate the impact of being a first mover before others catch up.

Conclusion

Technological innovations, whether the machine gun, the railroad, or the longbow, can influence the balance of power and international conflict. Yet their impact is generally determined by how people and organizations use the technology rather than

by the technology itself.[113] It is too early to tell what the impact of narrow AI will be, but technology development suggests it will have at least some effect.

As an "enabling" technology that is more like electricity or the combustion engine than a weapon system, narrow AI is likely to have an impact that extends beyond specific questions of military superiority to influence economic power and societies around the world. This article demonstrates that technological innovation in AI could have large-scale consequences for the global balance of power. Whatever the mix of dual-use AI or militarily-exclusive AI that ends up shaping modern militaries over the next few decades, the organizational adoption requirements are likely to be significant. Militaries around the world will have to grapple with how to change recruiting and promotion policies to empower soldiers who understand algorithms and coding, as well as potential shifts in force structure to take advantage of AI-based coordination on the battlefield.

Military and economic history suggests that the effect of narrow AI could be quite large, even if suggestions of AI triggering a new industrial revolution are overstated. Adoption capacity theory shows that changes in relative military power become more likely in cases of military innovations that require large organizational changes and the adoption of new operational concepts. Even if the United States, China, and Russia were to end up with similar levels of basic AI capacity over the next decade, the history of military innovations from the phalanx to blitzkrieg suggests it is *how* they and others use AI that will matter most for the future of military power.

Whether AI capabilities diffuse relatively slowly or quickly, major military powers will likely face security dilemmas having to do with AI development and deployment. In a slow diffusion scenario, if countries fear that adversaries could get ahead in ways that are hard to rapidly mimic — and small differences in capabilities will matter

on the battlefield — that will foster incentives for quick development and deployment. In a rapid diffusion scenario, competitive incentives will also exist, as countries feel like they have to race just to keep up.[114] Moreover, it will be inherently difficult to measure competitors' progress with AI (unlike, say, observing the construction of an aircraft carrier), causing countries to assume the worst of their potential rivals.

Competition in developing AI is underway. Countries around the world are investing heavily in AI, though the United States and China seem to be ahead. Yet even if the space-race analogy is not precise, understanding AI as a competition can still be useful. Such frameworks help people and organizations understand the world around them, from how to evaluate international threats to the potential trajectory of wars.[115] If likening competition in AI to the space race clarifies the stakes in ways that generate incentives for bureaucratic action at the government level, and raises corporate and public awareness, the analogy stands to have utility for the United States.

From a research perspective, one limitation of this article is its focus on the balance of power and international competition, as opposed to specific uses of AI. Future research could investigate particular implementations of AI for military purposes or other critical questions. Specific implementations could include the use of autonomous weapon systems able to select and engage targets on their own. These systems could raise ethical and moral questions about human control,[116] as well as practical issues surrounding war that is fought at "machine speed."[117] The integration of AI into early-warning systems and its ability to aid in rapid targeting could also

affect crisis stability and nuclear weapons.[118] In the broader security realm, AI will affect human security missions.[119] By laying out an initial framework for how military applications of narrow AI could structure international competition and the balance of power, this article lays the groundwork for thinking through these questions in the future.

This article also raises a series of policy questions. When thinking about AI as an arena for international competition, one question is whether, in response to China's AI strategy, the United States should launch its own comprehensive AI strategy. In 2016, the Obama White House released an AI policy road map. It acknowledged the importance of U.S. leadership in AI but focused mostly on regulatory policy questions.[120] The transition from Barack Obama to Donald Trump led to a pause in these efforts, though the White House recently announced the creation of a new committee of AI experts to advise it on policy choices.[121]

Some might argue that it is necessary for the United States to develop and announce a formal AI strategy similar to China's.[122] While there are plenty of private-sector incentives for the development of AI technology, only the government can coordinate AI investments and ensure the development of particular implementations that it considers critical for AI leadership.[123]

On the other hand, it is the free market in the United States, and its connections to the global economy, that have made the United States an engine of global innovation. More centrally planned economies have often struggled with innovation. During the Cold War, the Soviet defense industrial base and military proved effective at perfecting existing technologies or adopting technologies.

111 Paul Scharre, "Autonomous Weapons and Operational Risk," *Center for a New American Security,* working paper, (February 2016), https://www.cnas.org/publications/reports/autonomous-weapons-and-operational-risk.

112 Thanks to Heather Roff for making this point clear.

113 H.R. McMaster, "Continuity and Change: The Army Operating Concept and Clear Thinking About Future War."

114 On the security dilemma, see Robert Jervis, "Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma," *World Politics* 30, no. 2 (1978): 167-214, http://www.jstor.org/stable/2009958. This would also make arms control more difficult.

115 Yuen Foong Khong, *Analogies at War: Korea, Munich, Dien Bien Phu, and the Vietnam Decisions of 1965* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992).

116 Michael C. Horowitz, "The Ethics and Morality of Robotic Warfare: Assessing The Debate Over Autonomous Weapons," *Daedalus* 145, no. 4 (2016): 25-36, https://doi.org/10.1162/DAED_a_00409.

117 On warfare at machine speed, see Robert O. Work, *Deputy Secretary of Defense Remarks to the Association of the U.S. Army Annual Convention,* Oct. 4, 2016, https://www.defense.gov/News/Speeches/Speech-View/Article/974075/remarks-to-the-association-of-the-us-army-annual-convention/. On AI and the speed of war, see Allen and Husain, "On Hyperwar."

118 Horowitz, Scharre, and Velez-Green, "A Stable Nuclear Future?"

119 Heather Roff, "Advancing Human Security Through Artificial Intelligence," *Chatham House,* May 2017, https://www.chathamhouse.org/publication/advancing-human-security-through-artificial-intelligence.

120 Ed Felten and Terah Lyons, "The Administration's Report on the Future of Artificial Intelligence," *White House,* Oct. 12, 2016, https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/blog/2016/10/12/administrations-report-future-artificial-intelligence.

121 Aaron Boyd, "White House Announces Select Committee of Federal AI Experts," *Nextgov,* May 10, 2018, https://www.nextgov.com/emerging-tech/2018/05/white-house-announces-select-committee-federal-ai-experts/148123/.

122 For a recent example, see William A. Carter, Emma Kinnucan, and Josh Elliot, "A National Machine Intelligence Strategy for the United States," *Center for Strategic and International Studies* and *Booz Allen Hamilton*, March 2018, https://www.csis.org/analysis/national-machine-intelligence-strategy-united-states.

123 Allen and Husain, "The Next Space Race Is Artificial Intelligence."

The centralized Soviet system, however, made true innovation more difficult.[124]

China is spending much more than the United States on AI research, and Chinese AI researchers are producing more papers on topics such as deep learning than U.S. researchers.[125] How that translates into tangible advances in AI technology is unclear. From a balance-of-power perspective, one could argue that the optimal approach would involve a mixed strategy between market and government development of AI. In the economic arena, central planning can stifle innovation, meaning the role of government should be to fund basic research and then let market incentives do the rest.

The defense sector may be different, however. For the United States, it will be up to the Department of Defense to clearly outline what types of AI technologies are most useful and to seed research and development to turn those technologies into a reality. For any strategy, for both the United States and China, a principal challenge will be translating basic research in programs of record into actual capabilities. As Cummings writes about government agencies working on AI systems around the world, "[T]he agencies developing these technologies are struggling to make the leap from development to operational implementation."[126]

More broadly, if investing in and appropriately utilizing AI is critical to military power in the 21st century, the U.S. approach is a mixed bag. Optimists can point to investments in connecting cutting-edge research to U.S. military forces through institutions such as the Defense Innovation Unit – Experimental (DIUx), the Strategic Capabilities Office, and the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA). From discussions of the "Third Offset" to "Multi-Domain Battle," senior military and civilian leaders are also taking the challenge of AI seriously.[127]

Meanwhile, a great deal of bottom-up innovation is happening in the U.S. military, both in terms of developing technologies and experimenting with novel concepts of operation. It is possible that the research and smaller, experimental programs that the United States is funding will become part of mainstream U.S. military programs, enabling the United States to stay ahead and sustain its military superiority. If narrow AI continues to develop, adopting the technology will require sustained attention by senior leaders.

Pessimists, however, can point to a gap between rhetoric and unit-level experimentation on the one hand and budgetary realities on the other.[128] There is a lot of discussion about the importance of artificial intelligence and robotics, as well as a clear desire among senior uniformed leadership to make the U.S. military more networked, distributed, and lethal by taking advantage of AI, among other technologies.[129] This rhetoric has not yet caught up to reality in terms of U.S. military spending on AI. When faced with a choice of investing in a next-generation drone, for example, the U.S. Navy used its available programmatic dollars for the MQ-25 air-to-air refueling platform, which will support inhabited aircraft such as the F-35. The MQ-25 program was chosen over an advanced armed system — based on the X-47B demonstrator — with stealthy potential that could operate in dangerous conflict environments.[130] The MQ-25 decision may be seen as the canary in the coal mine if the U.S. military falls behind in the coming decades — especially if a failure to appropriately adopt advances in AI and robotics turns out to be a key reason for that relative military decline.

At the end of the day, however, AI's effect on international politics will depend on much more than choices about one particular military program. The challenge for the United States will be in calibrating, based on trends in AI developments, how fast to move in incorporating narrow AI applications. This will be true whether those applications are dual-use or based in exclusively-military research. And that challenge to leadership in AI in general, as well as in military power, is complicated by the movements of China and other competitors, all of which seem interested in leveraging AI to challenge U.S. military superiority.

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124 Matthew Evangelista, *Innovation and the Arms Race: How the United States and the Soviet Union Develop New Military Technologies* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988).

125 Cade Metz, "As China Marches Forward on A.I., the White House Is Silent," *New York Times*, Feb. 12, 2018, https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/12/technology/china-trump-artificial-intelligence.html.

126 Cummings, 9.

127 Tom Simonite, "Defense Secretary James Mattis Envies Silicon Valley's AI Ascent," *Wired*, Aug. 11, 2017, https://www.wired.com/story/james-mattis-artificial-intelligence-diux/; Gopal Ratnam, "DARPA Chief Touts Artificial Intelligence Efforts," *Roll Call*, Mar. 1, 2018, https://www.rollcall.com/news/politics/darpa-chief-touts-artificial-intelligence-efforts.

128 On bottom-up innovation, see Grissom, "The Future of Military Innovation Studies." On innovation inhibitors, see Adam M. Jungdahl and Julia M. Macdonald, "Innovation Inhibitors in War: Overcoming Obstacles in the Pursuit of Military Effectiveness," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 38, no. 4 (2015): 467-499, https://doi.org/10.1080/01402390.2014.917628.

129 Adm. Harry B. Harris Jr. et al., "The Integrated Joint Force: A Lethal Solution for Ensuring Military Preeminence," *Strategy Bridge*, March 2, 2018, https://thestrategybridge.org/the-bridge/2018/3/2/the-integrated-joint-force-a-lethal-solution-for-ensuring-military-preeminence.

130 Sam LaGrone, "Navy Releases Final MQ-25 Stingray RFP; General Atomics Bid Revealed," *USNI News*, Oct. 10, 2017, https://news.usni.org/2017/10/10/navy-releases-final-mq-25-stingray-rfp-general-atomics-bid-revealed.

UNBEATABLE: SOCIAL RESOURCES, MILITARY ADAPTATION, AND THE AFGHAN TALIBAN

Theo Farrell

Following the 9/11 attacks, the Afghan Taliban were obliterated in a lightning war prosecuted by the United States. Their Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan ceased to exist as a physical entity, and the Taliban leader, Mullah Mohammed Omar, fled to Pakistan. Within five years, however, the Taliban had regrouped and returned in large numbers to southern and eastern Afghanistan. By 2016, they had overrun at least a third of the country. How did the Taliban come back so successfully from utter defeat? This article draws on the literatures on civil wars and on military adaptation to identify and unpack two sets of factors that explain the relative success of insurgencies: the availability of social resources and the elements that drive and enable military adaptation. Using a large number of original interviews with Taliban leaders, cadre, and field commanders, I demonstrate how these factors combined to make the Taliban essentially unbeatable.

Insurgencies are famously difficult to defeat, yet the Afghan Taliban have proven especially so. Accounts of Taliban resilience have focused on both the deficiencies of Western efforts and the Afghan state and on Pakistani support for the Taliban. These accounts fail, however, to reveal the full picture of how the Taliban have been able to survive. Drawing on original field research, this article explores how the Taliban's success has been shaped by factors internal to the insurgency, namely, the social resources that sustain it and the group's ability to adapt militarily.

The fall of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan was swift and brutal. Shortly after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the United States went to war against al-Qaeda and its Taliban hosts in Afghanistan. Taliban forces were obliterated in a lightning war prosecuted by American special operations forces and their Afghan allies, supported by an armada of warplanes. U.S. air forces did most of the killing.

The U.S. Air Force and Navy dropped 18,000 bombs in the air campaign, 10,000 of which were precision munitions. The exact number of Taliban fighters killed is unknown, but according to one estimate the death toll was 8,000 to 12,000.[1] By early 2002, the Taliban emirate had ceased to exist as a physical entity, and its leader, Mullah Mohammed Omar, had fled to Pakistan.

Within five years, however, the Taliban had regrouped and returned in large numbers to southern and eastern Afghanistan. In the decade that followed, the new Afghan state and its Western backers were unable to stop a Taliban insurgency from steadily gaining more ground across the country. In 2016, the Taliban seized Kunduz city in northern Afghanistan for a second time, having done so the year before as well.[2] The Taliban had also come close to capturing the provincial capitals of Helmand and Uruzgan in the south and Farah in the west. In May 2016, U.S. Forces-Afghanistan command reported that only 65 percent of the

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[1] Michael E. O'Hanlon, "A Flawed Masterpiece," *Foreign Affairs* 81 (May/June 2002): 48, 55, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/afghanistan/2002-05-01/flawed-masterpiece.

[2] Mujib Mashal and Najim Rahim, "Afghan Forces Push Taliban Out of Kunduz Center, Officials Say," *New York Times*, Oct. 4, 2016, https://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/05/world/asia/afghanistan-taliban-kunduz.html.

country's 407 districts were under government control.[3] This highlights the question of how the Taliban were able to come back so successfully from utter defeat.

Between 2001 and 2016, the United States spent around $800 billion on war in Afghanistan. The international community spent an additional £240 billion building up Afghan security forces. In 2010, at the height of the international military effort in Afghanistan, just over 100,000 U.S. troops and around 40,000 troops from 50 other nations were deployed there. Despite all this military might and international largesse, the Taliban were not defeated. How can this be explained? To date, studies on the war have mostly focused on deficiencies in the international military effort and problems with the Afghan state. Lack of success in defeating the Taliban has been blamed on the failings of Western leadership and strategy, on the hubris and incoherence of the international effort, and on flaws in counterinsurgency tactics and operations.[4] Equally important has been the scale of corruption in Afghanistan, fueled by the massive influx of international aid, which has undermined both the legitimacy and the effectiveness of the Afghan government and security forces.[5]

In explaining the persistence and success of the Afghan Taliban, many commentators have highlighted the support the group received from Pakistan. The long, porous border between Afghanistan and Pakistan (across which men, material, and money move with relative ease), the use of refugee camps in Pakistan as secure rear bases, and significant military assistance from the Pakistani Army have unquestionably been important to sustaining the insurgency in Afghanistan.[6] The Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) agency of the Pakistani Army has been central in this. The ISI has largely succeeded in hiding its involvement in the Afghan conflict, working through undercover agents, civilian sympathizers, contractors, and retired officers. Taliban interviewees are also cautious about commenting on Pakistan's role in their struggle. Thus, outside the world of secret intelligence, it is possible to get only glimpses of the ISI's assistance to the Taliban. While the group receives significant financial support from Gulf Cooperation Council states (and from various sources within GCC states), and some military assistance from Iran and possibly Russia, Pakistan has been the Taliban's most important source of funds, training, and military supplies.[7] According to the journalist Steve Coll, by 2008 it had become apparent to the U.S. military that the Pakistan Army was supporting the whole deployment cycle of Taliban forces, from their training in Pakistan to their deployment in Afghanistan to their return to Pakistan for rest and recuperation. Coll even notes that "Pakistan Army and Frontier Corps troops along the Pakistan border were firing on American border posts to provide covering fire for the Taliban to infiltrate into Afghanistan and return."[8]

Less studied, however, is how the Taliban have been the makers of their own success. To be sure, the literature on the Taliban is sizable and includes important books on the group's origins, politics, culture, and war making before 2002.[9] Antonio Giustozzi has produced a number of studies on the organization, governance, and fighting tactics of the post-2002 Taliban insurgency.[10] Still missing, though, is a comprehensive explanation for the Afghan Taliban's remarkable resilience. How is it that the Taliban managed to survive an onslaught by the most powerful military alliance in the world?

In this article, I draw on two bodies of theory from the field of security studies, one on the roots of insurgency and the other on military adaptation. The former identifies the critical nature of social resources that give resilience to insurgencies — in particular, the strength of horizontal networks within the insurgency and vertical links into host communities. The latter identifies those factors that make it more likely for militaries to adapt to evolving challenges in war. When applied to the Afghan Taliban, what's revealed is an insurgency that has a deep well of social resources and that has, over time, improved its ability to innovate and adapt. Taken together, these factors point to an insurgency that is highly resilient and one that is unbeatable by military means alone. This finding has vital implications for the Trump administration's strategy, which revolves around intensifying the military effort against the Taliban.

In addition to presenting new insights informed by theory-driven inquiry, this article draws on a large number of original interviews with Afghan Taliban leaders, officials, and field commanders. Careful protocols were followed to ensure the fidelity of the interview data.[11] Of course, the reliability of what Taliban members say is inevitably open to question. On some matters, Taliban interviewees were inclined to exaggerate (e.g., the level of public support the group enjoys) or to be less than forthcoming (e.g., the role that Pakistani intelligence plays in providing support for the group). To minimize the risk of corrupt data undermining the analysis, the main findings are developed from multiple interviews and, where appropriate, are related to published scholarship on the Taliban.

This article proceeds with a review of the literature on the social roots of insurgency, applying those insights to the Afghan Taliban, as well as a review of the literature on adaptation in war, likewise applying insights to the Taliban case. It concludes with a look at the implications of these findings for the new U.S. strategy for Afghanistan.

Social Sources and Insurgency

Even in situations that are ripe for rebellion, organizing an insurgency is far from easy. As political scientist Jeremy Weinstein notes, insurgent leaders face multiple challenges, chief among them maintaining control, especially as the insurgency grows, and extracting resources (e.g., funds, supplies, and recruits) without alienating local populations.[12] Some insurgent groups rely on terror to impose discipline within their ranks and to keep local populations subdued. The Islamic State in Iraq and Syria is a prominent practitioner of this tactic.[13] Even more savage was the Revolutionary United Front, whose atrocities in Sierra Leone in the 1990s included abducting children and turning them into sadistic killers, and hacking off the limbs of countless thousands of civilians.[14] One problem with wielding terror as a tactic is that it "can stifle opposition but cannot engender loyalty and support from the civilian population." For insurgent groups seeking to hold territory, this creates the ever-present risk of civilian defection to the opposing side.[15] For many insurgencies, consent is as important as coercion in maintaining both internal control and external local support.

Weinstein points to the importance of "social

3   Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, Quarterly Report to the United States Congress, July 30, 2016, 86, https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/quarterlyreports/2016-07-30qr.pdf.

4   Theo Farrell, *Unwinnable: Britain's War in Afghanistan, 2001–2014* (London: The Bodley Head, 2017); Jack Fairweather, *The Good War: The Battle for Afghanistan, 2006–14* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2014); Daniel P. Bolger, *Why We Lost: A General's Inside Account of the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2014); David H. Ucko and Robert Egnell, *Counterinsurgency in Crisis: Britain and the Challenges of Modern Warfare* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013); Rajiv Chandrasekaran, *Little America: The War Within the War for Afghanistan* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012); Sten Rynning, *NATO in Afghanistan: The Liberal Disconnect* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012); David P. Auerswald and Stephen M. Saideman, *NATO in Afghanistan: Fighting Together, Fighting Alone* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014); Sherard Cowper-Coles, *Cables from Kabul: The Inside Story of the West's Afghanistan Campaign* (London: Harper Press, 2011); Frank Ledwidge, *Losing Small Wars: British Military Failure in Iraq and Afghanistan* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2011); Tim Bird and Alex Marshall, *Afghanistan: How the West Lost Its Way* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2011); M.J. Williams, *The Good War: NATO and the Liberal Conscience in Afghanistan* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); Seth G. Jones, *In the Graveyard of Empires: America's War in Afghanistan* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2009).

5   Chris Kolenda, "Endgame: Why American Interventions Become Quagmires," PhD thesis, King's College London, 2017; Sarah Chayes, *Thieves of State: Why Corruption Threatens Global Security* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2016); Antonio Giustozzi, *The Army of Afghanistan: A Political History of a Fragile Institution* (London: Hurst, 2015); Astri Suhrke, *When More Is Less: The International Project in Afghanistan* (London: Hurst, 2011); Peter Marsden, *Afghanistan: Aid, Armies and Empires* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2009).

6   Peter Bergen with Katherine Tiedemann, eds., *Talibanistan: Negotiating the Borders Between Terror, Politics, and Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Vahid Brown and Don Rassler, *Fountainhead of Jihad: The Haqqani Nexus, 1973–2012* (London: Hurst, 2013); Carlotta Gall, *The Wrong Enemy: America in Afghanistan, 2001–2014* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2014).

7   Carlotta Gall, "Saudis Bankroll Taliban, Even as King Officially Supports Afghan Government," *New York Times*, Dec. 6, 2016, https://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/06/world/asia/saudi-arabia-afghanistan.html; Ahmad Majidyar, "Afghan Intelligence Chief Warns Iran and Russia Against Aiding Taliban," *The Middle East Institute*, Feb. 5, 2018, http://www.mei.edu/content/io/afghan-intelligence-chief-warns-iran-and-russia-against-aiding-taliban; Justin Rowlatt, "Russia 'Arming the Afghan Taliban', Says US," *BBC News*, Mar. 23, 2018, http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-43500299. The extent of Pakistan support to the Taliban is documented in Steve Coll, *Directorate S: The C.I.A. and America's Secret Wars in Afghanistan and Pakistan, 2001–2016* (New York: Random House, 2018); and Gall, *The Wrong Enemy*.

8   Coll, *Directorate S*, 329-340.

9   Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban: The Story of the Afghan Warlords* (London: Pan Macmillan, 2001); Gilles Dorronsoro, *Revolution Unending: Afghanistan, 1979 to the Present* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005); Kamal Matinuddin, *The Taliban Phenomenon: Afghanistan, 1994–1997* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); Alex Strick van Linschoten and Felix Kuehn, *An Enemy We Created: The Myth of the Taliban/Al Qaeda Merger in Afghanistan, 1970–2010* (London: Hurst, 2012); Rob Johnson, *The Afghan Way of War: Culture and Pragmatism: A Critical History* (London: Hurst, 2011).

10   Antonio Giustozzi, *Koran, Kalashnikov and Laptop: The Neo-Taliban Insurgency in Afghanistan* (London: Hurst, 2007); Antonio Giustozzi, ed., *Decoding the New Taliban: Insights from the Afghan Field* (London: Hurst, 2009).

11   In total, 282 interviews with Taliban and 138 interviews with non-Taliban Afghan locals were conducted by Afghan researchers over two periods, from 2011–12 and 2014–15. Those interviewed were not paid for their interviews. Interviews were recorded in field notes and transcribed into English. The research project was led by myself, and the field research was supervised by Dr. Antonio Giustozzi. In conformity with the project protocols, I do not reveal the precise location and date of the interviews in order to protect the anonymity of the interviewees. The findings from the 2011–12 pilot project were published as Theo Farrell and Antonio Giustozzi, "The Taliban at War: Inside the Helmand Insurgency, 2004–2011," *International Affairs* 89 (2013): 845-71. The overall findings of the main project will be published as Antonio Giustozzi, *The Taliban at War* (London: Hurst, forthcoming).

12   Jeremy M. Weinstein, *Inside Rebellion: The Politics of Insurgent Violence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 43-44.

13   Jessica Stern and J.M. Berger, *ISIS: The State of Terror* (London: William Collins, 2015).

14   Kieran Mitton, *Rebels in a Rotten State: Understanding Atrocity in the Sierra Leone Civil War* (London: Hurst, 2015).

15   Zachariah Cherian Mampilly, *Rebel Rulers: Insurgent Governance and Civilian Life During War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011), 52-55.

endowments" in mobilizing people to join or support an insurgent movement. Social endowments include preexisting networks, common identities, shared beliefs, and norms of reciprocity, all of which facilitate cooperation and collective action, especially in situations with short-term costs and only the promise of long-term gains.[16] In his major

[I]nsurgencies will often take on the symbolic trappings of statehood, and "perform" like a state.

study on the cohesion of insurgent organizations, Paul Staniland also highlights the role of prewar social networks, noting that insurgent leaders often "'socially appropriate' existing structures of collective action for new functions." Staniland distinguishes between two types of structures: horizontal networks and vertical ties.[17] Horizontal networks link people who may be dispersed geographically through common ideological beliefs or professional identities. Political parties are a prime example. Insurgent movements often originate from or incorporate political parties. One example is the peasant insurgency in Nepal from 1996 to 2006, which sprang from the Maoist wing of the Communist Party of Nepal.[18] Vertical ties, on the other hand, are preexisting linkages between insurgent groups and local people, often based on common ethnic, tribal, or familial networks. These make it possible for insurgent groups to bind local communities to their cause and to extract resources from and exert control over them. Thus, "bonds of family and kinship" were crucial to the success of the Naxalites in mobilizing peasant support for their Maoist insurgency in eastern India.[19] Staniland

argues that variance in the cohesion and resilience of insurgencies may be explained by the degree to which they are founded on, and are able to exploit, both horizontal networks and vertical ties.

Over time, many insurgencies develop governance processes and structures to provide services for civilians in the territory they control. This requires insurgent groups to divert resources that could otherwise be devoted to their armed struggle. It may also require insurgent groups to take civilian preferences into account, even when they differ from the interests and preferences of the insurgency.[20] In the case of secessionist insurgencies, the impulse to govern is obvious since the struggle is focused on achieving independent statehood. In other cases (especially with Maoist insurgencies), insurgent groups are ideologically predisposed to govern the areas and populations over which they have control.[21] For most insurgent governments, establishing the means to police the population and regulate disputes is the first order of business. The provision of other public services, such as education and health care, is usually a secondary concern.[22] Nonetheless, providing some governance is important in the long term for insurgencies to sustain public support. This can, in turn, lead to the moderation of ideologically driven insurgent governments, if only for pragmatic reasons.[23] Regardless of the extent and effectiveness of their governance, insurgencies will often take on the symbolic trappings of statehood, and "perform" like a state. As Zachariah Mampilly notes, "[b]y mimicking the behavior of the modern state, rebels seek to discursively construct a political authority imbued with a comparable legitimacy enjoyed by national governments."[24] Such behavior can be important in sustaining the political claims of an insurgency group.

When it comes to the Taliban, this discussion

raises two questions. First, what role did horizontal networks and vertical ties play in the development of the post-2002 insurgency? Second, how successful have the Taliban been in creating state-like structures and public services since 2002?

The Social Roots of Taliban Resurgence

At the core of the Taliban movement is a horizontal network, based on common religious schooling and shared military experience, that endows the group with a powerful, unifying ideology and worldview. The Taliban movement was founded on a network of Deobandi madrassas in Pakistan within which the group's leadership and cadre were educated. Thousands of young men were mobilized from these madrassas to fight against the Soviets in the mujahedeen war in the 1980s. Mujahedeen fighting groups organized themselves into larger networks, called "fronts," or *mahaz*, each led by a great leader who was able to disburse military supplies from foreign donors across his front to field commanders.[25] According to one major study on the origins of the Taliban, "In greater Kandahar, there were literally hundreds of Taliban commanders and dozens of Taliban fronts. ... The Taliban sought to distinguish themselves from other mujahedeen groups by offering a more ostentatiously religious jihad to those who fought with them."[26] Young Taliban fighters formed strong bonds with the movement and with each other through the rigors and hardships of the mujahedeen war.[27]

The Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989, and the fall of the Soviet-backed regime in Kabul three years later, removed the common cause that had held different mujahedeen parties together, and civil war promptly ensued. In southern Afghanistan, local warlords had free rein to prey on civilians, imposing arbitrary fines, stealing land, and kidnapping people for ransom and sexual abuse. In Kandahar, the Taliban returned to arms in 1994, under the leadership of Mullah Omar, to bring security and justice to the Pashtun population. Within four years, Taliban fighters had

swept across the country, defeating or buying off rivals who stood in their path. By 1998, only a few pockets of resistance remained, most notably the Tajik Northern Alliance, which was holed up in its mountain retreats in the northeast. Upon seizing control of the country, the Taliban established the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. Chronically underfunded (with an annual budget of around $80 million) and untrained in public administration, the Taliban were unable to reestablish basic public services across the country. Moreover, the group imposed myriad fundamentalist strictures on the population, most notably preventing women from going to work and girls from going to school.[28] Accordingly, the downfall of the Taliban in late 2001 and early 2002 was welcomed by a great many Afghans.

The major challenge for the interim Afghan administration of Hamid Karzai in 2002 was asserting government rule beyond Kabul and preventing a return to civil war. Karzai did this primarily by coopting various warlords into the new Afghan government. In this way, the corrupt warlords who had been pushed out of power by the Taliban in the 1990s returned as local governors and police chiefs. Under the guise of officialdom, these reincarnated figures once again stole from and abused the population. This, in turn, provided fertile ground for the gradual return of the Taliban into southern and eastern Afghanistan beginning in 2004. As one local elder from Helmand province noted, "day by day people got fed up with this Afghan government and welcomed the Taliban back into their districts."[29]

The United States ruled out peace talks with the Taliban in 2001 and 2002, and Karzai did not respond to a number of Taliban overtures during this period. Instead, U.S. special operations forces hunted down Taliban "terrorists," who were rendered to detention facilities in Bagram, Afghanistan, and Guantanamo Bay. Many "common people," as the Taliban call non-Taliban locals, also were caught up in the net thrown by U.S. special operations. As Mike Martin notes, the Americans "failed to understand how offering a bounty would cause people to denounce anyone they were

16   Weinstein, *Inside Rebellion*, 48-49.

17   Paul Staniland, *Networks of Rebellion: Explaining Insurgent Cohesion and Collapse* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014).

18   Madhav Joshi and T. David Mason, "Between Democracy and Revolution: Peasant Support for Insurgency Versus Democracy in Nepal," *Journal of Peace Research* 45 (2008): 765-82, http://www.jstor.org/stable/27640768.

19   Alpa Shah, "The Intimacy of Insurgency: Beyond Coercion, Greed or Grievance in Maoist India," *Economy and Society* 42 (2013): 480-506. https://doi.org/10.1080/03085147.2013.783662

20   Nelson Kasfir, "Rebel Governance — Constructing a Field of Inquiry: Definitions, Scope, Patterns, Order, Causes," in *Rebel Governance in Civil War*, ed. Ana Arjona, Nelson Kasfir, and Zachariah Mampilly (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 22-23.

21   Bert Suykens, "Comparing Rebel Rule Through Revolution and Naturalization: Ideologies of Governance in Naxalite and Naga India," in *Rebel Governance in Civil War*, ed. Arjona et al., 138-57.

22   Mampilly, *Rebel Rulers*, 63-64.

23   Till Forster, "Dialogue Direct: Rebel Governance and Civil Order in Northern Cote d'Ivoire," in *Rebel Governance in Civil War*, ed. Arjona et al., 203-25; and Suykens, "Comparing Rebel Rule Through Revolution and Naturalization."

24   Zachariah Mampilly, "Performing the Nation-State: Rebel Governance and Symbolic Processes," in *Rebel Governance in Civil War*, ed. Arjona et al., 77-78.

25   Johnson, *The Afghan Way of War*, 217-39.

26   Van Linschoten and Kuehn, *An Enemy We Created*, 45. Initially, it was believed that the Taliban originated in Kandahar in 1994 as a religious militant group that sought to bring law and order to southern Afghanistan and stop local warlords from abusing the area population. This view was most notably advanced in Rashid's *Taliban: The Story of the Afghan Warlords*. However, van Linschoten and Kuehn have subsequently proven that the Taliban predated the 1990s and indeed fought in the mujahedeen war. This is also recounted in the published memoir of a former senior Taliban. See Abdul Salam Zaeff, *My Life With the Taliban* (London: Hurst, 2010).

27   On the mujahedeen as "brothers-in-arms" communities forged in war, see David B. Edwards, *Caravan of Martyrs: Sacrifice and Suicide Bombing in Afghanistan* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017).

28   Christina Lamb, *The Sowing Circles of Herat* (London: HarperCollins, 2004).

29   Interview with local elder no. 7, Nad-e Ali district, Helmand, March 2012.

having a feud with, or even innocent people, in order to collect the money."[30] The injustice of U.S. counterterrorism operations, combined with the return of abusive warlords, drove the Taliban to remobilize. Echoing the views of several Taliban interviewees, one noted: "When Karzai became president, Taliban were not fighting, they were in their houses. … But when the Americans and Afghan governments were disturbing and attacking on the families of all those Taliban … this is the reason that Taliban started fighting again."[31] In late 2002 and 2003, groups of Taliban began to operate in the southern provinces of Uruzgan, Helmand, and Kandahar and the eastern provinces of Paktia and Khost.

Senior Taliban figures also began to remobilize in Pakistan, leading in March 2003 to the formation of a Taliban leadership council in the city of Quetta. Called the Rahbari Shura by the Taliban, it is more commonly known in the West as the Quetta Shura. In the years that followed, the Taliban effectively reestablished a government in exile. Mullah Omar remained in hiding so his deputy, Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, chaired the Quetta Shura. Provincial and district governors were appointed, starting in Kandahar and Helmand in 2003 and 2004 with other provinces in southern and eastern Afghanistan following in 2005. Twelve national commissions were established in Pakistan (military, politics, finance, culture, health, etc.) that effectively operated as shadow Taliban government departments.[32]

From 2004 on, the Taliban returned in a more concerted way to southern Afghanistan. Taliban infiltration of rural districts followed a pattern. In most cases, it began with small groups of Taliban visiting villages to make contact with sympathizers, foment rebellion, and intimidate or kill pro-government elders and clerics. As they became more confident, these Taliban emissaries held open meetings to call on people to wage jihad on the "cruel government" and "foreign invaders." Taliban mullahs were also dispatched to preach jihad to villages. As leading expert on the Taliban,

Antonio Giustozzi, notes, "The strategic task of these 'vanguard' teams was to prepare the ground for a later escalation in the insurgency."[33] In Musa Qala district in northern Helmand in 2004, the Taliban "secretly entered the district and talked to some villages and elders … they told the people that they were coming back to the district to fight against the government."[34] In 2005, the Taliban returned in force to Musa Qala and "within two to three months they had captured all the villages," leaving only the district center under government control.[35] In eastern Afghanistan, significant Taliban mobilization predated the formation of the Quetta Shura. In mid-2002, the former Taliban minister of tribal affairs, Jalaluddin Haqqani, began to remobilize his front, and later that year Haqqani fighting groups were operating in Paktia and Khost.[36]

Indicative of a powerful horizontal network, mobilizing Taliban fronts in southern Afghanistan reunited under the Quetta Shura. Invariably, rivalries emerged between some senior Taliban figures and the fronts they led. The rivalry between Mullah Baradar and Mullah Dadullah was especially pronounced. The eastern Taliban also resented the dominance of the Kandahari clique within the movement, and in time this led to the emergence of two additional leadership shuras that rivaled the Quetta Shura. The first was Miran Shah Shura, based on the Haqqani network, which declared autonomy from the Quetta Shura in August 2007.[37] The second was the Peshawar Shura, which declared autonomy from the Quetta Shura in 2009.[38] Both shuras took direct control of the fronts and fighting groups in their networks. Yet neither openly challenged the primacy of the Quetta Shura. This was both symbolically important and consistent with Taliban ideology, which emphasizes the centrality of obedience to the emir. It also ensured that most Taliban members, regardless of what front they were in, retained and evoked a residual loyalty to Mullah Omar.[39]

Vertical links were equally important to the establishment of the Taliban insurgency. A closed

political system developed under Karzai whereby government resources flowed primarily to the familial and patronage networks of the warlords appointed to office.[40] Many disenfranchised communities ended up siding with the Taliban out of disgust at the inequitable distribution of those resources and the corruption of the new warlord-officials.[41] Downtrodden communities also aligned with the Taliban to gain protection from abusive pro-government militias. In some cases, the Taliban expertly exploited local dissatisfaction by supporting local elders and mullahs who called for rebellion and silencing those who were opposed.[42]

The Taliban also stoked popular opposition to the presence of armed foreigners. This was not difficult given the growing Afghan anger toward U.S. night raids on homes as well as civilian casualties caused by U.S. airstrikes. Expressing a view typical of many interviewees, one local elder in Ghanzi noted that he "was happy for return of Taliban in our district because of the cruelties of the Americans."[43] Clumsily executed British operations in Helmand — and the widespread perception that these were targeting the poppy crop, the main livelihood for most locals — caused a popular revolt in the province in 2007.[44] One group of local elders later recalled, "We thought the British were trying to kill us with hunger — they destroyed our opium but didn't give us one Afghani [the Afghan currency]. That is why people decided to join the Taliban; they needed someone to defend them."[45] In fact, the British did provide compensation for the destruction of poppy crops, but farmers

got nothing as this scheme was administered by corrupt local officials.[46]

In many places, rebellion mapped onto existing tribal rivalries. A noted example is the Ishaqzai community within Sangin district in Helmand. For generations, the Alizais and Alikozais of northern Helmand had been in competition with the Ishaqzai. Under the Taliban state, Ishaqzais held a number of key government posts in the province, including the governorship. The tables turned when Karzai appointed an Alizai warlord as provincial governor and an Alikozai warlord as head of the provincial secret police. As Martin notes, warlords in both positions "used the cover of their government positions to tax, harass and steal from the Ishaqzai."[47] One Alikozai admitted in

> In many places, rebellion mapped onto existing tribal rivalries.

2007 that "The Ishaqzai had no choice but to fight back."[48]

As they gained control of sizable portions of territory, the Taliban set about trying to reestablish an Islamic emirate in Afghanistan. To achieve this goal, Taliban provincial governors were provided with a modest budget.[49] The Taliban lacked the resources and expertise, however, to replicate the state. For many Afghan locals and Taliban commanders in Helmand, establishing a shadow government was not seen as a major

30 Mike Martin, *An Intimate War: An Oral History of the Helmand Conflict* (London: Hurst, 2014), 125.

31 Interview with *mahaz* commander no. 2, Nangarhar, 2015.

32 Interview with national commission member, 2014; interview with former member of Rahbari Shura, 2014.

33 Giustozzi, *Koran, Kalashnikov and Laptop*, 101.

34 Interview with local elder no. 3, Musa Qala, Helmand, 2012.

35 Interview with local elder no. 4, Musa Qala, Helmand, 2012.

36 Interview with Taliban cadre no. 10, Peshawar, 2015. A number of Taliban fronts also reactivated in Nangarhar in 2004–05, each with many hundreds of fighters. Interview with *mahaz* commander no. 1, Nangarhar, 2015; interview with *mahaz* commander no. 2, Nangarhar, 2015.

37 Interviews with two cadre, Miran Shah Shura, 2015.

38 Interviews with four Taliban leaders, Nangarhar, 2015.

39 See, for example, Graeme Smith, "What Kandahar's Taliban Say," in *Decoding the New Taliban*, 191-210.

40 On closed versus open political orders, see Douglas C. North, John Joseph Wallis, and Barry R. Weingast, *Violence and Social Orders: A Conceptual Framework for Interpreting Recorded Human History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

41 Interview with local elder no. 4, Nahr-e Seraj, 2011.

42 Carter Malkasian, Jerry Meyerle, and Megan Katt, "The War in Southern Afghanistan, 2001–2008," unclassified report (Alexandria, VA: Center for Naval Analysis, July 2009): 11, 14, https://info.publicintelligence.net/CNA-WarSouthernAfghanistan.pdf.

43 Interview with local elder no. 3, Qarabagh, Ghanzi, 2014.

44 Farrell, *Unwinnable*, 226-28.

45 Interview with group of local elders no. 9, Nad-e Ali district, 2012.

46 Interview with elder no. 3, Nahr-e Seraj, 2011.

47 Martin, *Brief History*, 49.

48 Cited in Tom Coghlan, "The Taliban in Helmand: An Oral History," in *Decoding the New Taliban*, 139. The British Army provided limited and reluctant support to the Afghan government's poppy eradication program. Britain was the lead nation for the international counter-narcotics effort in Afghanistan; however, the British Army quickly realized that it risked losing local support in Helmand if its forces were too closely associated with the destruction of the poppy crop. The British got blamed for it anyway. See Farrell, *Unwinnable*, 227-28.

49 Interview with Taliban leader no. 14, Quetta, 2015.

part of the Taliban war effort.[50] The only area in which the Taliban were able to provide alternative government services was in the administration of justice. There was high demand for Taliban services given the frequency of rural disputes over land, trade, and family matters. Initially, the Quetta Shura sought to replicate the court system of the Islamic emirate of the 1990s, with standing lower and higher courts. In Helmand, the Taliban were able to reestablish the emirate court system for a time. But in most places, justice was administered by shadow governors, Taliban mullahs, and military commanders. According to Thomas Johnson and Matthew DuPee, "The Taliban shadow justice system is easily one of the most popular and respected elements of the Taliban insurgency by local communities, especially in southern Afghanistan."[51] Under growing pressure from operations of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), the Taliban switched in 2009 from standing to mobile courts in Helmand. As one elder noted, "Judges are hiding; sometimes they meet in people's houses, sometimes in the mountains, sometimes in the mosques."[52] Nonetheless, Taliban courts remained widely used because, compared with the official Afghan courts, they offered accessible, quick, and corruption-free justice. As one elder observed, "In two or three hours, [the Taliban] could solve disputes with someone over one jerib of land. Now in Lashkar Gah, if you have a dispute with someone over one jerib of land, you have to sell twenty jeribs to pay the courts."[53]

In the end, the Taliban never fully invested in reconstituting their Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. Instead, the military campaign took precedence. The 2010 edition of the Taliban rulebook (the *layeha*) specifies the structure of the Taliban shadow government at provincial and district levels and even provides for the appointment of suitably skilled non-Taliban officials. In reality, in many cases the local Taliban commander *de facto*

acted as the shadow governor.[54] As one local elder from Musa Qala noted, "There was a [Taliban] district chief, but he didn't have much influence. Most of the power was with commanders who had lots of fighters in the district."[55] U.S. and international forces intensified their campaign targeting Taliban leadership, which led many shadow governors to flee to Pakistan, where they would issue instructions by mobile phone.[56] This gave local commanders even more authority in matters of governance. A local elder from central Helmand described the status quo this way in 2011: "When people have an issue, they will approach the local [Taliban] commander. They don't know who the district chief is."[57]

The Taliban focus on the military campaign meant that, with the exception of administering justice, the Taliban were not able to provide public services to people in areas under their control. This, combined with the conflict's growing intensity, led support for the Taliban to decline over time in many parts of Afghanistan. Aside from those villages and sub-tribal groups that had allied with the Taliban, many farmers just wanted to get on with their lives in peace. In eastern Afghanistan, Taliban restrictions on the movement of civilians, and interrogation of locals suspected of spying, became further sources of friction.[58] The Quetta Shura did regulate the shadow governors to ensure that they took measures to win over communities, such as banning arbitrary executions and limiting attacks on teachers and health officials. The 2007 and 2010 editions of the *layeha* outlined processes for communities to complain to the Quetta Shura if a provincial or district governor was too repressive or corrupt. Two district governors were replaced in Sangin in 2009, one for allowing Taliban fighters to attack local farmers who had received government agricultural aid and the other for his overly draconian administration of justice.[59] The Taliban also took measures to strengthen the

military chain of command to improve adherence by field commanders to directives from Quetta (This is discussed further in the next section). While attacks on schools and extrajudicial killings declined in 2010 and 2011, they did not disappear altogether.[60]

The Taliban benefited from extensive social resources in establishing the post-2002 insurgency. Shared education, ideology, and military experience all endowed a powerful horizontal network that helped the Taliban mobilize its fighting groups and maintain the coherence of a movement that contained many rival fronts and shuras. The Taliban were also able to develop and exploit vertical links with disgruntled villages and disenfranchised sub-tribal communities, which helped the group to seize control of rural areas from pro-government warlords. The situation is more mixed with regard to the Taliban's success in developing legitimacy by establishing state-like structures and services. The Taliban sought to reestablish the Islamic emirate in the areas they controlled and took care to listen to the concerns of locals. But the group's ability to govern was severely hampered by the conflict. Only

in the administration of justice were the Taliban able to provide a public service that was valued by local Afghans. Shoring up insurgent morale and public support was an extensive Taliban propaganda campaign that utilized many forms of media — including jihadi magazines, radio, night letters, and sophisticated uses of social media — and contained narratives tailored for local Afghans and Pakistanis as well as global audiences.[61]

Military Adaptation in War

War involves a dynamic struggle between two or more armed parties, each trying to outwit and outfight the other.[62] By its nature, war demands that those engaged in this bloody struggle be prepared to adapt both to their environment and to the other side's strategy and tactics. Military history is replete with examples of how fighting forces have adapted under battlefield pressure,[63] as well as how they have taken advantage of newly available technologies.[64] Those militaries that fail to adapt quickly or extensively enough are at

50   Interview with local elder no. 3, Nahr-e Seraj, 2011; Taliban commander no. 2, Nad-e Ali, 2012; and Taliban commander no. 1, Marjah, 2011.

51   Thomas H. Johnson and Matthew C. DuPee, "Analysing the New Taliban Code of Conduct (Layeha): An Assessment of Changing Perspectives and Strategies of the Afghan Taliban," *Central Asian Survey* 31 (2002): 84, https://doi.org/10.1080/02634937.2012.647844; see also Coghlan, "The Taliban in Helmand," 148–49.

52   Interview with local elder no. 5, Nahr-e Seraj, 2011. Also confirmed by interviews with elder no. 1, Now Zad, 2011; elder no 6, Nad-e Ali, 2011; and elder no. 2, Garmsir, 2011.

53   Interview with local elder no. 7, Nahr-e Seraj, 2011; similar view was offered in interview with elder no. 5, Nahr-e Seraj, 2011.

54   Johnson and DuPee, "Analysing the New Taliban Code," 85-86.

55   Interview with elder no. 3, Musa Qala, 2011.

56   Interviews with elder no. 4, Nahr-e Seraj, 2011; and elder no. 3, Musa Qala, 2011.

57   Interview with elder no. 4, Nahr-e Seraj, 2011.

58   Interview with local elder no. 1, Logar, February 2015; interview with local elder no. 2, Logar, February 2015; interview with local elder no. 10, Nangarhar, March 2015.

59   Phil Weatherill, "Targeting the Centre of Gravity: Adapting Stabilisation in Sangin," *RUSI Journal* 156 (2011): 98, 22n, https://doi.org/10.1080/03071847.2011.606655.

60   Antonio Guistozzi and Claudio Franco, *The Battle for the Schools: The Taleban and State Education* (Berlin: Afghan Analysts Network, 2011), http://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2012/10/2011TalebanEducation.pdf.

61   Thomas H. Johnson, *Taliban Narratives: The Use and Power of Stories in the Afghanistan Conflict* (London: Hurst, 2017).

62   The dynamic competition at the heart of war is captured by Carl von Clausewitz's description of it as "a duel on an extensive scale." Carl von Clausewitz, *On War* (Middlesex: Penguin, 1987), 101.

63   Williamson Murray, *Military Adaptation in War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

64   Theo Farrell, "Introduction: Military Adaptation in War," in *Military Adaptation in Afghanistan*, ed. Theo Farrell, Frans Osinga, and James A. Russell (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013), 9-10.

greater risk of defeat and find that, even if they do end up winning the war, the price of victory was higher than necessary.[65]

Notwithstanding these realities about adaptation, military organizations can nevertheless be slow to change. That is in part because, through training, planning, and equipment, militaries invest heavily

In the end, the Taliban never fully invested in reconstituting their Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. Instead, the military campaign took precedence.

in excelling at particular methods of waging war. This, in turn, creates a "competency trap," whereby it becomes difficult to abandon existing ways of doing things.[66] So, how and when do militaries adapt? The literature on military change identifies the shock of defeat as a key driver.[67] Although militaries have powerful incentives to adapt based on their battlefield setbacks, higher-ups sometimes fail to appreciate and act upon lessons learned on the ground. This points to another key factor in military adaptation identified in the literature: namely, effective organizational leadership. When the innovations originate from below, i.e., on the battlefield, all that is required are senior leaders who are prepared to support the necessary changes throughout the organization.[68] In some cases, innovations will flow from the

top, for example, when senior leaders champion organizational change in order to harness new technology, incorporate foreign military lessons, or respond to new political direction.[69]

In a study published in 2010 on British military operations in Afghanistan, I identified two key enablers of military adaptation. One is the degree of centralization within an organization. Here it is about getting the balance right. Military adaptation requires sufficient delegation of authority so that battlefield commanders have the latitude to try out new tactics when the old ones prove ineffective.[70] It also requires sufficient centralized direction to ensure that organization resources are committed to developing and rolling out new tactics and to acquiring the equipment necessary to operate in new ways. A second key enabler is personnel turnover: Fresh ideas can travel into organizations with people. This is well understood in business, in what has become, in many sectors, a global hunt for talent. It applies in the military context with changes of command and the rotation of units into and out of theaters of operation.[71]

In an important correction to my model, Kristen Harkness and Michael Hunzeker identified political considerations as a further factor critical in enabling military adaptation. In a study of the failure to adapt in the British counterinsurgency campaign in Southern Cameroons in 1960–61, they found that "British politicians chose to sacrifice military effectiveness for broader strategic and political interests, thus subverting bottom-up adaptation." Their research highlights the importance of political leadership in setting overarching objectives for military campaigns, putting in place any high-level operational constraints, and allocating the resources necessary for adaptation.[72]

Until now, scholarship on military adaptation has focused on the armed forces of states — that is, organizations with centralized authority exercised through a formal hierarchy and structured into functionally based subunits.[73] Indeed, through a process of transnational emulation of professional norms and practices, state-based militaries around the world have come to adopt remarkably similar organizational structures since the 19th century.[74] However, non-state military actors are more heterogeneous. Some emulate the hierarchies, units, and uniforms of state-based militaries, to varying degrees of fidelity. Others have a hybrid structure, with subunit formation reflecting local circumstances, and a less centralized and more informal hierarchy in which authority is often exercised through patronage networks. This variation can be seen in the military forces of Afghanistan's foremost warlords during the late 1990s, specifically the more hierarchical and formally structured army of Ismail Khan and the patrimonial and semi-regular forces of Gen. Abdul Rashid Dostrum.[75]

In the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, U.S. military commanders perceived themselves to be at a disadvantage when it came to military adaptation, believing that, with their flatter hierarchies and networked structures, insurgent groups found it easier to adapt.[76] Certainly, the less regimented culture and informal hierarchies of insurgent groups reduce the social and organizational barriers to experimentation. At the same time, as noted above, military adaptation requires sufficient organizational capacity to identify operational problems and develop tactical and technological solutions.[77] Modern militaries devote considerable resources to developing such capacities whereas insurgencies are less able to do so, suggesting that insurgencies may find it more difficult to ensure wider adoption of new tactics and integration of new technologies.

The literature on military adaptation thus leads to the following questions when considering the Taliban. First, how did the Taliban adapt to battlefield setbacks? Second, what role did Taliban

leadership — military *and* political — play in enabling that adaptation? Third, how centralized is the Taliban, and how has the group's organizational structure affected military adaptation? And, finally, as the insurgency grew, is there evidence that new ideas about military matters had a significant impact on the Taliban?

Military Adaptation and Taliban Resilience

The Taliban have proven to be highly adaptive adversaries. During the war with the Soviets, the Afghan mujahedeen developed a pretty standard repertoire of guerrilla tactics. In particular, these involved planting mines in roads, ambushing convoys, and conducting raids against military bases.[78] Experience gained in this conflict shaped Taliban thinking about how they should fight. However, this did not stop the Taliban from adapting after the fall of the Islamic emirate. As noted above, the deployment of Western combat forces into southern and eastern Afghanistan in 2006 and 2007 increased pressure on the Taliban insurgency. The group responded with a number of adaptations to improve its ability to mass and control its forces in the field. The Taliban also adapted tactics to take advantage of bomb technology and to reduce exposure to Western firepower.

The Taliban's loose organizational structure, based primarily on a large number of semi-autonomous fronts linked to various shuras, presented a fundamental problem for the Quetta Shura in terms of managing the war effort. Initially, the Quetta Shura tried to get fronts to cooperate by offering financial incentives. The Taliban also tried to mass forces by moving experienced fighting groups across provinces, usually within the same *mahaz* network. By 2008, the Taliban leadership realized that this attempt to reform the mahaz system was not working. Anecdotal evidence from Helmand province illustrates the problem. In Kajaki, an Afghan interpreter hired by the British

65   The classic study is by Eliot A. Cohen and John Gooch, *Military Misfortunes: The Anatomy of Failure in War* (New York: Free Press, 1990).

66   James G. March and Barbara Levitt, "Organizational Learning," in *The Pursuit of Organizational Intelligence*, ed. J.G. March (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), 78-79.

67   Barry R. Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine: France, Britain, and Germany Between the World Wars* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1984); Stephen P. Rosen, *Winning the Next War: Innovation and the Modern Military* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991).

68   Philipp Rotmann, David Tohn, and Jaron Wharton, "Learning Under Fire: Progress and Dissent in the US Military," *Survival* 51, no. 4 (August 2009): 31-48, https://doi.org/10.1080/00396330903168824. Thus, nonresponsive senior leaders within the military or the government can block necessary military adaptation. See Adam M. Jungdahl and Julia M. Macdonald, "Innovation Inhibitors in War: Overcoming Obstacles in the Pursuit of Military Effectiveness," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 38 (2015): 467-99, https://doi.org/10.1080/01402390.2014.917628.

69   The importance of senior leaders with the vision and organizational standing to lead military innovation is explored in Rosen's *Winning the Next War*. See also Theo Farrell, Sten Rynning, and Terry Terriff, *Transforming Military Power Since the End of the Cold War: Britain, France and the United States, 1991-2012* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

70   The importance of sufficient "force autonomy" to enable military adaptation is also identified in Torunn Laugen Haaland, "The Limits to Learning in Military Operations: Bottom-Up Adaptation in the Norwegian Army in Northern Afghanistan, 2007–2012," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 39, no. 7 (2016): 999-1022, https://doi.org/10.1080/01402390.2016.1202823.

71   I also identified a third enabling factor, poor organizational memory, that is not relevant for the Taliban case. Theo Farrell, "Improving in War: Military Adaptation and the British in Helmand Province, Afghanistan, 2006–2009," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 33, no. 4 (2010): 567-94, https://doi.org/10.1080/01402390.2010.489712.

72   Kristen A. Harkness and Michael Hunzeker, "Military Maladaptation: Counterinsurgency and the Politics of Failure," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 38, no. 6 (2015): 777-800, https://doi.org/10.1080/01402390.2014.960078. (Quote is from p. 778-79.)

73   James A. Russell, *Innovation, Transformation, and War: Counterinsurgency Operations in Anbar and Ninewa Provinces, Iraq, 2005–2007* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011); Chad C. Serena, *A Revolution in Military Adaptation: The US Army in the Iraq War* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2011); Farrell et al., ed., *Military Adaptation in Afghanistan*; Stephen M. Saideman, *Adapting in the Dust: Lessons Learned from Canada's War in Afghanistan* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016).

74   Theo Farrell, "Transnational Norms and Military Development: Constructing Ireland's Professional Army," *European Journal of International Relations* 7 (2001): 309-26.

75   Antonio Giustozzi, *Empires of Mud: War and Warlords in Afghanistan* (London: Hurst, 2009).

76   Stanley McChrystal, *My Share of the Task: A Memoir* (London: Portfolio/Penguin, 2013), chap. 7–10. For a stinging critique of the U.S. military's failure to adapt in Iraq, see Thomas E. Ricks, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq* (London: Allen Lane, 2006).

77   Francis G. Hoffman, "Learning Under Fire: Military Change in Wartime," PhD thesis, King's College London, 2015.

78   Ali Ahmad Jalali and Lester W. Grau, *Afghan Guerrilla Warfare: In the Words of the Mujahideen Fighters* (Minneapolis: Zenith Press, 2001); Russian General Staff, *The Soviet-Afghan War: How a Superpower Fought and Lost*, trans. and ed. Lester W. Grau and Michael A. Gress (University of Kansas Press, 2002), 62-72.

to listen to Taliban communications "described almost comical attempts by different commanders to shirk combat and foist the responsibility on other commanders."[79]

Around this time the Peshawar Shura began to develop a more centralized command system for Taliban fighters in the east and northeast. This new system involved the creation of provincial military commissions to plan large-scale operations, manage logistics, and deal with disputes between front commanders, as well as the appointment of district military commissioners (*Nizami Massuleen*) to ensure that field commanders complied with direction from the Peshawar Shura. This type of centralized system was alien to Taliban culture. So where did it come from? The Pakistani military's extensive support for the Taliban, including providing military advisers, no doubt contributed to the creation and functioning of this more centralized system. But recent work by Claudio Franco and Antonio Giustozzi suggests that the Taliban's organizational innovations originated in the more regimented structure of Hezb-i Islami, a rival mujahedeen party during the Soviet war. The Peshawar Shura was formed partly out of a breakaway faction from Hezb-i Islami in 2006. In this way, Hezb-i Islami's ideas about how to organize the insurgency came into the Taliban. This more centralized system was subsequently adopted, with some reluctance, by the southern Taliban when Mullah Abdul Qayyum Zakir was appointed to head the Quetta Military Commission in 2009. There is a complicated but important backstory here: Zakir, a prominent Taliban commander from northern Helmand, had fallen out with his erstwhile patron, Mullah Baradar, and so he aligned instead with the Peshawar Shura. It was only under pressure from Peshawar that Baradar appointed Zakir to oversee the Quetta Military Commission. From this position, which

he occupied until 2014, Zakir was able to ensure that the new centralized system rolled out across the south.[80] In addition, from 2008 on, foreign aid flowing through Pakistan was increasingly directed toward the Peshawar Shura, which allowed them to progressively outspend the Quetta Shura in funding the war.[81] This, in turn, enabled Peshawar to push its professionalization effort on Taliban fronts in the south as well as the east.[82]

The result was a somewhat cumbersome double chain of command, in which Taliban units belonging to a particular front would respond to both their parent networks and the Peshawar or Quetta military commissions (whichever had given direction).[83] As one field commander noted in 2011, "If we see an ISAF convoy or police or army, we have orders to attack them. But if we make a plan to attack someplace, I ask Haji Mullah [his *mahaz* chief]. Sometimes we get orders from the *nizami* commission as well."[84] Taliban interviewees also confirmed that the military commissions took over the task of resolving problems among commanders: "When some small problems come between to Taliban commanders, they are solved by the *nizami* commission in a very short time."[85] Where necessary, a mediator figure — "a Pakistani mullah," sent from Quetta — would be dispatched to sort out conflict between commanders when the district military commissioners were unable to cope on their own.[86] Thus, while it enabled more coordination between fronts and fighting groups, the Taliban's new centralized system did not foster state-like command and control.

The Taliban also adapted tactics in response to battlefield pressures. In Helmand, for instance, the group made wide use of fairly conventional infantry assaults in 2006 and 2007 in an attempt to overrun British outposts. The exact number of Taliban fighters killed in action over this period is unknown, but British defense intelligence

estimated it to be in the thousands.[87] In response to these growing losses, Taliban field units adapted by moving toward greater use of asymmetric tactics. Taliban commanders interviewed across nine districts in Helmand reported this change. Three of these interviewees confirmed that the imperative to reduce Taliban battlefield casualties drove the shift in tactics.[88] Nevertheless, the Taliban still engaged in occasional large-scale attacks and paid a heavy price when they did so. This included, most spectacularly, an assault on Lashkar Gah in October 2008 by a 300-strong force, with the objective of decapitating the provincial government and discrediting the British mission. This attack was repulsed by airpower, leaving around 150 Taliban dead.[89] Perhaps having learned from such setbacks, in 2010 the Quetta Military Commission issued a general order instructing field units to avoid direct combat and to make greater use of guerrilla tactics.[90]

Based on extensive interviews with Taliban commanders and officials, Giustozzi shows how alongside the new tactics came a number of "technological innovations," including the introduction of anti-aircraft heavy machine guns, heavy mortars, advanced anti-armor weapons, and large-scale use of sniper rifles and improvised explosive devices (IEDs).[91] Taliban interviewees admit to having received military equipment from Iran, and some said they had received military supplies from Russia.[92] Interviewees are far more careful in discussing support the Taliban received from the Pakistani Army. It is very likely, however, that these Taliban technological innovations were facilitated by equipment and training provided by Pakistan.

The Taliban's most significant technology-enabled military adaptation was the move to industrial-scale

use of IEDs. In Quetta and Peshawar, the Taliban established Mine Commissions to lead this effort. In 2006, around 30 percent of all coalition fatalities were caused by IEDs. The next year, the share rose to almost 40 percent. From 2008 to 2010, IEDs were responsible for more than half of all coalition troop deaths.[93] By late 2008, use of IEDs had quadrupled in Helmand from the previous year. The number of such devices detected in Helmand jumped from around 100 per month in late 2008 to more than 450 per month in the summer of 2009 (they caused 80 percent of British fatalities that summer). This number continued to rise in 2010, to more than 600 in February and 700 in March.[94]

Initially, most improvised explosive devices were made using recycled Soviet mines and unexploded

[H]ow centralized is the Taliban, and how has the group's organizational structure affected military adaptation?

ISAF ordnance. To meet demand, however, the Taliban had to switch to large-scale production of explosives using fertilizers from Pakistan.[95] By 2009, 80 percent of IEDs used these types of homemade explosives.[96] Western forces responded to the threat by deploying far more capable armored vehicles. The Taliban's homemade explosives were

79   Coghlan, "The Taliban in Helmand," 145.

80   Claudio Franco and Antonio Giustozzi, "Revolution in the Counter-Revolution: Efforts to Centralize the Taliban's Military Leadership," *Central Asian Affairs* 3, no. 3 (2016): 272-75, https://doi.org/10.1163/22142290-00303003.

81   On the rise of the Peshawar Shura, see Franco and Giustozzi, "Revolution in the Counter-Revolution," 249-86.

82   On the importance of "resource control" to the leadership of insurgent groups, see Alec Worsnop, "Who Can Keep the Peace? Insurgent Organizational Control of Collective Violence," *Security Studies* 26, no. 3 (2017): 482-516, https://doi.org/10.1080/09636412.2017.1306397.

83   Interview with Taliban commander no. 2, Nad-e Ali, 2012. This procedure is confirmed in interviews with Taliban commanders from other provinces (Baghlan, Kunduz, Wardak) conducted in 2011–12 as part of a project run by one of the authors.

84   Interview with Taliban commander no. 1, Marjah, 2011.

85   Interview with Taliban commander no. 1, Now Zad, 2011; also confirmed by interviews with Taliban commander no. 4, Garmsir, 2011; Taliban commander no. 4, Marjah, 2011; Taliban commander no. 2, Now Zad, 2011, Now Zad; and Taliban commander no. 4, Kajaki, 2011.

86   Interview with Taliban commander no. 5, Sangin, 2011. See also Antonio Giustozzi and Adam Baczko, "The Politics of the Taliban's Shadow Judiciary, 2003–2013," *Central Asian Affairs* 1 (2014): 199-224, https://doi.org/10.1163/22142290-00102003.

87   Interview with staff officer, Defense Intelligence, Ministry of Defense, London, November 2008. Tom Coghlan reports that "British commanders estimated that approximately 1,000 Taliban died during 2006." He places less credence in newspaper reports of many thousands of Taliban dead. Coghlan, "The Taliban in Helmand," 130.

88   Interviews with Taliban commander no. 8, Garsmir, 2011; Taliban commander no. 3, Kajaki, 2011; and Taliban commander no. 3, Marjah, 2011.

89   Interview with senior staff officer, 3 Commando Brigade, Ministry of Defense, London, July 1, 2010. For a dramatic account of the Taliban attack, see Ewen Southby-Tailyour, *3 Commando Brigade: Helmand Assault* (London: Ebury Press, 2010), 55-66.

90   Interview with Taliban commander no. 3, Sangin. This is confirmed by 12 interviewees, with a number referring specifically to a "general order" from the Quetta Shura.

91   Antonio Giustozzi, *The Taliban at War* (London: Hurst, forthcoming), chap. 4.

92   Interview with former Taliban front commander, November 2016; interview with former Taliban provincial governor, November 2016.

93   Ian S. Livingston and Michael E. O'Hanlon, *Afghanistan Index: Tracking Variables of Reconstruction and Security in Post-9/11 Afghanistan* (Washington: Brookings Institution, May 2014), 11, figure 1.17, https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/index20140514.pdf.

94   Directorate Land Warfare, Lessons Exploitation Centre, Operation Herrick Campaign Study, March 2015 [redacted and publicly released version], Annex A to Annex E, chap. 3-6, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/492757/20160107115638.pdf; also Olivier Grouville, "Bird and Fairweather in Context: Assessing the IED Threat," *RUSI Journal* 154 (2009): 40, https://doi.org/10.1080/03071840903255252.

95   Fertilizers containing ammonium nitrate are banned in Afghanistan.

96   Antonio Giustozzi, "Military Adaptation by the Taliban, 2002–11," in M*ilitary Adaptation in Afghanistan*, ed. Theo Farrell et al. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013), 251.

about twenty times less powerful than military explosives, so it was difficult for the group to produce IEDs large enough to destroy such vehicles. U.S. and British forces also invested more heavily in IED detection capabilities. The Taliban responded by reducing the metal content in the devices to make them harder to detect. By 2011, the Taliban were producing IEDs on an industrial scale in Helmand, Kandahar, and Khost.[97] Hunting down IED makers became a priority for U.S. and coalition intelligence and special operations forces. One Taliban source gives insight into the impact of this counter-IED campaign on the Haqqani network: It lost almost 100 IED makers in 2013 and around 75 in 2014.[98] According to Taliban sources, the Iranians began to provide remotely triggered mines capable of penetrating Western armored vehicles in 2010 and increased the supply in 2011 and 2012.[99]

Such extensive use of IEDs made it increasingly difficult for U.S. and coalition forces to move around. In 2006–07, the British had only two IED disposal teams for the whole of Helmand. There were six teams by late 2008 and 14 by late 2009, but this was still not nearly enough. A British military review of the IED threat concluded that it had created "a defensive mindset" in British forces, who were increasingly focused on simply not getting blown up. The situation gradually improved for U.S. and international forces with the deployment of new armored vehicles, better training and equipment for detecting IEDs, and the targeting of IED production. By 2011, the proportion of coalition troops killed by IEDs fell below 50 percent. It dropped further, to around 30 percent, in 2012.[100] Since the coalition mission ended in December 2014, bringing with it the withdrawal of Western combat forces, the burden of fighting the Taliban has fallen on the Afghan National Security Forces, whose unarmored trucks and lack of counter-IED capabilities leave them highly vulnerable to such devices.

Professionalization of the war effort by the

Peshawar Shura, including adoption of military commissions by the Quetta Shura, was critical to the Taliban's ability to adapt militarily. With a shift in tactics came a new military training regime, reinforced by directives from Quetta and Peshawar compelling the tactical commanders to undergo training and receive regular advice on guerrilla tactics. One Taliban commander in Helmand noted in early 2012 that "now we are all focused a lot on getting training of IEDs, making of Fedayeen vests, getting ready of Fedayeen bombers and guerrilla fighting."[101] According to another commander, Taliban units undergo "15 or 20" days of training every four months.[102] One interviewee from Sangin said that the Taliban "decided to open new training centers for mujahedeen."[103] Yet another offered a contradictory and altogether more convincing view, given U.S. and British military operations: "We don't have a secure place for our training. One day we get training in one area and the other day we get training in another place."[104] Many Taliban interviewees from Helmand reported "foreign Taliban" (in this case meaning fighters from Pakistan) entering their districts for a week or two to provide military training. These men are most likely members of mobile training teams dispatched from Quetta or Peshawar that move from village to village.[105] Pakistani and Iranian military advisers appear to have provided significant support to the Taliban training effort.[106] This centrally directed and resourced training regime greatly increased the Taliban's capacity to absorb new weapons and bomb-making technology into general use by field forces.[107]

The ability to adapt has been key to the success of the Taliban insurgency. Early tactics learned during the Soviet war — ambushing military convoys and raiding enemy bases — proved suicidal in the face of Western artillery and airpower. The loose structure of the Taliban, based on the *mahaz* system, also greatly limited the group's ability to mass force and achieve decisive outcomes

on the battlefield. The Taliban adapted in two major ways: first, by introducing some degree of centralized command of fighting groups through a system of provincial military commissions and district military commissioners; and, second, by shifting to guerrilla warfare tactics and avoiding direct engagement with enemy forces. The latter adaptation involved a massive increase in the use and sophistication of IEDs, significantly hindering freedom of movement by international and Afghan security forces.

The typical drivers of military adaptation are present in the case of the Taliban. Growing battlefield losses drove the Taliban to find new ways to fight and organize. This effort accelerated when Mullah Zakir assumed leadership of the Quetta Military Commission in 2009. The Taliban's political leadership, in the form of the Quetta Shura old guard, was not keen on Zakir and his organizational reforms, but pressure from the Peshawar Shura backed by Pakistani funds swept aside these concerns. The decentralized structure of the Taliban had given local commanders too much latitude to fight when and how they liked. Under Zakir, some semblance of centralized command was superimposed on the *mahaz* system. This, over time, enabled the rolling out of new tactics, training, and bomb technologies. Finally, new ideas travelled with people into the Taliban: Organizational and tactical innovations came not only from the Pakistani ISI (as previously believed) but were also adopted when a breakaway faction of Hezb-i Islami was absorbed into the Taliban movement, forming the Peshawar Shura.

Conclusion: The Problem with U.S. Strategy

The resilience of an insurgency is substantially shaped by its social resources and its ability to adapt. The importance of these factors is identified in the relevant theoretical literature and is furthermore evident in the case of the Afghan Taliban. The group was founded on a powerful horizontal network. In establishing a post-2002 insurgency, however, the Taliban were able to exploit vertical links into host communities as well. The group was less successful in its efforts to rebuild the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan

but garnered some legitimacy from the efficiency of Taliban courts. The Taliban also adapted militarily, in terms of tactics and supporting technologies, as well as in the command of insurgent fighting groups. The latter improvements to the Taliban's chain of command, and the overall professionalization of the insurgent war effort led by the eastern Taliban, also increased the group's capacity to adapt tactically. Previous studies have further highlighted the importance of foreign support for the Taliban and of their ability to operate from sanctuaries in Pakistan. The combination of the group's social resources, ability to adapt, and trans-border support make the Taliban's resurgence from what had looked like utter defeat not all that surprising.

Ultimately, insurgencies win by not losing, especially when facing off against a foreign great power. Essentially, the insurgents need only outwait the foreign interloper. This has been the Taliban's basic strategy. Under President Donald Trump, the United States has decided to double down in Afghanistan. One element of the "new" Trump strategy involves getting tough with Pakistan for failing to crack down on the Taliban. On Jan. 1, 2018, the president tweeted that Pakistan was playing the United States for "fools" by giving "safe haven to the terrorists we hunt in Afghanistan."[108] His comments triggered an immediate suspension of U.S. military assistance to Pakistan.[109] The Trump administration is gambling hugely by cracking down on Pakistan given Islamabad's capacity to make things far worse both by interfering with the U.S. logistical routes through Pakistan, and by increasing support to the Taliban.[110] Even in the unlikely event that the Pakistan Army withdraws its support for the Afghan Taliban, the United States would still have to contend with an adaptive insurgency that has strong social roots.

This is where the other element of the Trump strategy to intensify the relatively modest U.S. military effort in Afghanistan becomes problematic. Around 11,000 U.S. troops are stationed in Afghanistan, 8,400 of whom are committed to supporting NATO's Resolute Support mission to "train, advise, and assist" the Afghan security forces. In August 2017, Trump approved the deployment of an additional 3,900 troops to Afghanistan. Gen. Joseph Vogel, head of U.S. Central Command, declared that in 2018 U.S. forces would "focus on offensive operations and … look for a major effort to gain the initiative very quickly as we

97 Giustozzi, *The Taliban at War*, chap. 6.

98 Interview with Taliban leader, Miran Shah Shura, 2015.

99 Interview with several Taliban commanders, Faryab, 2014; interview with Taliban commander, Kandahar, 2014; interview with Taliban leader, Miran Shah Shura, 2015.

100 Farrell, *Unwinnable*, 242–44.

101 Interview with Taliban commander no. 3, Marjah, 2011.

102 Interview with Taliban commander no. 4, Garmsir, 2011.

103 Interview with Taliban commander no. 6, Sangin, 2011.

104 Interview with Taliban commander no. 5, Marjah, 2011.

105 Interview with Taliban commander no. 3, Sangin, 2011.

106 Interviews with Taliban commander, Kandahar, 2014; and with Taliban cadre, Nangarhar, 2015.

107 On the importance of organizational capacity to "absorb" new military technologies, see Michael C. Horowitz, *The Diffusion of Military Power: Causes and Consequences for International Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010).

108 Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump), Twitter post, Jan. 1, 2018, 4:12 a.m., https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/947802588174577664.

109 Haroon Janjua, "'Nothing but Lies and Deceit': Trump Launches Twitter Attack on Pakistan," *Guardian*, Jan. 2, 2018, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jan/01/lies-and-deceit-trump-launches-attack-on-pakistan-tweet.

110 Mujib Mashal and Salman Masood, "Cutting Off Pakistan, U.S. Takes Gamble in Complex War," *New York Times*, Jan. 5, 2018, https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/05/world/asia/pakistan-aid-afghan-war.html.

enter into the fighting season."[111] It is hard to see how such a modest increase in U.S. ground forces could have a decisive effect. The U.S. military's last attempt to turn the tables on the Taliban came in late 2009 and early 2010, when there were around 100,000 U.S. troops in Afghanistan and about 40,000 troops from coalition partners.[112] Afghan capabilities, insofar as they have grown since 2010, can hardly make up for the withdrawal of Western combat forces.[113] Indeed, the Afghan security forces have steadily lost ground

Less studied is how the Taliban have been the makers of their own success

across the country since 2014, with major Taliban gains that year in the south (Helmand and Uruzgan provinces), east (Ghanzi, Wardak, Kapisa, and Logar provinces), and north (Kunduz province).[114] According to the U.S. special inspector general for Afghanistan reconstruction, only around 70 percent of Afghanistan's 407 districts were under government control in late 2015. Two years later, that share was down to just over half of the districts.[115]

History is instructive here: When the United States got bogged down in drawn-out wars against peasant armies in Korea and Vietnam, it resorted to major bombing campaigns to break the stalemate. This failed to work in both of those wars.[116] In Afghanistan, history is repeating itself. In December 2017, the U.S. commander in Afghanistan, Gen. John Nicholson, revealed that a major campaign by U.S. air forces was targeting some 500 Taliban drug laboratories in southern areas, bringing the number of airstrikes in 2017 to three times more than had occurred in 2016. [117] Afghan civilians have borne the brunt of this bombing campaign: The United Nations reported a 52 percent increase in civilian deaths caused by airstrikes in 2017 in comparison to the year before.[118]

Civilian casualties notwithstanding, the United States is pursuing a targeted bombing campaign. Noting that the Taliban earn around $200 million a year through its taxation of the opium trade, Nicholson declared, "We're hitting the Taliban where it hurts, which is their finances." He added: "The Taliban have three choices: reconcile, face irrelevance or die."[119] According to the leading analyst on the Afghan opium trade, David Mansfeld, the U.S. military is grossly overestimating both the Taliban's ability to collect taxes and the amount of poppy being destroyed in the bombings. Mansfeld finds accordingly that the bombing campaign is having far less impact on Taliban revenue than is claimed by U.S. military commanders.[120]

In a January 2018 *Foreign Affairs* article titled "Why the Taliban Isn't Winning in Afghanistan," Seth G. Jones argues that "Although the Taliban has demonstrated a surprising ability to survive and conduct high-profile attacks in cities like Kabul, it is weaker today than most recognize."[121] Jones is only partly right. Citing various Afghan opinion polls, Jones argues that public support for the Taliban has plummeted thanks to its extremist ideology, brutal tactics, and reliance on both the drug trade and support from Pakistan. He fails to note, however, that polling in Afghanistan is famously unreliable and that public views of the Taliban are especially difficult to gauge in areas under Taliban control. He is on safer ground in noting that few non-Pashtun Afghans recognize the legitimacy of the Pashtun-dominated Taliban and that Afghanistan's growing urban population abhors the socially regressive ideology of the Taliban. Some in the Taliban leadership have long understood these realities and foresee the Taliban entering government only through a power-sharing arrangement.[122] These days, the Taliban's main problem is not the group's decline in popularity but its waning cohesiveness.

In November 2016, Michael Semple and I spent a week conducting interviews with seven senior Taliban figures. Our subjects included two former deputy ministers, a former provincial governor, and two former senior military commanders. What we discovered surprised us. We had expected Taliban confidence to have been boosted by recent battlefield success. Instead, those we interviewed reported widespread disillusion within the movement, with the state of Taliban leadership, and with a seemingly endless war. Multiple interviewees told us that many Taliban members feel that the war lost direction and purpose after the withdrawal of foreign combat forces. The Taliban's current leader, Mullah Haibatullah Akhundzada, is widely seen as ineffective and lacking the moral authority of the group's founder, Mullah Omar. This is undermining the ideological cornerstone of the Taliban, namely obedience to the emir. Several factions are vying for power within the movement, most notably the Ishaqzai-dominated Mansour network based in northern Helmand (led by Mullah Rahim, the Taliban governor of Helmand).[123] Thus, while the Taliban maintains strong vertical ties with rural communities, which have supported the group's battlefield gains since 2014, the horizontal network holding the insurgency together is weakening.[124]

Sending more U.S. troops into Afghanistan and pushing them out into the field is likely to provide some short-term gains. Importantly, the presence of a Marine battalion in Helmand helps prevent the provincial capital from falling to the Taliban. Yet this marginal increase in combat-force levels will not break the strategic stalemate in Afghanistan when massive U.S. military power failed to do so in 2010. Rather, sending in more troops and conducting more airstrikes may well make the Taliban stronger. Meanwhile, destroying drug processing and production facilities will hurt not only the Taliban but also anybody involved in opium farming, which is just about every farmer in Helmand. It stands to once again drive them into the arms of the insurgents. And just as before, public patience is likely to wear thin at apparent U.S. military carelessness and mounting civilian casualties.[125] In the end, ramping up the U.S. military effort in Afghanistan risks reenergizing the Taliban's sense of purpose and uniting a movement that may be beginning to unravel. If the United States is not careful, it could end up bombing its way to defeat in Afghanistan. ♟

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111 Carlo Muñoz, "U.S. Forces to Go on the Offensive in Afghanistan, Says Top Commander," *Washington Times*, Jan. 2, 2018, https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/jan/2/top-commander-us-forces-go-offensive-afghanistan/.

112 Farrell, *Unwinnable*, 292-324.

113 In a less-than-encouraging development, the U.S. Department of Defense for the first time in eight years classified the data on Afghan security forces' operational readiness. Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, Quarterly Report to the United States Congress, Oct. 30, 2017, 99-100, https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/quarterlyreports/2017-10-30qr.pdf.

114 Lauren McNally and Paul Bucala, "The Taliban Resurgent: Threats to Afghanistan's Security," *Afghanistan Report no. 11* (Washington: Institute for the Study of War, March 2015): 13-17, 19-20, http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/AFGH Report.pdf.

115 Of the 407 districts in Afghanistan, 7 percent were under insurgent control or influence, 21 percent were contested, and 72 percent were under government control in November 2015. By October 2017, these ratios had shifted to 14 percent under insurgent control or influence, 30 percent contested, and 56 percent under government control. Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR), Addendum to SIGAR's January 2018 Quarterly Report to the United States Congress, Jan. 30, 2018, 1, https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/quarterlyreports/Addendum_2018-01-30qr.pdf.

116 On Korea, Robert A. Pape finds that U.S. bombing was unable to have a significant impact on the enemy war effort or the civilian economy, hence he concludes that no coercive leverage was produced. On Vietnam, he argues that the U.S. bombing campaign "succeeded in 1972 where it had failed from 1965 to 1968 because in the interim Hanoi had changed from a guerrilla strategy, which was essentially immune to air power, to a conventional offensive strategy, which was highly vulnerable to air interdiction." Robert A. Pape, *Bombing to Win: Air Power and Coercion in War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996), chap. 5 and 6 (Quote is from p. 209).

117 Eric Schmitt, "Hunting Taliban and Islamic State Fighters, From 20,000 Feet," *New York Times*, Dec. 11, 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/11/world/asia/taliban-isis-afghanistan-drugs-b52s.html.

118 U.N. figures comparing civilian deaths from U.S. airstrikes in the first nine months of 2016 and 2017. Shashank Bengali, "U.S. Airstrikes Rise Sharply in Afghanistan — and So Do Civilian Deaths," *Los Angeles Times*, Dec. 4, 2017, http://www.latimes.com/world/asia/la-fg-afghanistan-us-airstrikes-20171204-htmlstory.html.

119 Schmitt, "Hunting Taliban."

120 Andrew Cockburn, "Mobbed Up: How America Boosts the Afghan Opium Trade," *Harper's Magazine*, April 2018, https://harpers.org/archive/2018/04/mobbed-up/.

121 Seth G. Jones, "Why the Taliban Isn't Winning in Afghanistan: Too Weak for Victory, Too Strong for Defeat," *Foreign Affairs*, January 2018, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/afghanistan/2018-01-03/why-taliban-isnt-winning-afghanistan.

122 Michael Semple, Theo Farrell, Anatol Lieven, and Rudra Chaudhuri, *Taliban Perspectives on Reconciliation* (London: Royal United Services Institute, September 2012), https://rusi.org/sites/default/files/taliban_perspectives_on_reconciliation.pdf.

123 Theo Farrell and Michael Semple, *Ready for Peace? The Afghan Taliban After a Decade of War* (London: Royal United Services Institute, January 2017), https://rusi.org/sites/default/files/201701_bp_ready_for_peace.pdf.

124 For more recent analysis supporting this view, see Antonio Giustozzi, "Do the Taliban Have Any Appetite for Reconciliation in Kabul?" Center for Research and Policy Analysis, Mar. 19, 2018, https://www.af-crpa.org/single-post/2018/03/20/Do-the-Taliban-Have-any-Appetite-for-Reconciliation-with-Kabul-Antonio-Giustozzi.

125 Sune Engel Rasmussen, "Afghan Civilians Count Cost of Renewed US Air Campaign," *Guardian*, Sept. 5, 2017, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/sep/05/afghan-civilians-count-cost-of-renewed-us-air-campaign.

RONALD REAGAN AND THE COLD WAR: WHAT MATTERED MOST

Melvyn P. Leffler

Scholars, like contemporary observers, continue to argue heatedly over the quality of President Ronald Reagan's strategy, diplomacy, and leadership. This paper focuses on a fascinating paradox of his presidency: By seeking to talk to Soviet leaders and end the Cold War, Reagan helped to win it. In that process, his emotional intelligence was more important than his military buildup; his political credibility at home was more important than his ideological offensive abroad; and his empathy, affability, and learning were more important than his suspicions. Ultimately, by striving to end the nuclear arms race and avoid Armageddon, he contributed to the dynamics that led to the dissolution of the Soviet Union. These ironies, rather than detracting from Reagan's significance, should instead put it in proper perspective. He was Gorbachev's minor, yet indispensable partner, setting the framework for the dramatic changes that neither man anticipated happening anytime soon.

Scholars love debating the role of Ronald Reagan in the Cold War. Some say he aimed to *win* the Cold War. Others claim he wanted to *end* the Cold War. Some say he wanted to abolish nuclear weapons and yearned for a more peaceful world; others say he built up American capabilities, prepared to wage nuclear war, and sought to destroy communism and the evil empire that embodied it. Noting these contradictions and Reagan's competing impulses, some writers even claim that he wanted to do all of these things.[1]

Figuring out what Ronald Reagan wanted to do, or, more precisely, what things he wanted *most* to do, may be an impossible task. When reading memoirs about Reagan and interviews with his advisers, what impresses and surprises the most is that the "great communicator" was regarded as "impenetrable" by many of those who adored him,

who worked for him, and who labored to impress his legacy on the American psyche.

Nonetheless, the growing documentary record, along with memoirs and oral histories, allows for a more careful assessment of Reagan's personal impact on the endgame of the Cold War. His role was important, albeit not as important as Mikhail Gorbachev's. But his significance stemmed less from the arms buildup and ideological offensive that he launched at the onset of his presidency in 1981 than from his desires to abolish nuclear weapons, tamp down the strategic arms race, and avoid Armageddon. These priorities inspired Reagan to make overtures to Soviet leaders; gain a better understanding of their fears; and, eventually, to engage Gorbachev with conviction, empathy, and geniality. After 1985, many of Reagan's national security advisers, intelligence analysts, and political allies disdained the president's

1   John Prados, *How the Cold War Ended: Debating and Doing History* (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, 2011); Artemy Kalinovsky and Craig Daigle, "Explanations for the End of the Cold War," in *The Routledge Handbook of the Cold War*, ed. Artemy Kalinovsky and Craig Daigle (London: Routledge, 2014). For Reagan's competing impulses, see James G. Wilson, *The Triumph of Improvisation* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014); Jacob Weisberg, *Ronald Reagan* (New York: Times Books, 2016); for inconsistencies, ambiguities, and change, see Tyler Esno, "Reagan's Economic War on the Soviet Union," *Diplomatic History* 42, no. 2 (April 2018): 281–304, https://doi.org/10.1093/dh/dhx061.
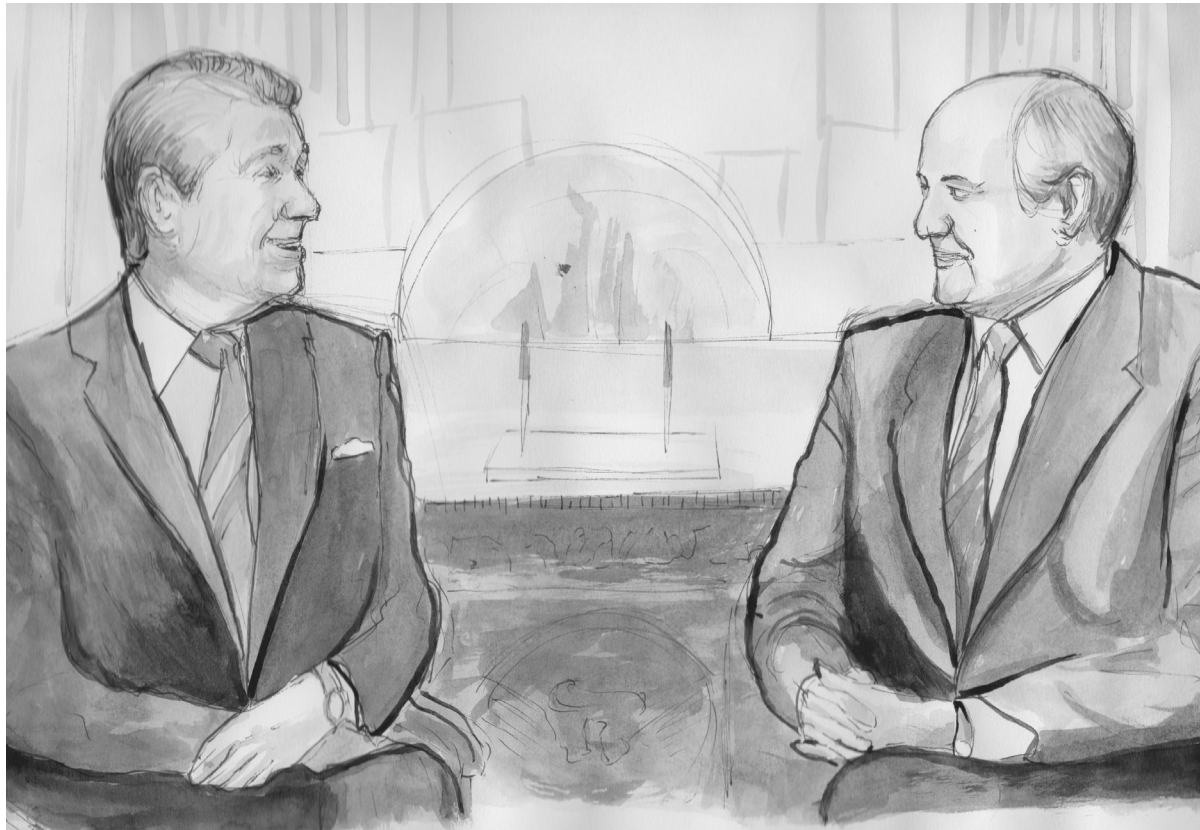
nuclear abolitionism, distrusted Gorbachev, and exaggerated the strength and durability of the Soviet regime. Reagan, however, strove to consummate the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, push forward on strategic arms reductions, and solidify his relationship with a pliable Soviet leader who was trying to reshape his own country. Reagan's sincerity, goodwill, strong desire for negotiations, and shared commitment to nuclear abolition (however abstract) reassured Gorbachev, helping to sustain a trajectory whose end results the Soviet leader did not foresee or contemplate. Paradoxically, then, Reagan nurtured the dynamics that won the Cold War by focusing on ways to end it.

Ronald Reagan was convivial, upbeat, courteous, respectful, self-confident, and humble. But he was also opaque, remote, distant, and inscrutable. Ronnie was a "loner," Nancy Reagan wrote in her memoir. "There's a wall around him. He lets me come closer than anyone else, but there are times when even I feel that barrier."[2] His advisers agreed. Charles Wick, his longtime friend and head of the U.S. Information Agency, acknowledged that "no matter how close anybody was to him . . . there still is a very slight wall that you don't get past."[3] "No one was close to Reagan," Ken Adelman told an interviewer. "He laughed, he was a wonderful warm human being, but there was something impenetrable about him. Really, he wouldn't share — some views were out there, but otherwise he just went to a different drummer — a strange person."[4]

Of course, Reagan had a set of strong convictions that he preached for most of his long career as a spokesman for General Electric, as governor of California, as an aspirant for the highest office in the land, and as president. "He wasn't a complicated person," Nancy explained. "He was a private man, but he was not a complicated one."[5] Everyone thought they knew what Reagan believed: He loved freedom and hated communism. He revered free enterprise and abhorred big government. He wanted to cut taxes and catalyze private entrepreneurship. He adored the city on the hill and detested the evil empire.[6]

But things got complicated for his advisers when they learned that he also yearned for peace, detested nuclear weapons, thought mutually assured destruction (MAD) was itself mad, feared that nuclear war would lead to Armageddon, and embraced compromise. When trade-offs were necessary, when priorities needed to be agreed upon, when complicated options needed to be resolved, Reagan was opaque. He "gave no orders, no commands; asked for no information; expressed no urgency," said David Stockman, his first budget director. Although Stockman became a harsh critic, Reagan's admirers did not disagree. Martin Anderson, among his most important economic advisers and a longtime friend, wrote: "He made no demands, and gave almost no instructions." Frank Carlucci, who served on the National Security Council staff in the early years and returned as national security adviser and secretary of defense in the later years of Reagan's second term, noted that the president often seemed in a "daze"; well, not exactly a "daze," Carlucci said, but very "preoccupied," especially during the Iran-Contra controversy. According to Richard Pipes, the renowned Soviet expert, Reagan sometimes seemed "really lost, out of his depth, uncomfortable," at National Security Council meetings. William Webster, who headed the CIA at the end of Reagan's presidency, one day approached Colin Powell, then the national security adviser, and confided, "I'm pretty good at reading people, but I like to get a report card. I can't tell whether I'm really helping him or not because he listens and I don't get a sense that he disagrees with me or agrees with me or what." Powell replied, "Listen, I'm with him a dozen times a day and I'm in the same boat. So don't feel badly about that."[7]

A Strategy to Win or to End the Cold War?

Nevertheless, a trend has emerged that praises Reagan's strategy for winning the Cold War. According to its proponents, there is abundant evidence to support this argument, specifically National Security Decision Directives (NSDD) 32 and 75. Those directives, formulated in 1982 and early 1983, outline a strategy: build strength, constrain and contract Soviet expansion, nurture change within the Soviet empire (to the extent possible), and negotiate.[8] The sophisticated analysts who rely on these directives and who regard Reagan as a grand strategist acknowledge the disarray in the administration; the feuding between the State Department, the Defense Department, and the national security staff; and the bickering inside the White House among James Baker, Michael Deaver, Ed Meese, and (to some extent) Nancy Reagan. Yet they claim — with a good deal of evidence — that when Judge William Clark, Reagan's close friend, took the role of national security adviser in 1982, he sorted all this out, imposed discipline, and orchestrated a polished and refined strategy that triumphed over the evil empire.[9] Clark himself, in a lengthy interview at the University of Virginia's Miller Center in 2003, took pride in forcing the Soviets to reshape their behavior through economic warfare, ideological competition, and military power.[10]

These interpretations by sophisticated scholars such as Hal Brands, William Inboden, and John Gaddis appear, at first glance, persuasive.[11] But when the evidence is examined closely, there is room for skepticism. In November 1983, after Pipes had left the National Security Council staff, Alexander Haig had left the State Department, and Clark had left the White House, Jack Matlock, Pipes' successor, began organizing Saturday-

2   Nancy Reagan, with William Novak, *My Turn: The Memoirs of Nancy Reagan* (New York: Random House, 1989), 106; also see Lou Cannon, *President Reagan: The Role of a Lifetime* (New York: Public Affairs, 2000), 172–95; Edmund Morris, *Dutch: A Memoir of Ronald Reagan* (New York: Random House, 1999), 61.

3   Charles Z. Wick, Ronald Reagan Oral History Project interview, Miller Center of Public Affairs, University of Virginia, Apr. 24–25, 2003, 42, https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-oral-histories/charles-z-wick-oral-history-director-united-states.

4   Kenneth Adelman, Ronald Reagan Oral History Project interview, Miller Center of Public Affairs, University of Virginia, Sept. 30, 2003, 45, https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-oral-histories/kenneth-adelman-oral-history-director-arms-control-and.

5   Nancy Reagan, *My Turn*, 104.

6   A wonderful compendium of Reagan's beliefs and views can be found in Kiron K. Skinner, Annelise Anderson, and Martin Anderson, eds., *Reagan in His Own Hand* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2001).

7   David A. Stockman, *The Triumph of Politics: How the Reagan Revolution Failed* (New York: Harper and Row, 1986), 76; Martin Anderson, *Revolution: The Reagan Legacy* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1990), 289–90; Richard Pipes, *Vixi: Memoirs of a Non-Belonger* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 166; Frank Carlucci, Ronald Reagan Oral History Project interview, Miller Center of Public Affairs, University of Virginia, Aug. 28, 2001, 28–30, https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-oral-histories/frank-carlucci-oral-history-assistant-president-national; William H. Webster, Ronald Reagan Oral History Project interview, Miller Center of Public Affairs, University of Virginia, Aug. 21, 2002, 26–27, https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-oral-histories/william-h-webster-oral-history-fbi-director-director.

8   National Security Decision Directive 32, "U.S. National Security Strategy," May 20, 1982, https://fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsdd/nsdd-32.pdf; National Security Decision Directive 75, "U.S. Relations with the USSR," Jan. 17, 1983, https://fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsdd/nsdd-75.pdf.

9   Hal Brands, *What Good Is Grand Strategy? Power and Purpose in American Statecraft from Harry S. Truman to George W. Bush* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014), 102–19; John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of American National Security Policy During the Cold War*, rev. ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 342–79; William Inboden, "Grand Strategy and Petty Squabbles: The Paradox of the Reagan National Security Council," in *The Power of the Past: History and Statecraft*, ed. Hal Brands and Jeremi Suri (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2016), 151–80.

10   William P. Clark, Ronald Reagan Oral History Project interview, Miller Center of Public Affairs, University of Virginia, Aug. 17, 2003, https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-oral-histories/william-p-clark-oral-history-assistant-president.

11   Brands, *What Good Is Grand Strategy?*; Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*; Inboden, "Grand Strategy and Petty Squabbles."

morning breakfasts for senior officials to clarify the administration's policy. George Shultz, the new secretary of state, attended, as did Bud McFarlane, the national security adviser, as well as Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger and Vice President George H. W. Bush. There were sharp differences of opinion, Matlock subsequently wrote,

but nobody [at the breakfast] argued that the United States should try to bring the Soviet Union down. All recognized that the Soviet leaders faced mounting problems, but understood that U.S. attempts to exploit them would strengthen Soviet resistance to change rather than diminish it. President Reagan was in favor of bringing pressure to bear on the Soviet Union, but his objective was to induce the Soviet leaders to negotiate reasonable agreements, not to break up the country.[12]

These senior officials outlined the key goals: reduce the use and threat of force in international disputes, lower armaments, establish minimal levels of trust with the hope of verifying past agreements, and effectuating progress on human rights, confidence-building measures, and bilateral ties.[13]

The policymakers agreed that they should not challenge the legitimacy of the Soviet system, seek military superiority, or force the collapse of the Soviet system, which, according to Matlock, was to be considered "distinct from exerting pressure on Soviets to live up to agreements and abide by civilized standards of behavior."[14]

They also agreed that they should pursue a policy of realism, strength, and negotiation. Realism meant "that our competition with the Soviet Union is basic and there is no quick fix." Strength was necessary to deal with the Kremlin effectively, while negotiations aimed to reduce tensions, not to conceal differences.[15]

So, what should one conclude? There are Clark and NSDD 75 on the one hand, and Matlock and the Nov. 19 Saturday-morning breakfast memo on the other. Shultz had presented his own memorandum to the president on Soviet-U.S. relations after he replaced Haig as secretary of state, and that memorandum resembled the Saturday breakfast memo.[16] One approach has been interpreted to connote a desire to achieve overwhelming military strength, cripple the Soviet economy, undermine the Soviet empire, and destroy the communist way of life.[17] The other suggested a desire to achieve military parity, negotiate arms reductions, modulate competition in the Third World, avoid Armageddon, and achieve, in the words of Shultz, "a lasting and significant improvement in U.S.-Soviet relations."[18] So what, then, to make of this? Was there a strategy to win the Cold War? Or was there a strategy to end the Cold War?

While pondering these questions, one should consider two of the most famous quotes and stories about Reagan and the Cold War. In 1977, in a private conversation with Richard Allen, the man who would become his first national security adviser, Reagan explained that his approach to the Cold War was simple: "We win, they lose." Allen was stunned by the simplicity and brilliance of this formulation. Others have cited it as the most cogent framework for illuminating the evolution of Reagan's strategy.[19]

Thomas Reed, a special assistant to Reagan for national security and a former secretary of the Air Force, narrates the other story. Reed reports that Stuart Spencer, Reagan's political consultant, accompanied the candidate in July 1980 on a flight from Los Angeles to the Republican nominating convention in Detroit. Spencer asked, "Why are you doing this, Ron?" With no hesitation, Reagan answered, "To end the Cold War." I am not sure how, Reagan went on to say, "but there has to be a way." Reagan focused on the weakness of the Soviet system, his fear of nuclear war, and his frustration

with détente. Reed then adds, "Reagan was not a hawk. He did not want to 'beat' the Soviets. He simply felt that it would be in the best interests of both countries, or at least of their general citizenry, 'to end this thing.'"[20]

Reed goes on to emphasize that Reagan believed that the way to end the Cold War was by winning it.[21] But if Reagan's words to Spencer are parsed

[Reagan's] significance stemmed less from the arms buildup and ideological offensive that he launched at the onset of his presidency in 1981 than from his desires to abolish nuclear weapons, tamp down the strategic arms race, and avoid Armageddon.

more carefully, it becomes clear that Reagan was not talking about "beating" the Soviets but, rather, seeking to end the Cold War.

It is easy to conflate "winning the Cold War" and "ending the Cold War." Yet, when thinking about the strategy and aims of the Reagan administration, consider: What do the two terms mean? Was there, in fact, a strategy to win the Cold War, as many triumphalists claim, or was there instead a strategy to end the Cold War? What would it have taken to win the Cold War rather than end it? Would each involve different approaches, goals, and tactics, or would they overlap? What assumptions would shape the pursuit of one or the other?

In a series of interviews conducted by the Miller Center, leading officials in the Reagan administration were asked whether Reagan had a strategy. Clark said yes. Richard Allen implied that such a strategy existed. Frank Carlucci was not at all certain what Reagan had in mind, but he enormously admired the president's intuition. Things worked out. Indeed, the results were breathtaking.[22] But just because things worked out doesn't mean there was

a strategy. In fact, George Shultz said that Reagan did not have a strategy to spend the Soviets into the ground. Shultz reiterated the points that he and Matlock had outlined in 1983: realism, strength, negotiation. Weinberger maintained that Reagan's strategy was simple: negotiate from strength. James Baker pretty much agreed with Weinberger, stressing that the president was a pragmatic compromiser. Reagan's aim, said Baker, was "peace through strength," not the breakup of the Soviet empire, the dissolution of the Soviet Union, or the destruction of communism.[23]

Ken Adelman's interview is one of the most interesting. Adelman, director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, acknowledged that he personally had never believed that the Cold War would end. Nor did he think that the United States could bankrupt the Kremlin. Reagan's mastery of nuclear issues was nonexistent, according to Adelman. "He had no knowledge, no feel, and no interest in whether it was missiles, warheads, SEPs [Selective Employment Plan], throw-weights, none of that," Adelman emphasized. When the president and Mikhail Gorbachev broached an agreement on nuclear abolition in Reykjavik in 1986, Adelman thought that "they were in fairyland." And when Reagan kept insisting on sharing Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) technology with Soviet leaders, Adelman thought it was "crazy." Yet the results were spectacular. Adelman's interview ended with a rapturous homage to Reagan: "I'm so startled by the changes he made, and how that changed our world." The president was "impenetrable." One could never grasp "his inner core," Adelman said. But, Adelman concluded, it is what Reagan accomplished that counts. Everyone can see what he "really, really did," and that is what matters.[24]

12   Jack F. Matlock, Jr., *Reagan and Gorbachev: How the Cold War Ended* (New York: Random House, 2004), 75–77.

13   Matlock, *Reagan and Gorbachev.*

14   Matlock, *Reagan and Gorbachev.*

15   Matlock, *Reagan and Gorbachev,* 76.

16   "Next Steps in US-Soviet Relations," Memorandum from George P. Shultz to President Reagan, Mar. 16, 1983, http://thereaganfiles.com/19830316-shultz.pdf; George P. Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph: My Years as Secretary of State* (New York: Scribner, 1993), 269–71.

17   Peter Schweizer, *Reagan's War: The Epic Story of His Forty-Year Struggle and Final Triumph Over Communism* (New York: Anchor Books, 2002); Paul Kengor, *The Crusader: Ronald Reagan and the Fall of Communism* (New York: Regan Books, 2006); Francis H. Marlo, *Planning Reagan's War: Conservative Strategists and America's Cold War Victory* (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, 2012).

18   Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph,* 266.

19   Richard Allen, Ronald Reagan Oral History Project interview, Miller Center of Public Affairs, University of Virginia, May 28, 2002, 26–27, https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-oral-histories/richard-allen-oral-history-assistant-president-national; Hal Brands, "The Vision Thing," in *Peril: Facing National Security Challenges,* Miller Center of Public Affairs, University of Virginia, 2017, http://firstyear2017.org/essay/the-vision-thing.

20   Thomas C. Reed, *At the Abyss: An Insider's History of the Cold War* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2004), 234–35.

21   Reed, *At the Abyss,* 236ff.

22   Clark, Miller Center interview, 14–16, 34; Allen, Miller Center interview, 26, 74–75; Carlucci, Miller Center interview, 28–34, 40–42, 47–48.

23   George P. Shultz, Ronald Reagan Oral History Project interview, Miller Center of Public Affairs, University of Virginia, Dec. 18, 2002, 13, 18–19, https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-oral-histories/george-p-shultz-oral-history-secretary-state; Caspar Weinberger, Ronald Reagan Oral History Project interview, Miller Center of Public Affairs, University of Virginia, Nov. 19, 2002, 10–11, 28–31, https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-oral-histories/caspar-weinberger-oral-history-secretary-defense; James A. Baker III, Ronald Reagan Oral History Project interview, Miller Center of Public Affairs, University of Virginia, June 15–16, 2004, 13, 44, https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-oral-histories/james-baker-iii-oral-history-white-house-chief-staff.

24   Adelman, Miller Center interview, 60, 57, 58, 39, 64–66; also see Ken Adelman, *Reagan at Reykjavik: Forty-Eight Hours that Ended the Cold War* (New York: Broadside Books, 2014), 64–66.

Assessing What Mattered

So, what did Reagan actually do, and what precisely mattered? Adelman, Wick, Baker, Weinberger, and Allen, like so many others, assign huge importance to SDI. A few years ago, Paul Wolfowitz contributed an essay to a volume on post-Cold War strategy that began with an anecdote about a young Russian who visited Dick Cheney in 1992, when he was secretary of defense. The man explained how Reagan had won the Cold War, saying that the Russians thought they were invincible until Reagan plowed ahead with the stealth bomber (B-2) and with SDI. At that point, according to the young man, the Russians knew they could not compete unless they changed.[25] Supposedly, SDI won the Cold War. Critics of this

> Was there, in fact, a strategy to win the Cold War, as many triumphalists claim, or was there instead a strategy to end the Cold War?

viewpoint, and I am one of them, need to be honest: Many similar quotations from Soviet officials and military people attest to this perspective.[26]

But again, let's nurture some skepticism: Just as this essay casts doubt on Reagan's strategic genius, it also casts doubt on the decisive role that the Strategic Defense Initiative — and, indirectly, the U.S. military buildup — played in bringing about the end of the Cold War. "We were not afraid of SDI," Gorbachev reflected in 1999, "first of all, because our experts were convinced that this project was unrealizable, and, secondly, we would know how

to neutralize it." In 1985, when he assumed power, Gorbachev believed that Reagan's military buildup was not likely to be sustained. Gorbachev's closest aide, Anatoly Chernyaev, scorned the argument that Gorbachev was acting as a result of external pressure:

> I do not believe that the anti-Communist, anti-Soviet rhetoric and the increase in the armaments and military power of the United States played a serious role in our decision-making . . . I think perhaps they played no role whatsoever.

Anatoly Dobrynin, the longtime Soviet ambassador to the United States who returned to the Kremlin in 1986 to lead the international department of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, agreed totally with Chernyaev. "The Soviet response to Star Wars," he writes, "caused only an acceptable small rise in defense spending." The Soviets' fundamental problems, according to Dobrynin, stemmed from autarchy, low investment, and lack of innovation. Alexander Bessmertnykh, the deputy foreign minister, said that "very soon we realized that" SDI "was impractical . . . [It] was a fantasy." The chief of the Main Intelligence Directorate (GRU) of the General Staff later confided: "I was in contact with our senior military officers and the political leadership. They didn't care about SDI. Everything was driven by departmental and careerist concerns."[27]

Many of the most renowned historians of Soviet leaders and Kremlin decision-making similarly disagree that SDI and the U.S. military buildup were critical factors; these include Mark Kramer, Vlad Zubok, and Archie Brown.[28] In his book on the end of the Cold War, Robert Service presents a

nuanced discussion of SDI. While not discounting its salience, Service stresses that Gorbachev eventually decided to ignore the Strategic Defense Initiative. In his recently published, masterful biography of Gorbachev, William Taubman largely concurs with Service's assessment. In his good book on the arms race, *The Dead Hand*, David Hoffman concludes: "Gorbachev's great contribution was in deciding what not to do. He would not build a Soviet Star Wars. He averted another massive weapons competition." In short, SDI was a secondary factor impelling Gorbachev to take the course that he did.[29]

What then did Reagan do that made a real difference? Let's first acknowledge some critical facts. Many of the events that defined the end of the Cold War — the eradication of the Berlin Wall, free elections in Poland and Hungary, unification of Germany inside NATO, the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, and the dissolution of the Soviet Union — all came after Reagan left office. They were the result of socioeconomic and political crosscurrents in Eastern Europe; structural problems beleaguering the Soviet economy; nationality conflicts inside the Soviet Union; Gorbachev's policies and predilections; Kremlin internal politics; and diplomatic interactions between Gorbachev and George H. W. Bush, Helmut Kohl, and François Mitterand, among others.[30] Ronald Reagan had little to do with these matters.[31]

So, back to the question: What were Reagan's key contributions? Shultz says it was the combination of strength, realism, and negotiation.[32] But wouldn't Dean Acheson, John Kennedy, Richard Nixon, Henry Kissinger, and Zbigniew Brzezinski — to name just a few — have said much the same

about their own approaches: that they combined the pursuit of strength, realism, and negotiation? Adelman says it was the unique combination of seeking arms cuts, building strength, championing SDI, and delegitimizing the Soviet Union.[33] Yet building arms and extolling SDI, as already noted, did not decisively shape Soviet policies. Although U.S. covert actions and ideological offensives put Gorbachev on the defensive, the Soviet leader's relative stature in the world was growing, not declining. Recall that the U.S. arms buildup, the deployment of Pershing IIs and cruise missiles, the genocidal actions of America's authoritarian associates in Central America and South America, and Reagan's reluctance to distance himself from the apartheid regime in South Africa garnered widespread approbation and damaged the image of the United States. Although the new literature persuasively shows that Reagan and his advisers deserve credit for their shift to democracy promotion and support for human rights, one should not forget that when Reagan left office, it was Gorbachev who drew wildly enthusiastic crowds wherever he went abroad — not Reagan, who was tarnished from the Iran-Contra affair.[34]

The Soviet system lost its legitimacy not because of the U.S. ideological offensive but because of its performance. Even before Gorbachev took office his comrades grasped that their system was faltering and required a radical overhaul. Gorbachev infused conviction, energy, and chaos into efforts to remake and revive socialism. He knew the system was stagnating. Indeed, this was evident around the world, as China embarked on a new trajectory and as country after country moved away from command systems and statist controls.[35]

25   Paul Wolfowitz, "Shaping the Future: Planning at the Pentagon, 1989-1993," in *In Uncertain Times: American Foreign Policy After the Berlin Wall and 9/11*, ed. Melvyn P. Leffler and Jeffrey W. Legro (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011), 44.

26   See, for example, Hal Brands, *Making the Unipolar Moment: U.S. Foreign Policy and the Rise of the Post-Cold War Order* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2016), 89–90; Schweizer, *Reagan's War*; Kengor, *The Crusader*, 300–302.

27   For Gorbachev, see Andrei Grachev, *Gorbachev's Gamble: Soviet Foreign Policy and the End of the Cold War* (Cambridge: Polity, 2008), 84; also see Memorandum from A. Yakovlev to Gorbachev, March 12, 1985, in Svetlana Savranskaya and Thomas Blanton, *The Last Superpower Summits: Gorbachev, Reagan, and Bush — Conversations that Ended the Cold War* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2016), 26–27; for Chernyaev's comment, see Beth Fischer, "Reagan and the Soviets: Winning the Cold War?" in *The Reagan Presidency: Pragmatic Conservatism and Its Legacies* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2003), 126; Anatoly Dobrynin, *In Confidence: Moscow's Ambassador to America's Six Cold War Presidents* (Random House, 1995), 610–11; for Bessmertnykh, see William C. Wohlforth, ed., *Witnesses to the End of the Cold War* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 14; quotation by V. V. Shlykov in Michael Ellman and Vladimir Kontorovich, eds., *The Destruction of the Soviet Economic System: An Insider's History* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1998), 57.

28   Private email correspondence, December 2016.

29   Robert Service, *The End of the Cold War, 1985–1991* (New York: Public Affairs, 2015), 192–95, 274–78, 296; William Taubman, *Gorbachev: His Life and Times* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2017), 263, 295–96; David E. Hoffman, *The Dead Hand: The Untold Story of the Cold War Arms Race and Its Dangerous Legacy* (New York: Doubleday, 2009), 206–25, 243–44, 266; James Mann, *The Rebellion of Ronald Reagan: A History of the End of the Cold War* (New York: Viking, 2009), 345; Luigi Lazzari, "The Strategic Defense Initiative and the End of the Cold War" (master's thesis, Naval Post-Graduate School, 2008), http://hdl.handle.net/10945/4210.

30   For brief discussions of many of these matters, see the essays in Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad, eds., *The Cambridge History of the Cold War: Volume 3 — Endings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

31   Of course, Reagan was instrumental in shaping the INF Treaty and in urging Gorbachev to withdraw Soviet troops from Afghanistan.

32   Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, 500, 1136.

33   Adelman, *Reagan at Reykjavik*, 64–66.

34   For new findings on Reagan and democracy promotion and human rights, see, for example, Sarah B. Snyder, "Principles Overwhelming Tanks: Human Rights and the End of the Cold War," in *The Human Rights Revolution: An International History*, ed. Akira Iriye, Petra Goedde, and William I. Hitchcock (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 265–83; Robert Pee, *Democracy Promotion, National Security and Strategy: Foreign Policy Under the Reagan Administration* (London: Routledge, 2015); Evan McCormick, "Breaking with Statism? U.S. Democracy Promotion in Latin America, 1984–1988," *Diplomatic History* (Aug. 30, 2017), https://doi.org/10.1093/dh/dhx064; also see Morris Morley and Chris McGillion, *Reagan and Pinochet: The Struggle Over U.S. Policy Toward Chile* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Joe Renouard, *Human Rights in American Foreign Policy: From the 1960s to the Soviet Collapse* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), 167–271.

35   Stephen G. Brooks and William C. Wohlforth, "Power, Globalization, and the End of the Cold War: Reevaluating a Landmark Case for Ideas," *International Security* 25, no. 3 (Winter 2000/01): 5–53, https://doi.org/10.1162/016228800560516; Service, *End of the Cold War*; Chris Miller, *The Struggle to Save the Soviet Economy: Mikhail Gorbachev and the Collapse of the USSR* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016); Vladislav M. Zubok, *A Failed Empire: The Soviet Union in the Cold War from Stalin to Gorbachev* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 265–335; Archie Brown, *The Rise and Fall of Communism* (London: Bodley Head, 2009); Chen Jian, "China and the Cold War After Mao," in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War: Endings*, 181–200, https://doi.org/10.1017/CHOL9780521837217.010.

Reagan deserves credit for understanding these trends and extolling them. Moreover, his advisers merit credit for exploiting these trends in the international economy to America's advantage. In his recent book, Hal Brands brilliantly assesses the ability of Reagan administration officials to capitalize on globalization, technological change, the communications transformation, and the electronics revolution.[36] These initiatives reconfigured America's position in the international arena as the Cold War drew to a close, but they did not cause the end of the Cold War. In a recent scholarly account of Gorbachev's economic policies, Chris Miller claims that Gorbachev and his advisers were far more influenced by what was going on economically in Japan and in China than what was happening in the United States.[37]

Reagan's Contribution: Building Trust

So, back again to the basic query: What were Reagan's unique contributions? Adelman stresses Reagan's desire for real cuts in armaments. Shultz emphasizes negotiation. Baker underscores Reagan's negotiating skills and dwells on his pragmatism.

But these laudatory comments understate Reagan's unique gifts and his contributions to the end of the Cold War. To say that Reagan wanted to negotiate is far too facile. He fiercely wanted to talk to Soviet leaders from his first days in office.[38] When Vice President Bush attended Konstantin Chernenko's funeral in March 1985, he brought a set of talking points for his first meeting with Gorbachev. He was scripted to say:

I bring with me a message of peace. We know this is a time of difficulty; we would like it to be a time of opportunity. . . . We know that some of the things we do and say sound threatening and hostile to you. The same is true for us.

The two governments needed to transcend that distrust. "We are ready to embark on that path with you. It is the path of negotiation."[39]

To say that Reagan wanted to negotiate trivializes his approach. After Bush conversed with Gorbachev at Chernenko's funeral, Secretary of State Shultz turned to the new Soviet leader and said,

President Reagan told me to look you squarely in the eyes and tell you: 'Ronald Reagan believes that this is a very special moment in the history of mankind. You are starting your term as general secretary. Ronald Reagan is starting his second term as president. . . . President Reagan is ready to work with you.'[40]

That determination and anticipation infused Reagan's first meeting with Gorbachev in Geneva in October 1985. Reading the opening pages of his autobiography, one can sense the president's excitement: Having looked forward to this encounter with a Soviet leader for more than five years, his "juices" were flowing. "Lord," he wrote in his diary, "I hope I'm ready."[41]

He was ready. He felt that his policies had built up America's military might and strengthened his negotiating position. He thought the Soviet Union was an economic basket case.[42] But neither U.S. military strength nor Soviet economic weakness explain what ensued. They are part of the puzzle, important parts. Yet they were present at other times during the Cold War, and it had neither ended nor been won.

What was different now? It was not simply Reagan's desire to negotiate. It was his sensibility, empathy, conviction, skill, charm, and self-confidence. Informed of the intricacies of the Single Integrated Operational Plan and the mechanics of decision-making in times of nuclear crisis, Reagan was appalled by the thought that he would have only six minutes to determine whether "to unleash Armageddon!" "How could anyone apply reason" in those circumstances, he mused.[43] Perhaps that realization, along with the tutoring he was receiving about Soviet history and culture, explain

his growing empathy for the adversary.[44] "Three years had taught me something surprising about the Russians," he wrote in his diary. "Many people at the top of the Soviet hierarchy were genuinely afraid of America and Americans. Perhaps this shouldn't have surprised me, but it did."[45] He talked to foreign ambassadors about Soviet perceptions and recorded their views in his diary. Learning that the Soviets were insecure and genuinely frightened, he tried to insert this understanding in his handwritten letters to Chernenko before the Soviet leader died.[46] Reagan told his national security advisers, "We need talks which can eliminate suspicions. I'm willing to admit that the USSR is suspicious of us."[47]

This empathy subsequently infused his meetings with Gorbachev. Although Reagan wanted armaments to cast shadows and bolster his negotiating posture, he also grasped Soviet perceptions of SDI. "We do not want a first-strike capability," he told his advisers, "but the Soviets probably will not believe us." Intuiting that after the nuclear disaster at Chernobyl Gorbachev faced growing internal challenges, Reagan prodded his subordinates to reach an agreement that did not "make him [Gorbachev] look like he gave up everything."[48] Gorbachev, he stressed, mustn't be forced "to eat crow"; he must not be embarrassed. "Let there be no talk of winners and losers," Reagan said. The aim was to establish a process, a series of meetings, "to avoid war in settling our differences in the future."[49]

The deliberations of the National Security Council after 1985 do not reveal officials designing a strategy to win the Cold War, break up the Soviet Union, or eradicate communism. Instead, they reveal officials who were struggling to shape a negotiating strategy that would effectuate arms reductions. They reveal a president pushing hard

for real arms cuts. They reveal a president who feared nuclear war, believed in SDI, and wanted to share it. They reveal a president who desired to abolish nuclear weapons.[50] Reagan's advisers felt that he was living in fantasyland, as Adelman said in his Miller Center interview.[51] Occasionally, they politely interrupted: "Mr. President," they would say, "there is a great risk in exchanging technical data." Or, "Mr. President, that would be the most

> ## To say that Reagan wanted to negotiate is far too facile. He fiercely wanted to talk to Soviet leaders from his first days in office.

massive technical transfer the Western world has ever known." But Reagan was not dissuaded: "There has to be an answer to all these questions because some day people are going to ask why we didn't do something new about getting rid of nuclear weapons. You know," he went on, "I've been reading my Bible and the description of Armageddon talks about destruction, I believe, of many cities and we need absolutely to avoid that. We have to do something now."[52]

Reagan was not very good at getting his advisers to do things they bickered over or did not want to do. But Reagan was good, indeed superb, at dealing with people. He could set you "utterly at ease," wrote his critic, David Stockman. Devoid of facts and short on knowledge, said Richard Pipes, Reagan nonetheless "had irresistible charm." "Easy

36 Brands, *Making the Unipolar Moment.*

37 Miller, *Struggle to Save the Soviet Economy.*

38 Melvyn P. Leffler, *For the Soul of Mankind: The United States, the Soviet Union, and the Cold War* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007), 347–65.

39 Leffler, *For the Soul of Mankind*, 364–65.

40 Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, 531–32.

41 Ronald Reagan, *An American Life* (New York: Pocket Books, 1990), 11–14, 634ff.

42 Douglas Brinkley, ed., *The Reagan Diaries* (New York: Harper Collins, 2007), 368.

43 Reagan, *An American Life*, 257.

44 Matlock, *Reagan and Gorbachev*, 132-34; Robert C. McFarlane and Zophia Smardz, *Special Trust* (New York: Cadell and Davies, 1994), 308–309; Mann, *Rebellion of Ronald Reagan*, 82–110.

45 Brinkley, *Reagan Diaries*, 198–99, 247; Reagan, *An American Life*, 588, 589, 595.

46 Leffler, *For the Soul of Mankind*, 357–61.

47 "Discussion of Geneva Format and SDI," Dec. 10, 1984, in Jason Saltoun-Ebin, *The Reagan Files: Inside the National Security Council*, 2nd ed. (Santa Barbara, CA: Seabec Books, 2014), 344.

48 "U.S.-Soviet Relations," June 6, 1986, in Saltoun-Ebin, *The Reagan Files*, 426.

49 "Memorandum Dictated by Reagan: Gorbachev," November 1985, in Savranskaya and Blanton, *Superpower Summits*, 44.

50 For his fears, see Brinkley, *Reagan Diaries*, 199; Reed, *At the Abyss*, 243–45; Beth A. Fischer, *The Reagan Reversal: Foreign Policy and the End of the Cold War* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1997), 102–43; Nate Jones, ed., *Able Archer 83: The Secret History of the NATO Exercise That Almost Triggered Nuclear War* (New York: New Press, 2016), 45–47; for his nuclear abolitionism, see especially Paul Lettow, *Ronald Reagan and His Quest to Abolish Nuclear Weapons* (New York: Random House, 2005); Martin Anderson and Annelise Anderson, *Reagan's Secret War: The Untold Story of His Fight to Save the World from Nuclear Disaster* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2009).

51 Adelman, Miller Center interview, 58.

52 "Review of United States Arms Control Positions," Sept. 8, 1987, in Saltoun-Ebin, *The Reagan Files*, 541, 543; Savranskaya and Blanton, *Superpower Summits*, 454.

to like," said Shultz; Reagan "was a master of friendly diplomacy."[53]

He worked hard at it, prepared for his talks, grasped the rhythm of negotiations, and understood the value of stubborn patience.[54] Gorbachev sometimes sneered at him during Politburo meetings for his simplistic, narrow-minded, and repetitious talking points. But in their new book, Svetlana Savranskaya and Thomas Blanton show how deeply affected Gorbachev was by Reagan's conviction to abolish nuclear weapons at Reykjavik. At the emotional end of their last conversation, Reagan pleaded with Gorbachev to allow SDI testing: "Do it as a favor to me so that we can go to the people as peacemakers." Gorbachev said no, but was deeply affected. "I believe it was then, at that very moment," wrote Chernyaev, that Gorbachev "became convinced that it would 'work out' between him and Reagan."[55]

Reagan engaged Gorbachev in a way no American leader had previously engaged a Soviet leader in the history of the Cold War. Of course, he was dealing with a special, new type of Soviet leader. But it was to Reagan's credit that he realized this. It took intuition and courage. Other than Shultz, hardly any of his advisers felt this way — not Weinberger, Clark, Casey, Carlucci, Baker, Bush, Gates, or outside critics such as Kissinger. Nor is it clear that his Democratic foes would have seized the opportunity as he did. Even had they tried, it is not likely that they could have orchestrated the same type of political support for engagement with the Soviet leader. Reagan's reputation for ideological purity and toughness — even after the
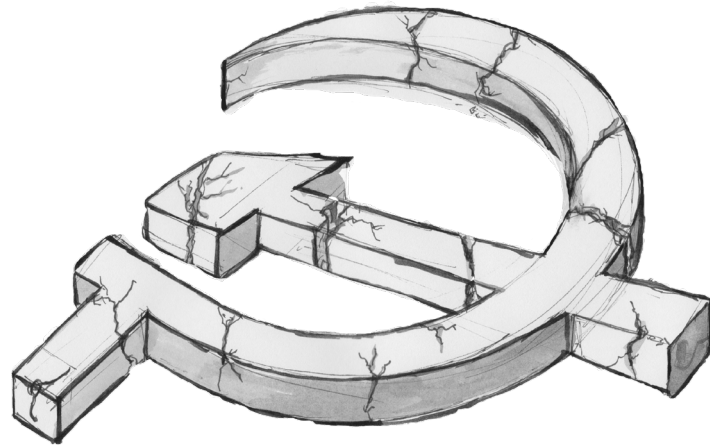
Iran-Contra scandal — afforded him flexibility that other U.S. politicians did not have. And his Soviet interlocutors knew it. Reagan had the trust of the American people, Gorbachev believed. If the president struck a deal, it would stick.[56]

Reagan provided the incentive for Gorbachev to forge ahead. Gorbachev needed a partner to tamp down the arms race and end the Cold War so that he could revive socialism inside the Soviet Union. Gorbachev wanted to cut military expenditures, accelerate the economy, and improve Soviet living conditions.[57] Propelled by his ideals and by his recognition of material realities, he gradually made all the key concessions.[58] Reagan's stubborn patience incentivized Gorbachev to sign the zero-

zero Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty and to withdraw from Afghanistan. Reagan's sincerity, affability, and goodwill encouraged Gorbachev to believe that the Soviet Union was not endangered by foreign adversaries but by superior economies.[59] Reagan embodied a capitalist system that Gorbachev disdained but also democratic and humane values with which he did not disagree. By reconfiguring Soviet foreign policy, championing conventional as well as strategic reductions in arms, and retrenching from regional conflicts, Gorbachev hoped to find the time and space to integrate the Soviet Union into a new world order and a common European home that would comport with Soviet economic needs and security imperatives.

Gorbachev sensed that Reagan was seeking not to win the Cold War but to end it. He recognized that Reagan wanted arms cuts, believed in nuclear abolition, and sincerely championed human rights and religious freedom. He also understood that Reagan and his advisers wanted to exploit Soviet vulnerabilities and weaknesses to enhance America's posture in international affairs. But Gorbachev did not think that these matters endangered Soviet power and security. He also believed that the president's predilections coincided with his own. Gorbachev, said Chernyaev, felt "that Reagan was someone who was concerned about very human things, about the human needs of his people. He felt that Reagan behaved as a very moral person."[60]

Gorbachev was right. Reagan's rhetoric, actions, and behavior during his last years in office reveal what he most wanted to do: establish a process to negotiate arms cuts, reduce tensions, champion human rights, and promote stability and peace. He and his advisers were not discussing ways to win the Cold War or to break up the Soviet Union. At

meetings, they occasionally expressed confidence that they had the Soviets on the run, but far more often they remonstrated about the constraints Congress imposed on defense spending and

> **Gorbachev sensed that Reagan was seeking not to win the Cold War but to end it.**

acknowledged that Soviet economic problems, as bad as they were, were not likely to cause a Soviet collapse or even a rebalancing of military power. Their discussions implied an understanding that, at best, they might reduce tensions; mitigate chances of nuclear conflict; manipulate the Soviets into restructuring their forces; and prompt a contraction of Soviet meddling in Central America, southern Africa, and parts of Asia. Nonetheless, Reagan not only encouraged his advisers to integrate strategic defense and the elimination of ballistic missiles into their overall planning, he also hectored them to move forward to prepare a strategic arms-reduction treaty that he could sign. He still distrusted the Soviets and wanted to negotiate from strength. And he still prodded Gorbachev to advance human rights and religious freedom. But during his last years in office Reagan and his closest advisers rarely discussed victory in the Cold War.[61] Postulating a continuing Cold War, intelligence analysts estimated that Gorbachev wanted "to use economic reconstruction at home as a basis to project Soviet power and influence throughout the world."[62] Nobody in the U.S. government in January 1989, wrote Robert Gates, then deputy director of the CIA, was predicting

53 Stockman, *Triumph of Politics*, 74; Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, 131; Pipes, *Vixi*, 167; also Dobrynin, *In Confidence*, 605–12; Eduard Shevardnadze, *The Future Belongs to Freedom*, trans. Catherine A. Fitzpatrick (New York: Free Press, 1991), 81–90; Helmut Schmidt, *Men and Powers: A Political Retrospective*, trans. Ruth Hein (New York: Random House, 1989), 241–46.

54 For comments on Reagan's negotiating skill, see, for example, Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, 145; Anderson, *Revolution: The Reagan Legacy*, 285; Michael K. Deaver, *A Different Drummer: My Thirty Years with Ronald Reagan* (New York: HarperCollins, 2001), 71; Dobrynin, *In Confidence*, 605-12; Baker, Miller Center interview, 41–42; and for Reagan's own thoughts on negotiations, see, for example, "U.S. Options for Arms Control at the Moscow Summit," Feb. 9, 1988, Saltoun-Ebin, *The Reagan Files*, 574.

55 Savranskaya and Blanton, *Superpower Summits*, 136–37.

56 Mikhail Gorbachev, "A President Who Listened," *New York Times*, June 7, 2004, https://www.nytimes.com/2004/06/07/opinion/a-president-who-listened.html; Pavel Palazchenko, *My Years with Gorbachev and Shevardnadze: The Memoir of a Soviet Interpreter* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997), 39–40, 41–42; Barbara Farnham, "Reagan and the Gorbachev Revolution: Perceiving the End of Threat," *Political Science Quarterly*, 116 (Fall 2001): 225-52, http://www.jstor.org/stable/798060.

57 For Gorbachev, see, for example, Mikhail Gorbachev, *Perestroika: New Thinking for Our Country and the World* (New York: Harper and Row, 1987); Mikhail Gorbachev, *Memoirs* (New York: Doubleday, 1995); and especially Mikhail Gorbachev and Zdenek Mlynar, *Conversations with Gorbachev on Perestroika, the Prague Spring, and the Crossroads of Socialism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002). Among the best accounts by scholars, see Taubman, *Gorbachev*; Archie Brown, *The Gorbachev Factor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); Archie Brown, *Seven Years that Changed the World: Perestroika in Perspective* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); and, for a much less sympathetic view, see Zubok, *Failed Empire*.

58 For an excellent dialogue about the role of ideas and material realities, see the exchanges between William Wohlforth and Stephen Brooks on the one hand and Robert English on the other: Brooks and Wohlforth, "Power, Globalization, and the End of the Cold War," 5–53; Robert D. English, "Power, Ideas, and New Evidence on the Cold War's End: A Reply to Brooks and Wohlforth," *International Security* 26, no. 4 (Spring 2002): 70–92, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3092102; Brooks and Wohlforth, "From Old Thinking to New Thinking in Qualitative Research," *International Security* 26, no. 4 (Spring 2002): 93–111, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3092103.

59 See my discussion in Leffler, *For the Soul of Mankind*, 455–61; also see Chernyaev's comments in Svetlana Savranskaya, Thomas Blanton, and Vladislav Zubok, eds., *Masterpieces of History: The Peaceful End of the Cold War in Europe, 1989* (Central European University Press), 190, 200; Svetlana Savranskaya, "The Logic of 1989: The Soviet Peaceful Withdrawal from Eastern Europe," 1–47; William D. Jackson, "Soviet Assessments of Ronald Reagan, 1985-1989," *Political Science Quarterly*, 113 (Winter, 1988-1989): 617–45.

60 For Chernyaev's comment, see Wohlforth's *Witnesses to the End of the Cold War*, 109; also the comments by Bessmertnykh in *Witnesses*, 107–8; Gorbachev, *Memoirs*, 405-6, 408-9, 411; Savranskaya and Blanton, *Superpower Summits*, 132–37, 373–80; Andrei Grachev, *Gorbachev's Gamble: Soviet Foreign Policy and the End of the Cold War* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008), 224–27; Beth A. Fischer, "Toeing the Hardline? The Reagan Administration and the Ending of the Cold War," *Political Science Quarterly*, 112 (Fall 1997): 477–97.

61 The generalizations above are based on my reading of the many National Security Council discussions in 1987 and 1988 in Saltoun-Ebin's *The Reagan Files*, 462–624; on the summitry documents in Savranskaya and Blanton's *Superpower Summits*, 254–478; and on National Security Decision Directive 250, "Post-Reykjavik Follow-Up," Nov. 3, 1986, https://fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsdd/nsdd-250.pdf.

62 State Department, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, "What Does Gorbachev Want?" Aug. 15, 1987, "End of the Cold War Collection," National Security Archive, George Washington University.

Conclusion: Winning the Cold War by Ending It

Although these conditions that have come to define victory in the Cold War were not expected when he left office, Reagan nonetheless took tremendous pride in what he had accomplished. He sought peace through strength and strove to avoid a nuclear confrontation. He aspired to abolish nuclear weapons and tried to check Soviet expansion while engaging Soviet leaders. He showed empathy, displayed goodwill, and appreciated the changes Gorbachev was making. He hoped to tamp down the Cold War rather than win it. By doing all these things, Reagan reassured Gorbachev that Soviet security would not be endangered as Gorbachev struggled to reshape Soviet political, economic, and social institutions.[64]

In 2001, long after he left power, Gorbachev attended a seminar in London where academics blithely condemned Reagan as a lightweight. The professors had it all wrong, Gorbachev interjected. Reagan was a "man of real insight, sound political judgment, and courage." Three years later, in June 2004, he attended Reagan's funeral and showed up at the U.S. Capitol Rotunda, where Reagan's coffin was draped in an American flag. Slowly, he approached the casket, extended his right hand, and gently rubbed it back and forth over the Stars and Stripes. "I gave him a pat," Gorbachev later commented, a gesture that well symbolized the "personal chemistry" they had forged.[65]

After 1989, when Gorbachev's initiatives produced havoc within the Soviet Union and led to the disintegration of the Soviet empire, Reagan heralded America's victory in the Cold War.[66] But his own contribution was more modest and paradoxical. By seeking to engage the Kremlin and end the Cold War, he helped to win it. Negotiation was more important than intimidation. Reagan's emotional intelligence was more important than his military buildup; his political credibility at home more important than his ideological offensive abroad; his empathy, affability, and learning more important than his suspicions. By striving to end the nuclear arms race and avoid Armageddon, he inadvertently set in motion the dynamics that led to the dissolution of the Soviet Union. These ironies should not detract from Reagan's significance but should put it in proper perspective. He was Gorbachev's minor, yet indispensable partner, setting the framework for the dramatic changes that neither man anticipated happening anytime soon.

Scholars will debate the end of the Cold War for generations to come. But it would be a mistake to get lost in debates about the primacy of the individual, the national, or the international. There was an interplay of personal agency, domestic economic imperatives, ideological impulses, and evolving geopolitical configurations of power. Gorbachev assumed the reins of power in the Soviet Union, recognizing the economic and technological backwardness of his country, aware of the Soviet Union's weakening position in the global competition for power, and cognizant of its declining ideological appeal. Seeking to rectify these conditions and believing in communism with a human face, he attempted to revive, reform, and remake socialism at home. To do so, he knew he needed to tamp down the arms race and modulate Cold War rivalries. He succeeded — yet blundered into bankrupting his nation's economy, disrupting its unity, and contracting its power. His failures at home invite withering criticism, yet his courageous decisions to negotiate arms reductions, withdraw from Afghanistan, resist intervention in Eastern Europe, and accept the reunification of Germany inside NATO make him the principal human agent in a very complicated Cold War endgame.[67]

In this story, it is often difficult to assess accurately the role that Ronald Reagan played. Whereas many observers are inclined to see his ideological zealotry and military buildup as the catalysts for Gorbachev's decisions,[68] I argue here that those factors were far less consequential than Reagan's nuclear abolitionism, emotional intelligence, political stature, and negotiating skills. The new evidence and emerging scholarship regarding Reagan's second term and the summitry between 1985 and 1988 suggest that Reagan's engagement, learning, empathy, and geniality — coupled with Gorbachev's growing travails at home — reaped results that neither Reagan nor Gorbachev anticipated. But those results — the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union — can be grasped only in the context of a much larger matrix of evolving conditions within each country, within the globalizing world economy, and within a dynamic international arena.

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63   Robert M. Gates, *From the Shadows: The Ultimate Insider's Story of Five Presidents and How They Won the Cold War* (New York: Touchstone, 1996), 449; also see his memorandum (submitted to the president) "Gorbachev's Gameplan: The Long View," Nov. 24, 1987, "End of the Cold War Collection," National Security Archive.

64   Some of Reagan's most sincere convictions, hopes, and aims are expressed in his autobiography, *An American Life*, 266–68; also memorandum dictated by Reagan: "Gorbachev," November 1985, in Savranskaya and Blanton, *Superpower Summits*, 42-44; for the impact on Gorbachev, see Leffler, *For the Soul of Mankind*, 455–61; Savranskaya, Blanton, and Zubok, *Masterpieces of History*, 190, 200; and Savranskaya, "The Logic of 1989": 1–47; Nicholas J. Wheeler, "Investigating diplomatic transformations," *International Affairs* 89 (March 2013): 104–34, doi.10.1111/1468-2346.12028.

65   The two stories are narrated in Adelman, *Reagan at Reykjavik*, 314, 340; for the "personal chemistry," see Grachev, *Gorbachev's Gamble*, 227; also see comments by Chernyaev and Shultz in Wohlforth, *Witnesses to the End of the Cold War*, 109, 16; and Brinkley, *Reagan Diaries*, 613.

66   See, for example, Reagan's Address to the Republican National Convention, Aug. 17, 1992, http://www.let.rug.nl/usa/presidents/ronald-wilson-reagan/speech-of-the-former-president-at-the-1992-republican-convention.php.

67   For contrasting yet illuminating assessments, see especially Taubman, *Gorbachev;* Zubok, *Failed Empire;* Brown, *Gorbachev Factor.*

68   See, for example, Schweizer, *Reagan's War.*

The Strategist

This section is dedicated to publishing the work of current and former senior policymakers, members of the military, and civilian national security practitioners.

GETTING OUT AND ABOUT: TALKING WITH AMERICANS BEYOND WASHINGTON ABOUT THEIR PLACE IN THE WORLD

Julie Smith

A small team at CNAS is getting out of the Beltway "bubble" to talk to Americans about what role the United States should play on the international scene.

On any given day in Washington, dozens of think tanks that work on national security issues are busy drafting policy memos, meeting with embassy staff and foreign visitors, testifying before Congress, conducting press interviews, raising funds for their research, and hosting events, all in an effort to shape U.S. foreign policy. But in the weeks and months following the 2016 election, the normal rhythm of think tank work slowed considerably. The election of Donald Trump as America's 45th president raised some fundamental, and at times, paralyzing questions for Washington's think tank community. How did so many wonks both on the left and the right miss America's growing disaffection with globalization, a phenomenon that helped bring Trump to power? It is incumbent upon everyone who works in national security to ask ourselves what that fact says about the disconnect between Washington and the rest of the country. With an administration that prides itself on disregarding conventional expertise, we must also pose the question: What role should think tanks play moving forward?

Many of us in Washington are still mulling over those questions. But at the think tank where I work, the bipartisan Center for a New American Security (CNAS), my small team working on transatlantic security issues quickly came to the conclusion that it was time to try something different. Instead of spending most of our time interacting with other national security experts in Washington (both in and out of government) and meeting with allies and partners abroad, we needed to engage new audiences across the United States. We needed to escape the proverbial Beltway bubble. And because my program's mandate is to focus on transatlantic relations, my team knew that whatever initiative we were going to develop would need to include European national security experts as well.

In the spring of 2017, CNAS formally launched "Across the Pond, in the Field."[1] Over the course of three years, the project will take teams made up of two Americans and two Europeans to 12 cities across the United States. The two American envoys come from CNAS, while the Europeans

we've selected have been former ministers, current ambassadors, and think tank scholars. The project has multiple objectives. We want to expose Washingtonians and Europeans to a diverse range of American perspectives on transatlantic relations and U.S. foreign policy, something they don't necessarily get in national capitals. We also want to create opportunities for the Europeans on these trips to develop lasting relationships with cities outside of Washington and New York. Finally, our aim is to engage in a series of debates on U.S. global engagement with "grass-top" leaders – local individuals in industry and the public sector who serve as opinion leaders in their communities. Our goal has never been to lecture or teach Americans what they ought to think. Instead, we try to foster a genuine exchange of ideas that will allow the Americans we meet to ask us hard questions and challenge some of our longstanding, core assumptions about the transatlantic relationship and broader U.S. foreign policy.

Each trip that our teams go on follows the same general template. Over the course of two days, our small delegation hosts at least one large public event, speaks with members of the local press (which usually includes an editorial board meeting and AM talk radio), meets with business and political leaders, and visits a high school and/or a university. To date, we have visited Pittsburgh, Salt Lake City, and Tampa. As one might expect, these trips have taught us a lot so far, both about how to conduct programming "outside the Beltway" and about how Americans today are thinking about the world more broadly. Of course, a three-city tour doesn't lend itself to any conclusive generalizations, particularly because we aren't hearing from a full cross section of America in terms of race, ethnicity, and socio-economic status. But we believe that some of the early lessons from those three trips are worth sharing.

Americans are generally eager to interact and engage about their country's role in the world, but some remain skeptical. The first question we asked ourselves when we started this program was whether anyone would show up. Do Americans outside of Washington want to hear from and

engage in debates with the foreign policy elites who are popularly portrayed by the media as out of touch and irrelevant? To our great relief, especially after our well-attended public event in our first stop in Pittsburgh, we have found that people do indeed show up. Sometimes they turn out in stunningly large numbers. Our public events regularly draw audiences between 100 and 200 people, and I've personally spoken to audiences across the country that range in size from 300 to 700 people.

Between CNAS' "Across the Pond" trips, my own personal invitations to speak to audiences in places like Ohio and New Hampshire, and anecdotes from colleagues running similar programs, there is no question that Americans are hungry to engage with policymakers and experts on foreign policy. That said, not everyone has welcomed us with open arms. In advance of our trip to Pittsburgh, I placed an op-ed in the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* explaining the goals of our project and why it was important for folks like myself to get outside of Washington. The day that piece ran, CNAS received seven or eight phone calls — some profanity-laden — telling us to stay home. Because some of the calls included thinly veiled threats, we asked for police presence at our public event. Fortunately, we haven't ever encountered that sentiment in person. But the fact that a program designed to seek and listen to alternative viewpoints can create such a visceral reaction has taught us a thing or two about just how deep the mistrust and animosity towards Washington really runs.

Those phone calls reminded me of some of the reactions I encountered when I walked around the Washington monuments last summer with a video camera to ask American tourists what they thought about NATO. Most of the folks I approached were happy to offer a few comments. On a few occasions, however, parents held their children close and told me to back away, noting that they never talk to the "lamestream media." My efforts to reassure them by stating calmly that I did not work for a TV or radio station failed. What has become clear to me both through that experience and our city visits is that we may never find ways to engage certain sectors of the population, particularly those that reject the premise that dialogue in itself is a useful exercise. Working for a think tank in Washington means I come from a different tribe and for some people, that's enough reason to keep me at arm's length.

Finding a willing conservative, public audience in a large American city is difficult. Many U.S. cities are home to nonprofits such as the World Affairs Councils of America or the American Committees on Foreign Relations. The mission of these organizations is to create opportunities for dialogue with global leaders and policymakers. They play a critical role in educating both their members and the general public about pressing national security challenges. However, because many U.S. cities (even in red states) tilt blue, the audiences that those organizations draw tend to be heavy on the Democrats' side. One of the

We want to expose Washingtonians and Europeans to a diverse range of American perspectives on transatlantic relations and U.S. foreign policy.

major challenges we face in working with people outside of the Beltway has been identifying partner organizations that can help us reach a more politically diverse set of Americans. In the case of Pittsburgh, that meant leaving the downtown area and driving an hour to a neighboring red county to hold an event at a public library. In the case of Tampa, it meant spending hours on the phone finding libertarian and conservative groups and asking to help publicize our public event downtown. Those calls aren't always easy to make. You spend an enormous amount of time explaining who you are, what you do, who funds your work, why you're coming to town, and why they should care. In most cases, after a couple of calls, people offer to help. Occasionally, though, Washington's image as an elitist, out-of-touch, and globalist hub fuels skepticism about the motives behind our project and ends the conversation.

Form and format matter and can easily make or break efforts to engage Americans in an honest and civil debate. Americans might be interested in engaging on foreign policy, but they aren't in the mood for a lecture, especially from a bunch of elitist wonks from the coast. That's why we have very deliberately banned speeches at every event we attend or host. For large public forums, our moderator starts with one or two questions for our panelists and then immediately goes to the audience, often collecting four or five questions at a time in order to maximize the number of people that we can hear from. Audiences have reacted

positively to that format, often noting that they were surprised and relieved that we didn't open with a long lecture. We also try to host a reception after our public events where people can approach our delegation one-on-one. With an audience of 100 to 200 people or more, it's impossible to engage in an ideal dialogue. However, using some of these formats has helped us hear from as many people as possible.

Another important lesson from this project is the importance of humility and a willingness to admit your mistakes, especially regarding policies that your audience might oppose. It is impossible to foster a genuine exchange of ideas if you start in a defensive crouch. In some of the events we've hosted, I have intentionally outlined some of the policies that I believe we got wrong during the Obama administration in which I served. Our European guests also have been refreshingly honest about some of their own policy errors or

"Across the Pond" is an attempt to mine the country for fresh ideas.

miscalculations. This kind of openness and honesty can help disarm an American audience that is regularly bombarded with accusatory and divisive stories about folks on the other side of the aisle.

No single foreign policy issue occupies the minds of Americans today — their questions vary by the hour. Looking at polling data on American threat perceptions, it is easy to get the impression that Americans are singularly worried about terrorism.[2] In the three cities we visited, however, we did not encounter many questions about terrorism or the Islamic State. Instead, we heard a wide array of questions and opinions on everything from NATO to North Korea to NAFTA. Unsurprisingly, the headlines shape the questions people ask, as do the backgrounds and expertise of our European guests. For example, the British Labor Party politician we took to Salt Lake City was peppered with questions about Brexit. The current Swedish ambassador was asked about her country's efforts to be fossil-free by 2050. The former German defense minister took some pointed questions on

defense spending.

Some conspiracy theories and misleading narratives have taken root. Broadly speaking, the Americans we've met both at public events and in one-on-one meetings have been very well-informed. But in the age of disinformation[3] and with a president who has openly admitted to creating facts out of whole cloth,[4] it is not uncommon to stumble upon sometimes disturbing myths, conspiracy theories, or falsehoods. This is especially true on the issues of immigration and refugees. The Swedish ambassador was asked by an audience member if Muslims living in her country were taking over Swedish culture or outproducing Swedes. On another trip, a local resident asked the current Danish ambassador to the United States if it was safe to travel to Europe because he had heard "there is a terrorist attack every single day and that people are getting robbed by gangs of refugees." In Pittsburgh, I recorded a podcast with the former president of the Pittsburgh Rotary Club, who, in a discussion about U.S. and European immigration policies, claimed — falsely — that some predominantly Muslim cities in both Michigan and North Carolina have fully implemented Sharia.[5] While this project isn't about lecturing the Americans we meet, we have seized on opportunities to engage in myth busting where appropriate.

The issue of Russia has become so politicized that it's dangerous to raise. Of all the issues we've debated to date, none is as politically charged as Russia, specifically Russian meddling in the 2016 election. Recent polling data has shown the emergence of a noticeable split among Democrats and Republicans on their views towards Russia, attempts to engage the Russians, and the president's own relationship with Russia.[6] For nearly two decades, Americans on both sides of the aisle have held similarly negative views toward Russia. But that ended after the 2016

election. Democrats now hold a far less positive view towards Russia than Republicans do[7] — only 15 percent of Democrats have a favorable view of Russia, while 30 percent of Republicans do. Like domestic issues such as gun violence and the Second Amendment, one's views on Russia now can easily reveal political party affiliation.

We have felt that partisan divide on Russia in every city we have visited. Merely mentioning Russia quickly morphs into a scathing discussion about U.S. politics. Democrats are accused of conducting a "witch hunt." Republicans are accused of being AWOL on Russian election meddling. There are also some fascinating twists and turns in all the Russia-related finger-pointing. Republicans who have attended our events like to remind Democrats that they once mocked presidential candidate Mitt Romney for stating that Russia was America's greatest threat. Democrats at our events like to remind Republicans that they still mock former President Barack Obama for his Russian "reset" policy, even though many Republicans now support Trump's effort to do something similar.

dealing with Russian acts of intimidation, energy coercion, and disinformation campaigns far longer than the United States. Sharing those experiences helps our audiences appreciate the scope of the problem. It also serves as a useful reminder that the transatlantic relationship isn't always about America teaching or lecturing Europe. In many cases, such as how to grapple with Russian disinformation, we Americans can learn a lot from our European allies.

U.S. mayors and other local politicians don't feel hindered by today's hyper-partisanship and are making up for the paralysis across Washington. After visits to only three cities, it's hard to offer generalizable findings about anything that we've observed. We have found it refreshing, however, to hear so many stories from local politicians in the cities we have visited about their efforts to rise above the party politics currently paralyzing the nation's capital. Unlike their counterparts in Congress, the mayors and county executives we've met are extending hands across the aisle, developing new relationships at home and abroad,

In our discussions, we try our best to get away from Russian interference in our election and ask some of our European guests to describe their country's experiences with Russian aggression and what they're doing about it. Europeans have been

and forming alliances across state lines to advance common agendas on everything from climate change to the opioid crisis.

Americans of all political stripes are tired of carrying the proverbial burden of the West.

2   In a 2018 Pew Research Center poll, "defending against terrorism" ranked among the public's leading priorities for the president and Congress, with nearly three-quarters (73 percent) saying it is a top priority. See Kristin Bialik, "State of the Union 2018: Americans' Views on Key Issues Facing the Nation," Pew Research Center, Jan. 18, 2018, http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/01/29/state-of-the-union-2018-americans-views-on-key-issues-facing-the-nation/.

3   Darrell M. West, "How to Combat Fake News and Disinformation," Brookings Institution, Dec. 18, 2017, https://www.brookings.edu/research/how-to-combat-fake-news-and-disinformation/.

4   Josh Dawsey, Damian Paletta, and Erica Werner, "In Fundraising Speech, Trump Says He Made Up Trade Claim in Meeting with Justin Trudeau," Mar. 15, 2018, *Washington Post*, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-politics/wp/2018/03/14/in-fundraising-speech-trump-says-he-made-up-facts-in-meeting-with-justin-trudeau/?utm_term=.a91a8dea0453.

5   Julianne Smith and Andy Dlinn, "Andy Dlinn Talks Transatlantic Relations, Meaning Behind 'America First,'" Center for a New American Security, Nov. 3, 2017, https://www.cnas.org/publications/podcast/andy-dlinn-talks-transatlantic-relations-meaning-behind-america-first.

6   According to YouGov polling, in July of 2014 just 10 percent of Democrats and nine percent of Republicans considered Russia "an ally" or "friendly" to U.S. interests. Three years later, in July of 2017, those numbers were 11 percent and 30 percent, respectively. Recently, in light of the Mueller probe, that gap has started to close. See Dylan Matthews, "Trump has Changed How Americans Think About Politics," *Vox*, Jan. 30, 2018, https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2018/1/30/16943786/trump-changed-public-opinion-russia-immigration-trade.

7   See the second chart, "Americans' Opinions of Russia, By Party," in Megan Brenan, "Americans, Particularly Democrats, Dislike Russia," *Gallup*, Mar. 5, 2018, http://news.gallup.com/poll/228479/americans-particularly-democrats-dislike-russia.aspx?g_source=link_NEWSV9&g_medium=tile_1&g_campaign=item_1642&g_content=Americans%2c%2520Particularly%2520Democrats%2c%2520Dislike%2520Russia.

Irrespective of party affiliation, hometown, or age, many of the Americans we have met have expressed some level of frustration with burden-sharing in international matters. That sentiment takes different forms: America does too much for European defense, America is the world's policeman, or America provides too much aid to other countries. The basic message is that America is unfairly doing too much of something. What that means for the future of U.S. foreign policy, though, is far from clear. For some, Trump's "America First" slogan and his accompanying policies on everything from trade to Syrian refugees are the answer. For others, however, the feeling that America is doing or has done too much in the world doesn't necessarily translate into opposition to free trade or a desire to leave the NATO alliance. In fact, a higher percentage of Americans in 2017 believed that global trade was good for the U.S. economy and consumers than in 2016.[8] American support for the NATO alliance is also on the rise.[9] But there is a palpable sentiment that America needs to encourage others to share a greater portion of the burden when it comes to global challenges. No future U.S. president can afford to ignore this. Even in cases where they support global engagement, Americans express a clear desire for more "leadership" from our partners and allies.

CNAS' "Across the Pond" project isn't a scientific study about American attitudes, nor is it an attempt for policy elites to teach Americans in faraway places how to think about transatlantic relations and U.S. foreign policy. What it is at its core is a much-needed attempt at civil discourse and debate, free of insults and partisan attacks. But what about its *impact*, a term deeply familiar to those of us working in think tanks. In other words, what's the point?

We don't survey the people we meet through this project, so it is hard to know, short of a lot of positive feedback, whether our events are breaking through the partisan noise and helping folks learn from each other. There are, however, a few concrete ways to measure change. The CNAS intern pool, often dominated by applicants from the East Coast, has become more geographically diverse. We are now receiving applications from every city we've visited, and we hope that will continue as we visit another nine cities. The Transatlantic Security Program also produces a weekly podcast and puts out a weekly newsletter, via email, on transatlantic issues. We have seen an increase in the number of subscribers to those two products, which helps CNAS with national outreach.

Perhaps the biggest impact, though, has been in regards to my own personal views about transatlantic relations. I have spent more than 20 years working on Europe and advocating for a strong partnership with European allies. Over the course of the last year, I have worried that Trump's sometimes benign, sometimes antagonistic views towards Europe were moving the two sides of the Atlantic away from their shared history and shared values. I have warned that making the transatlantic relationship more transactional would spell disaster. But as some of the people we've engaged outside of Washington have reminded me in recent months, it seems Europe has adjusted quite well to this new era. Contrary to my warnings, our European allies haven't abandoned us just because we have a president who questions the utility of NATO and supports Brexit. Are these relationships more durable than I realized? Is the values aspect of the transatlantic relationship overstated?

These are the questions my colleagues and I don't necessarily encounter in the near constant cycle of meetings and conferences across Washington. Many of us, myself included, can find ourselves trapped in defending the status quo. For example, U.S. presidents always reiterate America's unwavering commitment to NATO's Article 5 clause on their first trip to Brussels. When Trump failed to do this last summer, Washington pundits, scholars, and journalists spent weeks warning about the consequences of departing from that tradition. This project gives us an opportunity to interact with people who don't necessarily react the same way to a president that regularly challenges the bipartisan consensus on U.S. foreign policy.

Finally, "Across the Pond" is an attempt to mine the country for fresh ideas. Not all of the answers for addressing Chinese cyber-attacks, Russian disinformation campaigns, or a brewing trade war with Europe — to name just a few of today's challenges — can be found in the White House Situation Room or large conference tables at Washington think tanks. Policymakers on both sides of the Atlantic must engage chambers of commerce, trade associations, and the private sector where one finds a greater degree of agility and innovation. Former policymakers on these trips also need to signal to universities what kind of skill sets governments will need in the future. For example, with so many U.S. adversaries relying on asymmetric tactics designed to undermine America's technological edge, the U.S. government will need more graduates with backgrounds in both policy and technology. These are some of the conversations we're having on these trips.

On their letterhead, program materials, and websites, think tanks often make oversized claims about their impact. They are either solving intractable problems or charting a course towards a better world. Or both. We certainly aren't prepared to argue that our "Across the Pond, in the Field" project is going to change the world. We do believe, however, that it is a much-needed attempt to break out of the conventional think tank model. That doesn't mean we'll stop researching and working on those tough policy dilemmas in Syria and North Korea. All of that important work will continue. But we will continue to implement this project in parallel to give us (and our European guests) the chance to pause, get outside the Beltway, question our core assumptions, and hear from folks that look at the world differently. Our next stop will be Grand Rapids, Michigan, in June. ♟

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8   "Munich Security Report 2018: To the Brink – and Back," Munich Security Conference Foundation, Nov. 28, 2017, 22, https://www.securityconference.de/en/discussion/munich-security-report/munich-security-report-2018/.

9   "Pew: NATO Approval on the Rise," *American Interest*, May 24, 2017, https://www.the-american-interest.com/2017/05/24/pew-nato-approval-on-the-rise/.

REDISCOVERING STATECRAFT IN A CHANGING POST-WAR ORDER

Michael J. Mazarr
Michael Kofman

If Washington doubles down on U.S. military and geopolitical predominance, it risks transforming the emerging competitive era into something far more confrontational and zero-sum than it needs to be. If it hopes to retain its position of leadership, the United States will have to make the present international order truly multilateral.

Politics is the art of the possible.

–Otto von Bismarck, 1867

The furor over Russia's poisoning of a former spy in Britain reflects a worrying, and accelerating, trend: America's relations with its primary rivals appear to be entering a period of lasting crisis. With new U.S. tariffs, trade disputes, clashes over international rules and norms in the South China Sea, and growing reports of Chinese influence-seeking, the competition with China is intensifying. Meanwhile, the Russian poisoning case and dozens of other provocations from Moscow have produced a situation of deep hostility that has been described as "even more unpredictable" than the Cold War.[1]

The new U.S. *National Security Strategy and National Defense Strategy* fittingly reflect this emerging strategic moment, offering a narrative of bellicose great powers that seek to expand their influence, shape the world according to their interests, and gain greater sway over the international order. Both strategies anticipate precisely the sort of aggressive rivalries we are seeing today. The *National Security Strategy* paints a dire picture of China and Russia challenging "American power, influence, and interests, attempting to erode American security and prosperity" while being "determined to make economies less free and less fair, to grow their militaries, and to control

information and data to repress their societies and expand their influence."[2] The *National Defense Strategy* warns of the "reemergence of long-term, strategic competition" with "revisionist powers."[3]

Some great power relationships are indeed reverting to a more tooth-and-nail kind of competition. China and Russia are ever more determined to claim the status and influence they believe is their due. But the response likely to emerge from these strategies, a reaction with deeper roots in U.S. foreign policy than the views of any one administration, deserves a more significant debate. That rejoinder calls for a reaffirmation of U.S. military and geopolitical predominance, accompanied by a defense build-up to empower a direct and ongoing confrontation with Russia and China in their own backyards — all in the name of a sprawling and uncompromising interpretation of the rules and norms of the post-World War II order. Unfortunately, such an approach is likely to fail, transforming the emerging competitive era into something far more confrontational and zero-sum than it needs to be.

The *National Security Strategy's* renewed reference to "peace through strength"[4] and the *National Defense Strategy's* attendant focus on restoring military supremacy reflect a habitual and ongoing American post-Cold War quest for predominance.[5] Yet, while military strength is important to deter hostile powers, trends in key regions and challenges to U.S. power projection

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1   Andrew Higgins, "It's No Cold War, But Relations with Russia Turn Volatile," *New York Times*, Mar. 26, 2018, https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/26/world/europe/russia-expulsions-cold-war.html.

2   The White House, *National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, December 2017, 2, https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf.

3   The Department of Defense, *Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy of the United States of America: Sharpening America's Competitive Edge*, January 2018, 2, https://www.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2018-National-Defense-Strategy-Summary.pdf.

4   *National Security Strategy* 2017.

5   Hal Brands, "Choosing Primacy: U.S. Strategy and Global Order at the Dawn of the Post-Cold War Era," *Texas National Security Review* 1, no. 2 (February 2018), https://tnsr.org/2018/02/choosing-primacy-u-s-strategy-global-order-dawn-post-cold-war-era-2/. See also Eric S. Edelman, "The Broken Consensus: America's Contested Primacy," *World Affairs* 173, no. 4 (December 2010), http://www.worldaffairsjournal.org/article/broken-consensus-americas-contested-primacy. Van Jackson argues in a thoughtful essay that America never sought primacy, at least in Asia; see "American Military Superiority and the Pacific-Primacy Myth," *Survival* 60, no. 2 (March 2018). We would suggest he has defined the required elements of a strategy of primacy too narrowly.

make it virtually impossible to recapture the level of military superiority the United States enjoyed for the last three decades. Nor is it capable of stemming the tide of change: American primacy is visibly eroding,[6] world politics are increasingly multilateral,[7] and other major powers are noticeably less willing to accept American dictates. Paradoxically, too, America's military strength and martial tradition have, in some ways, contributed to the growth of these emerging challenges by displacing America's ability to effectively engage in the nuanced balancing of interests that are so central to international politics. In the post-9/11 era of persistent counterterrorism operations, the United States has tended to view every challenge as an outright threat, every problem as subject to the application of military power, and every contest

as something to win rather than to manage.[8]

This is not to say that American leadership is doomed, or that the post-war international order the United States worked so hard to build — the set of institutions, rules, and norms that have helped provide a stabilizing force in world politics since 1945[9] — is destined to come to an end. In that regard, the call by the authors of these strategy documents for continued U.S. leadership is welcome and reassuring, and many of their specific policy prescriptions would help reaffirm that leadership. But clinging to visions of predominance and absolutist conceptions of U.S. goals poses great dangers to global stability during a time of turbulent transition that will only be survived through more flexible and pragmatic leadership. During our years of exposure to U.S. national security

processes, policies, and officials, we have watched as U.S. economic, military, and political dominance has underwritten a missionary approach to the international system. That approach is not only unsustainable given the shifting balance of power, but it ultimately represents one of the dominant fault lines between the United States and other major powers.

We are not proposing anything close to retrenchment. American leadership, a rules-based international order, and an extended network of alliances and partnerships that help keep the peace, remain valuable not just to the United States but also to small and middle powers alike. The heart of the American strategic challenge is how to reset the balance between ideology and pragmatism in foreign policy without killing off the key norms of conduct or the essential foundations of U.S. global engagement. The United States will have to make the present order truly multilateral in order to retain its leadership, keep dissent within the international system rather than forcing it outside, and accommodate competition. More than at any time in the last 70 years, dogmatism will be the enemy of strategy. The resulting challenge constitutes what is arguably the most difficult balancing act that U.S. foreign policy has confronted since 1945 — and perhaps, at any time in the country's history.

The Church of American Foreign Policy: Overdue for a Reformation?

Today, the malign intentions of states that wish to challenge the status quo are not the only factors increasing instability and raising the risk of conflict. After more than two decades of an ideological, values-driven approach to international affairs, the tone and tenor of American foreign policy can seem to have more in common with theology than statecraft. In approaching countries like Iraq, Afghanistan, or Libya and issues ranging from human rights to nonproliferation to the promotion of democracy, difficult choices of balance and priority are presented as normative absolutes. Increasingly after 1989, the imperative to forcibly extend the liberalism of the Western order has

been viewed as self-evident. As that order became more institutionalized and rule-based, and as American leadership of it became — for a time — more unquestioned, Washington (and other ambitious advocates of a more fully liberal order, particularly European nations and NATO members) has come to equate strategic judgments with moral imperatives. One risk of confounding strategy with morality is that the architect and enforcer of such an order loses the ability to compromise.

Absent any meaningful checks on American

Over time, the demand for purity in rule-making and enforcement has achieved a sort of religious fervor.

power, forcible democracy promotion, humanitarian intervention, the unbridled extension of alliances, and global campaigns against extremism came to dominate U.S. foreign policy. Critics of the ambitions of an ideology-driven U.S. foreign policy, from George Kennan to Andrew Bacevich, warned for decades about the hubristic missionary spirit at the core of U.S. global strategy.[10] "We seem to be in one of those periodic revivals of the American missionary spirit," *New York Times* editor Bill Keller argued as recently as 2011, "which manifests itself in everything from quiet kindness to patronizing advice to armored divisions."[11] This trend helps explain the marriage of neoconservatives and liberal interventionists, which played a major role in justifying the Iraq War. Despite their differences, these two groups agreed on the most elaborate vision of rule enforcement and value promotion.

The story of the liberal turn of the post-war order in the 1990s was thus, at least partly, one of mission creep and of the gradual acquisition of a far more uncompromising, indeed pious, tone

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6   Charles A. Kupchan, "The Decline of the West: Why America Must Prepare for the End of Dominance," *Atlantic*, Mar. 20, 2012, https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/03/the-decline-of-the-west-why-america-must-prepare-for-the-end-of-dominance/254779/. For a more extended argument, see Charles A. Kupchan, *No One's World: The West, the Rising Rest, and the Coming Global Turn* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), https://doi.org/10.1080/09700161.2014.895245.

7   This was the conclusion of the National Intelligence Council's *Global Trends* report from 2008; see *Global Trends 2025: A Transformed World* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2008), https://www.dni.gov/files/documents/Newsroom/Reports%20and%20Pubs/2025_Global_Trends_Final_Report.pdf. See also Matthew Burrows and Roger George, "Is America Ready for a Multipolar World?" *National Interest*, Jan. 20, 2016, http://nationalinterest.org/feature/america-ready-multipolar-world-14964.

8   Andrew J. Bacevich, *The New American Militarism: How Americans are Seduced by War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013). See also Daryl Press and Benjamin Valentino, "A Balanced Foreign Policy," in *How to Make America Safe: New Policies for National Security*, ed. Stephen Van Evera, (Cambridge, MA: The Tobin Project, 2006).

9   For a description of the current order, see Michael J. Mazarr, Miranda Priebe, Andrew Radin, and Astrid Stuth Cevallos, *Understanding the Current International Order* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2016). See also the analysis of John Bew, "World Order: Many-Headed Monster or Noble Pursuit?" *Texas National Security Review* 1, no. 1 (Dec. 2017).

10   See John Lewis Gaddis, *George F. Kennan: An American Life* (New York: Penguin, 2009) and Andrew J. Bacevich, *The Limits of Power: The End of American Exceptionalism* (New York: Holt, 2009).

11   Bill Keller, "The Return of America's Missionary Impulse," *New York Times Magazine*, Apr. 15, 2011, https://www.nytimes.com/2011/04/17/magazine/mag-17Lede-t.html.

and tenor.[12] These changes to the post-war order eventually found expression in the enlargement of NATO, which was justified as a right rather than a strategic judgment; humanitarian intervention in Kosovo; the emergence of a doctrine of a Responsibility to Protect (R2P), interpreted to overrule the sovereignty of other countries;[13] rhetorical support for the Arab spring, leading to intervention in Libya;[14] political backing for the Eastern European color revolutions;[15] and material support for pro-democracy nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in dozens of other states.[16] The post-9/11 embrace of a "global war on terror," the plunge into nation-building in Afghanistan, and the choice to invade Iraq all flowed from the same maximalist instinct. One depressing sign that this kind of missionary overreach continues today is the fact that the United States will spend, in 2018 alone, $45 billion in Afghanistan[17] — more than the 2017 budget of the Department of Homeland Security, $10 billion more than the budgets of either the Department of Housing and Urban Development or the Department of Justice, and nearly twice the budget of the Department of Energy.

Unlike the post-World War II order, which was principally underwritten by great powers and, eventually, by middle powers, this vision of foreign policy activism was one held primarily by the United States and a handful of its allies. Over time, the demand for purity in rule-making and enforcement has achieved a sort of religious fervor. Allowing such an uncompromising and moralizing vision to take the wheel of the post-war order was a strategic mistake, sparking the widespread perception that the United States was ideologically driven to advance regime change abroad, including the unilateral employment of force, whether permissible by international law or not. It signaled to some rivals that the United States reserved the

right to challenge the survival of their regimes at any moment, and thus tempted them to believe that their security was only guaranteed by military power, in particular nuclear weapons. The *National Security Strategy* and *National Defense Strategy* offer sensible warnings about the dangerous implications of this dynamic, implications such as Russian efforts to disrupt Western democracies and North Korean nuclear ambitions. But as we consider means of addressing these risks, it is worth keeping in mind that the seeds of that harvest were sown in part by America's own post-Cold War missionary tendencies.

The stability of any international order ultimately depends on the leading powers seeing one another as abiding by shared and predictable rules of the game. These powers must also believe that the international order is willing to recognize their interests on some level.[18] With the unipolar moment over, the system cannot be considered legitimate if the rules are interpreted by one power as it sees fit, even if the underlying intent is to promote what that power views as the greater good. This fundamental objection to the conventional American mindset is held most passionately, of course, in Moscow and Beijing, but varying degrees of the same frustration are evident in the statements and policies of a host of other countries, such as India, Brazil, South Africa, Germany, and France.[19] It is a false assumption that the middle powers, which are important to the order's endurance, underwrite, or subscribe to, American unilateralism in action and in interpretation of the rules.

What we are seeing today, therefore, is not only the rise of militaristic predator states, but also the insistence of other self-defined great powers that the United States both restrain its missionary impulses and interpret the rules of the post-war order in a way that does the least possible damage

to their interests. The great danger of the post-Cold War American mindset is that the United States has lost the ability to take seriously or grant any legitimacy to these types of strategic objections. After all, one must grant adversaries some degree of legitimacy even to engage in basic diplomacy, let alone to create the foundations for stable strategic relationships. Yet Washington only seems capable of detecting normative wrongs and decrying them as sinful. If the United States responds to demands by other major powers for an independent voice by doubling down on a moralistic and uncompromising vision, then this emerging era of competition will become more perilous than it already is.

Misreading History: Pragmatism, Absolutism, and Order

Part of the irony of the U.S. mindset is that it harkens back to a conception of the post-war order that never really existed, mistaking it for something far more uncompromising than it ever was and drawing the wrong lessons from history.

American discourse on the international order conflates three very distinct phases: the post-World War II period, the post-Cold War period,[20] and the present, yet-to-be defined phase. During the Cold War, while Washington's policy outlook certainly began to acquire a more missionary character, the prevailing order was principally underwritten by the great powers left standing amid the ashes of World War II. The system prized sovereignty, spheres of influence, deterrence, and a balance of terror between the leading superpowers.[21] To be sure, the United States led in the creation of the institutions and norms of the post-war order, and has labored

diligently to preserve them, for both self-interested and altruistic reasons.[22] The resulting institutions — the U.N. system; the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade/World Trade Organization structures; international economic institutions like the International Monetary Fund, World Bank, and G-20; and hundreds of smaller and more discrete organizations, treaties, and conventions — bolstered U.S. strategy over the decades. Associated norms, rules, and conventions began to build a sense of quasi-legalistic obligation at the foundations of world politics. But it remained a Westphalian order first and foremost, one built on the rule of sovereignty, a live-and-let-live spirit of mutual accommodation, and some degree of collective attention to shared problems.[23] It quite consciously attempted to balance great power interests with universal and nondiscriminatory rules, rather than simply enforcing such rules without regard to those interests.[24] That order was founded with World War II as its backdrop, and thus had the management of great power competition in mind.

At its inception, therefore, and for much of its history, the post-war order never was conceived of as constitutional, absolute, or without exceptions. Balancing where its dictates would be enforced — and when they would be intentionally overlooked — was a central preoccupation of U.S. foreign policy. The emphasis on human rights provides

> [T]he Post-war order never was conceived of as constitutional, absolute, or without exceptions.

12   Mark Kersten, "The Responsibility to Protect Doctrine is Faltering. Here's Why," *Washington Post*, Dec. 8, 2015, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2015/12/08/the-responsibility-to-protect-doctrine-is-failing-heres-why/?utm_term=.1ec01eb7adb1; Edward Rhodes, "The Imperial Logic of Bush's Liberal Agenda," *Survival* 45, no. 1 (2007), https://doi.org/10.1080/00396330312231343356; Michael C. Desch, "The Liberal Complex," *American Conservative*, Jan. 10, 2011, http://www.theamericanconservative.com/articles/the-liberal-complex/.

13   Anthony C. Zinni, "The 'Responsibility to Protect' and the Dangers of Military Intervention in Fragile States," in *Secular Nationalism and Citizenship in Muslim Countries*, ed. Kail C. Ellis, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 171-177. See also Mohammed Ayoob, "Humanitarian Intervention and State Sovereignty," *The International Journal of Human Rights* 6, no. 1 (September 2010), https://doi.org/10.1080/714003751.

14   Henry Kissinger, "A New Doctrine of Intervention?" *Washington Post*, Mar. 30, 2012, https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/a-new-doctrine-of-intervention/2012/03/30/gIQAcZL6lS_story.html?utm_term=.041085544113.

15   Russian views of this process are described in Andrew Radin and Clinton Bruce Reach, *Russian Views of the International Order* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2017).

16   A sympathetic account of such activities which nonetheless describes their risks is Thomas Carothers, "Responding to the Democracy Promotion Backlash," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, June 8, 2006, http://carnegieendowment.org/2006/06/08/responding-to-democracy-promotion-backlash-pub-18416.

17   Ellen Mitchell, "Pentagon: War in Afghanistan Will Cost $45 Billion in 2018," *Hill*, Feb. 6, 2018, http://thehill.com/policy/defense/372641-pentagon-war-in-afghanistan-will-cost-45-billion-in-2018.

18   This is a major theme of Henry Kissinger, *World Order* (New York: Penguin Books, 2014).

19   An excellent source on these trends is Oliver Steunkel, *Post-Western World: How Emerging Powers Are Remaking Global Order* (London: Polity, 2016).

20   For a fine survey of U.S. strategy in the post-Cold War period, see Hal Brands, *Making the Unipolar Moment: U.S. Foreign Policy and the Rise of the Post-Cold War Order* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2016).

21   This distinction is made in Mazarr, Priebe, Radin, and Cevallos, *Understanding the Current International Order*.

22   See, for example, Stewart Patrick, *The Best Laid Plans: The Origins of American Multilateralism and the Dawn of the Cold War* (Rowman and Littlefield, 2008).

23   An excellent recent survey of the evolution of thinking on sovereignty in the modern international order is Stewart Patrick, *The Sovereignty Wars: Reconciling America with the World* (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution Press, 2017). See also Richard N. Haass, "World Order 2.0: The Case for Sovereign Obligation," *Foreign Affairs* 96, no. 1 (January/February 2017), https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2016-12-12/world-order-20.

24   The story of the origins of the United Nations is told in Mark Mazower, *Governing the World: The History of an Idea, 1815 to the Present* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2012), 191-213. He concludes that the framers of the system "ended up creating an organization that combined the scientific technocracy of the New Deal with the flexibility and power-political reach of the nineteenth-century European alliance system."

a leading example. The managers of U.S. foreign policy have upheld this ideal, but they also have set it aside at various times for different reasons: a sense that long-term democratization demanded compromise, as in South Korea or Taiwan; a conviction that worse rights violations would occur without U.S. support, as was the case in Vietnam and Central America; or the demands of short-term national interests, admittedly sometimes craven, as in U.S. policy toward Iran and Chile.[25]

Washington's emphasis on creating a post-war order that is based on institutions, rules, and norms was therefore balanced with a recognition that these aspirations had to be aligned with a real world that would only imperfectly reflect them. In the gap would go statecraft, an effort to herd key members of the international community toward those important normative goals — but always with the recognition that the allowance for exceptions would be as important as the rules themselves.[26] Push too hard, hold too inflexibly to the ideals, and the whole thing would collapse.

The statesmanship required to balance these multiple considerations — that is to say, the acceptance of inconsistencies in the rules and norms of the order — was not limited to achieving liberal goals like human rights. The global trade regime reflects the same pattern, having developed amid traditions of industry-protecting, quasi-mercantilist behavior, and occasional bouts of protectionist fervor.[27] In regard to the norm against interstate aggression, the United States and its friends offered clever legal justifications (and sometimes not even those) for what looked like outright aggression in Iraq, Libya, and elsewhere. The presence of American forces in Syria, to take the leading current example, has involved sustained combat operations on the territory of another state outside any discernible national or international legal basis.[28]

During the Cold War, Washington was forced to live with uncomfortable strategic half-measures. The military balance as well as the risks of nuclear war, escalation, and miscalculation, imposed a sober approach and restraint in the face of Soviet and, later, Chinese vital interests. There was no way to stop Soviet intervention in Hungary in 1956 or in Czechoslovakia in 1968. It may not be how we remember it, but the Cold War's lasting accomplishment was maintaining a time of peace between adversarial superpowers that possessed the ability to destroy the world. Despite the global competition, collaboration took place to resolve disputes, manage conflicts among allies or client states, and avoid dangerous gambits like the Cuban Missile Crisis. There was no need to refer to "spheres of influence" to recognize the simple reality that the closer one gets to the borders of a rival, or the more vital their interests at stake, the more one has to treat with care whatever rules or norms are at play.[29] The imperative not to normalize an undesirable reality in international politics was always there, but policy and strategy recognized objective realities.

Like any set of rules, therefore, the post-World War II order has endured, and in some ways, flourished as much through its exceptions as its uncompromising enforcement. That flexibility allowed the United States to avoid fundamental breaks with key states. It overlooked human rights violations, the stretching of nonproliferation norms, and occasionally bellicose behavior even by the Soviet Union as part of this careful balancing act. This approach recognized that for any order to endure, all the leading powers must endorse it to some degree — and they will never do so if the application of its norms proves fundamentally inimical to their vital interests.

The Russia Problem

Gradually during the Cold War and then with much more energy after 1989, this pragmatic tenor of American leadership — a willingness to compromise on the road to greater order and community — transformed into a much more uncompromising mindset of missionary zeal. This shift has helped produce some real dangers, one of which was the failure to secure the post-Cold War peace with Russia. That failure resulted in

> [I]t was the United States' decision to take a decidedly missionary, rather than strategic, approach to Russia that played an important role in the current breakdown in U.S.-Russia relations.

a cycle of engagement and disappointment that eventually helped drive U.S.-Russian relations into their present abyss.

Undoubtedly, a large share of the blame can be placed squarely on the shoulders of the Russian elite. However, it was the United States' decision to take a decidedly missionary, rather than strategic, approach to Russia that played an important role in the current breakdown in U.S.-Russia relations. Arguably, the United States should not be blamed for taking advantage of the Soviet Union's collapse in seeking to advance a Europe that is whole, free, and at peace.[30] However, this was meant to be a slogan — not an ideology that led to perpetual NATO expansion, democracy promotion, and half-hearted bids for the former Soviet sphere. Nor was it ever consciously defined as a strategic concept. Taken too far and too quickly, some of these policies have resulted in negative-sum gains for all concerned. The United States never made a serious effort to establish a security framework in Europe in which Russia had a stake. Washington vacillated between ignoring Moscow as a defunct great power and naively seeking to convert Russian elites to Western values, rather than securing post-Cold War peace via structured settlement, negotiation on issues in dispute, and a strategy that planned for its inevitable return as a power in Europe.

In any scenario, Russia would have taken decades to complete a successful transition from being an imperial power to a constructive participant in a collective regional order, as did Britain and France at one point in their own histories. And yet, the United States took little notice of the long-running determinants of Russian strategy or foreign policy that would come into play in that transition. Russia had always sought buffer states in Europe to accommodate for its lack of depth and history of costly wars fought on Russian territory.[31] This history, together with a natural inclination to establish regional hegemony, predictably yielded a zero-sum outlook in Moscow when it came to the expansion of military or political blocs. A national security elite rooted in the Soviet experience would have always proven resistant to liberal democracy, and struggled to respect the independence of former Soviet republics.

These convictions did not need to be indulged by the United States — but they did need to be understood, planned for, and accommodated in a strategy designed both to advance liberal values and acknowledge Russian imperatives. It was precisely this sort of nuanced approach that a post-

25 The literature on the inconsistencies of U.S. human rights policy, especially during the Cold War, is immense. For a brief survey, see Mark P. Lagon, "Promoting Human Rights: Is U.S. Consistency Desirable or Possible?" *Council on Foreign Relations*, Oct. 19, 2011, https://www.cfr.org/expert-brief/promoting-human-rights-us-consistency-desirable-or-possible. See also David Carleton and Michael Stohl, "The Foreign Policy of Human Rights: Rhetoric and Reality from Jimmy Carter to Ronald Reagan," *Human Rights Quarterly* 7, no. 2 (May 1985), http://www.jstor.org/stable/762080; Ted Galen Carpenter, "The Hypocritical Strain in U.S. Foreign Policy," *National Interest*, May 4, 2011, https://www.cato.org/publications/commentary/hypocritical-strain-us-foreign-policy; and Kathryn Sikkink, *Mixed Signals: U.S. Human Rights Policy and Latin America* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2004).

26 The concept of balance and flexibility is a major theme in Dennis Ross, *Statecraft: And How to Restore America's Standing in the World* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2008).

27 Indeed, this concept was given a theoretical foundation with John Gerard Ruggie's notion of "embedded liberalism," the idea that the post-war socioeconomic order gained strength through the flexibility to allow a certain amount of domestic variations from the liberalizing norms of the system. John Gerard Ruggie, "International Regimes, Transactions, and Change: Embedded Liberalism in the Postwar Economic Order," *International Organization* 36, no. 2 (Spring 1982), https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818300018993.

28 For arguments on this score, see Craig Martin, "International Law and U.S. Military Strikes on Syria," *Huffington Post*, Aug. 31, 2013, https://www.huffingtonpost.com/craig-martin/international-law-and-the_b_3849593.html; Sharmine Narwani, "Is the Expanding U.S. Military Presence in Syria Legal?" *American Conservative*, Aug. 4, 2017, http://www.theamericanconservative.com/articles/is-the-expanding-u-s-military-presence-in-syria-legal/; and Laurie Blank, "Syria Strikes: Legitimacy and Lawfulness," *Lawfare*, Apr. 16, 2018, https://lawfareblog.com/syria-strikes-legitimacy-and-lawfulness. The international reaction to the legality of the latest round of U.S. and allied strikes has been mixed, with most states declining to take a formal position one way or the other. See Alonso Gurmendi Dunkelberg, Rebecca Ingber, Priya Pillai, and Elvina Pothelet, "Mapping States' Reactions to the Syria Strikes of April 2018," *Just Security*, Apr. 22, 2018, https://www.justsecurity.org/55157/mapping-states-reactions-syria-strikes-april-2018/.

29 Edward A. Kolodziej laid out an especially ambitious conceptualization of this de-facto mutual agreement in "The Cold War as Cooperation," *Bulletin of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences* 44, no. 7, (April 1991), http://www.jstor.org/stable/3824660.

30 James Goldgeier has argued that a series of U.S.-Russian meetings in the early years of the post-Cold War period "symbolize the narrative of the entire decade: While desirous of a new relationship with Russia, the United States saw itself as the Cold War victor and had the power to shape the security dynamic across Europe." The result, he argues, is that "while NATO enlargement spread security across a region more accustomed to insecurity or unwelcome domination, the failure to provide a place for Russia in the European security framework (for which Russia is responsible as well) left a zone of insecurity between NATO and Russia that continues to bedevil policymakers." See James Goldgeier, "Promises Made, Promises Broken? What Yeltsin Was Told about NATO in 1993 and Why It Matters," *War on the Rocks*, July 12, 2016, https://warontherocks.com/2016/07/promises-made-promises-broken-what-yeltsin-was-told-about-nato-in-1993-and-why-it-matters/. He is less critical of the post-Cold War U.S. strategy than our analysis; see also Goldgeier, "Less Whole, Less Free, Less at Peace: Whither America's Strategy for a Post-Cold War Europe?" *War on the Rocks*, Feb. 12, 2018, https://warontherocks.com/2018/02/less-whole-less-free-less-peace-whither-americas-strategy-post-cold-war-europe/.

31 For historical surveys of Russian foreign policy that touch on this perennial imperative in Russian strategic culture, see for example Robert Legvold, ed., *Russian Foreign Policy in the Twenty-First Century and the Legacy of the Past* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007) and Stephen Kotkin's "Russia's Perpetual Geopolitics," *Foreign Affairs* 95, no. 3 (May/June 2016), https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/ukraine/2016-04-18/russias-perpetual-geopolitics. For a general discussion, see Dmitry Trenin, "Russia's Spheres of Interest, Not Influence," *The Washington Quarterly* 32, no. 4 (October 2009), https://doi.org/10.1080/01636600903231089.

Cold War United States, certain of its values and fueled by a unipolar moment, never managed to acquire. Instead, a host of well-meaning policy elites accepted Russian absence from European politics as a green light to engage in what Timothy Snyder terms the "politics of inevitability," believing that the cycle of history was somehow stopped, and that Russian weakness could be taken as a license for strategic malpractice.[32]

NATO intervention in Kosovo demonstrated that the alliance now saw itself as able to dictate security terms in Europe unconstrained by international institutions in which Russia had an equal voice.[33] The long-term consequences of the unilateral use of force in Europe at a time of Russian weakness and insecurity would only be realized years later. Tearing up the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty destroyed what Moscow thought was a pillar of strategic stability at a time when the conventional military balance was entirely in America's favor.[34] Reframing NATO as a mechanism for out-of-area operations in support of American-led interventions made an equally powerful impression on Russia. A hodgepodge of efforts to promote democracy, political meddling, and NATO expansion ever further despite Russian warnings contributed to an elite consensus in Moscow that the West would only stop when faced with use of force. This is not a myopic argument about blowback from NATO expansion alone, but the inherent cumulative effect of American policies, many of which were uncoordinated, on U.S.-Russian relations.[35]

Russian President Vladimir Putin signaled the upshot of this cumulative effect in his 2007 address at the Munich Security Conference.[36] Years of efforts to engage Russia and lectures on the benefits of Western integration, Putin's broadside made clear, had in no way caused Russian leadership to redefine its fundamental national security assumptions, its outlook on the former Soviet space, or its enduring suspicion of Western intent. Simply put, more than 10 years ago, Russia's obvious frustrations and public warnings should have made it clear to Western officials that American foreign policy, together with European desires to expand their own supranational political institutions, would lead to conflict in Europe. This was evident to leading Cold War strategists in the 1990s, well before Putin took power or anyone in the West even knew his name.[37] After many years of failure to get its interests taken seriously by Washington, Moscow thought the Russia-Georgia

The long-term consequences of the unilateral use of force in Europe at a time of Russian weakness and insecurity would only be realized years later.

War made its concerns and outlook clear. Yet after 2008, a different group of American policy elites took the helm, still missionary in outlook, and holding on to the belief that with a few transactions in areas of mutual interest, Russian elites somehow could be convinced to abandon longstanding precepts of Russian strategic culture. Washington was then once again caught flatfooted over the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2014.

The architects of these post-Cold War U.S. policies will insist that their intentions were good, that each of these actions was aimed at upholding some rule or norm of the international order, that Russia need not have been offended, and that it all would have been different if Moscow had made different choices. Some will admit that mistakes were made. But even those who do still cast Russia as the essential problem. They use renewed confrontation with Russia as a strange kind of retroactive justification for the policies that played a hand in creating that confrontation in the first place. It goes without saying — and we must stress this point — that Russia's historic strategy for attaining security at the expense of others, its paranoid and narrow strategic culture, and its elite-driven decision-making process all constitute the real nub of the problem. But it is precisely *because* of those realities that almost every aspect of this conflict was predictable. Russia's spate of aggressive assaults on the post-war order do not exculpate U.S. policymakers for not only failing to secure the post-Cold War peace, but also for failing to prepare for Russia's inevitable return as a major power in the international system, and in particular a military power in Europe.

The harsh realities of Russian interests and intentions only reinforce the dangers of a post-Cold War policy toward Russia fueled by hegemonic overreach and missionary absolutism, rather than by an effort to deal with Russia as it is. Many of Moscow's demands need not threaten the security of the West and those that do must be vigorously countered. But America's approach to Russia in the wake of the Cold War looks like an almost willful 30-year effort to ignore Russian prerogatives, threats, and internal mobilization in the name of the rules and norms of the post-World War II order — an order that, as Moscow is busily reminding us (and as Beijing is likely to do as well), simply cannot endure if other powers don't subscribe to it.

The only reason Russia has not left this order entirely — as an aggrieved Japan once withdrew from the League of Nations in the 1930s[38] — is that it has few options in the way of allies today, remains dependent on the global financial system, and appears still to crave some degree of international legitimacy.[39] While Russia has not taken such fundamental steps as abandoning the United Nations or even many international treaties, there is growing evidence that Moscow perceives itself to be unconstrained by existing rules and norms. If anything, Russia seems increasingly unconcerned about its reputation, credibility, and legitimacy in the West. This is likely due not simply to desperation, but to the perception that there is little the West can do to impose its will. Russia has become unbridled in its use of political and cyber-enabled information warfare against the United States and its allies. Its military campaign in Syria has demonstrated that Russia is able to independently and effectively project power in another region, reaffirming that Moscow is still a great power in the international system and that it was underestimated in 2015.

One of the barriers to the necessary course correction in U.S. strategy is that the missionary sensibility now guiding much of America's foreign policy is grounded in some very real — but also very qualified — truths. America's role *is* different from that of other great powers.[40] American values *do* travel. Soft power, a network of allies and partners, and a leading role in the order's governing institutions *do* constitute some of America's greatest advantages. Many other countries, perhaps most, *do* believe that their interests are better served with Washington at the helm than Beijing or Moscow — or no one at all. Equally important is that, despite the preponderance of American power in the post-Cold War period, small and middle powers do not see the United States as a threat.[41] The post-war order *has* strongly benefited U.S. interests, in ways ranging from the creation of institutions that help stabilize the global economy to wrapping U.S. power and purpose in legitimizing multilateral context.[42]

Such realities account for why so many other countries are willing to overlook the occasional hypocrisy, give the United States credit for good intentions, and remain firmly wedded to the order Washington cobbled together in the aftermath of World War II. They are also a major reason why Russian and Chinese calls to balance American power have long gone unheeded, and why, despite the inherently unstable nature of a unilateral system, it has continued for over 25 years. Yet how to maintain the current order, and American leadership, after the demise of unipolarity could prove the most vexing question of this looming transition. Continuing this post-Cold War pattern of standing too straight-backed at the altar of the shared order, holding too inflexibly to its rule set, will at best produce a brittle and unsustainable system — and at worst, magnify the dangers of unfathomably destructive wars.

32 Timothy Snyder, *On Tyranny: Twenty Lessons from the Twentieth Century* (New York: Tim Duggan Books, 2017).

33 For the role of resentment over Kosovo in sparking recent Russian actions, see Masha Gessen, "Crimea is Putin's Revenge," *Slate*, Mar. 21, 2014, http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/foreigners/2014/03/putin_s_crimea_revenge_ever_since_the_u_s_bombed_kosovo_in_1999_putin_has.html. See also Ted Galen Carpenter, "How Kosovo Poisoned America's Relationship with Russia," *National Interest*, May 19, 2017, http://nationalinterest.org/feature/how-kosovo-poisoned-americas-relationship-russia-20755; and Stephen J. Blank, *Threats to Russian Security: The View from Moscow* (Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army Strategic Studies Institute, 2000).

34 Tom Z. Collina, "Dumping the ABM Treaty: Was It Worth It?" *Arms Control Now*, June 12, 2012.

35 For a general review of events, see Jeffrey Tayler, "The Seething Anger of Putin's Russia," *Atlantic*, Sept. 22, 2014, https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2014/09/russia-west-united-states-past-future-conflict/380533/; and Radin and Reach, *Russian Views*, 23-29.

36 See "Putin's Prepared Remarks at 43rd Munich Conference on Security Policy," *Washington Post*, Feb. 12, 2007, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/02/12/AR2007021200555.html.

37 See Thomas Friedman, "Foreign Affairs; Now a Word From X," *New York Times*, May 2, 1998, https://www.nytimes.com/1998/05/02/opinion/foreign-affairs-now-a-word-from-x.html. and Kenneth N. Waltz, "Structural Realism after the Cold War," *International Security* 24, no. 1 (Summer 2000), http://www.columbia.edu/itc/sipa/U6800/readings-sm/Waltz_Structural%20Realism.pdf.

38 Eri Hotta, *Japan 1941: Countdown to Infamy* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013).

39 Radin and Reach, *Russian Views*.

40 One recent argument on this score is James Traub, "America Can't Win Great-Power Hardball," *Foreign Policy*, Nov. 16, 2017, http://foreignpolicy.com/2017/11/16/america-cant-win-great-power-hardball/.

41 Keir A. Lieber and Gerard Alexander, "Waiting for Balancing: Why the World is Not Pushing Back," *International Security* 30, no. 1 (Summer 2005), https://doi.org/10.1162/0162288054894580.

42 Michael J. Mazarr and Ashley L. Rhoades, *Testing the Value of the Postwar International Order* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2018).

Rebuilding the City on a Hill

Part of the danger of a missionary attitude, then, is that it damages America's ability to take the interests of other major powers into consideration and encourages the adventurist promotion of Western values and the enforcement of rules

Adversaries who assume that the United States will punish them no matter what they do have no incentive for restraint.

in ways guaranteed to manufacture continual disputes and crises. A theological approach to foreign policy has warped Washington's judgment and, combined with the immense power at its disposal, impelled the United States to take more risks than its interests would dictate.[43] Ask a typical group of U.S. national security hands behind closed doors whether Washington should go to war over Ukraine, Georgia, or Syria, or to ensure free navigation in the South China Sea — as both of us have done on numerous occasions — and they are likely to laugh uncomfortably and shake their heads. And yet the inherent value of defending the norms established by the post-war order imbues each of these things with a supposed precedential value that supersedes the strict national interests involved.

This is not the first time that secondary issues have taken on primary importance because of their symbolic value. The Cold War was full of such examples. But there is a perilous difference between fighting off a global ideological menace in far-flung places with little inherent significance and defending abstract global norms along the borders of other great powers. The nature of the credibility imperative has changed, and yet the United States is sliding quickly back into Cold War thinking that, because general principles matter, everywhere and

everything matters — even issues and places of far more intrinsic importance to our competitors than to us.[44] Jack Snyder argues that the myth of "cumulative losses," which often appear in the form of unsubstantiated domino theories (i.e., that any setbacks in international affairs will necessarily escalate into a cascade of defeats) is a recurring theme among policy establishments heading towards over-extension and strategic insolvency.[45]

It is, of course, true that some of the states testing the boundaries today do have malign, or at least aggressive, intentions. The United States cannot simply disregard Russian aggression in Ukraine or meddling in Western political processes, or declare itself unconcerned with the potential for Chinese aggression against Taiwan. Our recommendations are designed to sustain, not abandon, a broadly shared, rules-based order. Even without the prompting of exaggerated domino theories, some rules must be enforced if and when the violations are profound enough.

But an approach guided by statecraft rather than theology urges the United States to ask critical discriminating questions in the process of making such judgments. Which are the rules that must be rigidly enforced? What norms must be forcibly advanced? How, precisely, should the United States go about both of those tasks? There is a good reason why some form of compromise and respect for mutual interests has been part of every successful program to manage rivalry.

Merely saying some things matter less than others is not tantamount to saying nothing matters. If Washington is not careful, a refusal to temper U.S. ambitions will produce a series of unnecessary and exhausting wars that, in the most tragic of ironies, end up generating the only scenarios likely to pose a truly existential threat to the U.S. homeland. It is time to finally abandon the crude, unqualified domino theories and credibility obsessions that plague our policy establishment. Russian annexation of Crimea is not a prelude to an invasion of NATO. Lithuania is not Ukraine. And none of them is Germany.

In order to deter other powers and make room

for compromise, the United States should stop lecturing these nations about what their interests ought to be and instead determine which of those interests America can live with and be willing to grant those interests some measure of political legitimacy. To refuse to admit the legitimacy of a rival's core interests is to make the conflict total, rendering it impossible to offer them assurances that if they refrain from undesired actions, we will forgo punishment. There is a profound difference between delegitimizing enemies when at war, which is commonplace, and delegitimizing countries with whom you wish to avert war, thus reducing your own space for compromise, settlement, and any incentive they might have to negotiate. Without such assurances, effective deterrence becomes both difficult and expensive. As Thomas Schelling has argued, the "pain and suffering" embodied in deterrent threats "have to appear *contingent* on" a potential aggressor's behavior.[46] Adversaries who assume that the United States will punish them no matter what they do have no incentive for restraint.

Ideological purity also limits America's options for resolving disputes by making it difficult to compromise or broker imperfect deals out of fear of political backlash at home. The missionary mindset makes the United States unwilling to surrender one iota of freedom of action (by constraining missile defense deployments, for example), or institutionalize anything but the purest enforcement of rules. This makes most treaties or compacts impossible to pass and creates a host of constraints that result in Washington only having the "big stick" to use as its principal means of management. This pattern has accelerated since 1989: The United States has become constitutionally incapable of signing, ratifying, or upholding limited deals to manage complex problems — whether that's the Agreed Framework with North Korea, a series of climate accords, or the nuclear deal with Iran. But dismissing diplomatic half-measures in favor of the big stick is a strategy with little coercive value against powers with similarly sized sticks and a growing allergy to American dictates. If something like the entirely sensible post-Cold War

U.S.-Russian arms agreements were to give way to a world without any arms control, for example, U.S. interests would only suffer.

The International Order: Back to the Old Testament

What, then, is the alternative? The answer does not lie in one of the variants of retrenchment on offer today.[47] The U.S. role as the leader and hub of a flexible but still meaningful rule-based world order — including the deterrent power of a potent and globally-postured U.S. military — underwrites peace and stability. The general U.S. strategy of "deep engagement" has benefited both U.S. interests and global economic and political security,[48] and the commitments to such engagement found in the *National Security Strategy* and the *National Defense Strategy* are heartening indeed. But there is a readily-available middle ground between retrenchment and predominance: The United States should remain internationally engaged while abandoning the dangerous implications of the missionary mindset that has prevailed for more than three decades.

A more humble and restrained version of U.S. engagement would have several basic characteristics. First, it would require greater power-sharing in setting and enforcing rules in the international order, ranging from trade and finance to regional security.[49] As more states become determined to have a voice in the setting and enforcement of rules in the post-war international order, and as they acquire the power to make their voices heard, that order will have to become more legitimately multilateral if it is going to survive.[50] Keeping the other major powers vested in the system is an essential component of any strategy to constrain them and contain the competition; the lower their stake in the current order, the shorter its lifespan will be. There is some evidence that a shared order, with leadership coming from more corners of the world, could work. Consider Europe's drive to save the Paris climate deal

43   A number of analysts have written about the tendency of modern American predominance to generate expanding ambitions. See, for example, Christopher Preble, *The Power Problem: How American Military Dominance Makes Us Less Safe, Less Prosperous, and Less Free* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009), especially 87-115. Our own recommendations are less comprehensive than Preble's, and we do not agree with every aspect of his portrait of U.S. military power.

44   Stephen M. Walt, "Why Are U.S. Leaders So Obsessed with Credibility?" *Foreign Policy*, Sept. 11, 2012, http://foreignpolicy.com/2012/09/11/why-are-u-s-leaders-so-obsessed-with-credibility/; and Christopher Fettweis, "Credibility and the War on Terror," *Political Science Quarterly* 122, no. 4 (Winter 2007), http://www.jstor.org/stable/20202929.

45   Jack Snyder, *Myths of Empire: Domestic Politics and International Ambition* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991).

46   Thomas Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), 4.

47   For one recent example see Eugene Gholz, Daryl G. Press, and Harvey M. Sapolsky, "Come Home America: The Strategy of Restraint in the Face of Temptation," *International Security* 21, no. 4 (Spring 1997).

48   Stephen G. Brooks, G. John Ikenberry, and William C. Wohlforth, "Don't Come Home, America: The Case against Retrenchment," *International Security* 37, no. 3 (Winter 2011/2012): 7-51, https://doi.org/10.1162/ISEC_a_00107.

49   See for example Amitav Acharya, *The End of American World Order* (New York: Polity, 2014).

50   A good recent statement of the need for a multilateral conception of a shifting order is Trine Flockhart, Charles A. Kupchan, Christina Lin, Bartlomiej E. Nowak, Patrick W. Quirk, and Lanxin Xiang, *Liberal Order in a Post-Western World* (Washington, DC: Transatlantic Academy, 2014).

absent America,[51] Japan's leadership of a rump Trans-Pacific Partnership,[52] or China's desire to lead and change, rather than destroy, established international institutions.[53]

A more multilateral order can work, but Washington must find a way to *make* it work, because an order based solely on American unipolarity is not sustainable. Simply put, American power, both relative and absolute, is insufficient to underwrite the order as it is currently conceived and being enforced by its own policy community. The more stakeholders and centers of leadership, the more resilient the current order actually will become, but this of course means the United States will have to learn to share the steering wheel. Otherwise the United States risks discrediting its leadership and surrendering even more influence to others. It is Beijing's quest to take charge of the current order, rather than destroy it and make enemies of its beneficiaries. That is what ought to worry Washington the most.

Second, a revised approach would counsel patience rather than urgency in the promotion of key norms and values. The great insight of U.S. Cold War strategy was that America's job was not to *force* a value change on the Soviet Union. It was instead to establish and safeguard an international system that ultimately would outlast and envelop the Soviet Union. The United States channeled conflict with the Soviet Union to distant proxy wars, where escalation dynamics could be controlled and the stakes to both parties were far from existential. In the process, beginning with Dwight Eisenhower's rejection of an outright "rollback" strategy,[54] successive U.S. administrations displayed a recognition of Soviet core interests, and a realization that the United States could not prevail if it competed so hard that it provoked the other side into a cataclysmic war.

In the end, the Soviet Union's own internal contradictions caught up with it, as cynicism and dysfunction consumed the system from the inside. Over time, it voluntarily signed up for the institutions of a system that would contain the competition, such as the Helsinki Final Act of 1975. Arms control, transparency, and confidence building treaties followed. In the end, the Soviet Union ceased being a revolutionary power and became a satisfied power in Europe.

The same concept — taking steps to gradually and inexorably create a context that *produces* desired changes rather than dispatching military forces or implementing economic sanctions to *force* those changes overnight — can and should be the starting point for a revised conception of the international order. With properly employed statecraft, values that Americans believe to be self-selling goods, from free markets to human rights to democracy, ought to prove attractive of their own accord. U.S. policy can sponsor and support these outcomes with a continuing and powerful strategy for liberal value promotion. But the primary goal of such a strategy would be to encourage established and emerging trends toward liberal values rather than force them into infertile soil.

In the process of executing this strategy, the United States should eschew military intervention for humanitarian purposes except in select cases. Those would include situations in which the United States can obtain fairly universal endorsement in the form of such signs as U.N. Security Council support. This rule would generally avoid throwing American weight behind region-wide revolutions, especially those that are likely to wash up on the doorsteps of other great powers. Washington should not cease being a beacon for democracy, but it also should think carefully about where democracy promotion is liable to engender political crises that could translate into security contests. The United States can amply fulfill its commitment to liberal values without disregarding the sovereignty or interests of other major powers. It can craft closer and more overtly supportive partnerships with rising democracies, boost foreign aid to developing countries that are building nascent democratic systems, expand humanitarian assistance missions and programs, and advance technical assistance and human capital development programs around the world.

Third, the revised approach to U.S. engagement would prioritize diplomacy and statecraft over military power. Secretary of Defense James Mattis — like many recent secretaries of defense — has spoken repeatedly and passionately about the importance of placing diplomacy at the forefront of U.S. national security strategy, and the need to invest in the tools required for such an emphasis.[55] Multiple diplomatic initiatives are now underway, from the Indo-Pacific-inspired engagement of India and Japan to negotiations with North Korea to close cooperation with NATO on enhancing deterrence.

Read in isolation, however, and considered alongside recent boosts in defense spending,[56] the new strategy documents seem to convey a vision in which the United States amasses military might to reaffirm U.S. dominance while avoiding hard political choices, essentially doubling down on raw power to compensate for loss of influence. In an era when leading competitors are discovering effective means of bolstering their influence outside the military lane and below the threshold of conflict, while also investing heavily in the capacity to offset U.S. power projection in their regions, this approach seems destined to disappoint. Despite some emerging concepts such as "multi-domain operations," "dynamic force employment," and "joint lethality," there is little in the new *National Security Strategy* or *National Defense Strategy* to suggest a rethinking of how the United States integrates the military with other instruments of national power. Direct competition, contesting regional balances of power with Russia and China, and a capability-centric approach continue to dominate the national security mindset. In these documents, Washington recognizes the rise of great power competition, and the erosion of America's military power, but not the need to change its strategy or outlook on the international order. As a consequence, the "whole of government" approach we so often hear espoused often turns out to be little more than a whole of Pentagon approach: The military toolkit is not used in integrated combination with non-military approaches, but as a substitute for them.

Placing statecraft before military power would amount to a tacit acknowledgement that the United States is overburdened by an expansive alliance network in which the credibility of extended deterrence is every day more difficult. Arming the regional adversaries of powers like Russia and China, or further expanding existing alliances, will have profound consequences, as these great powers have both the will and the power to enact stronger and destabilizing countermeasures. This requires exercising judgment in the choice of weapon systems and forces deployed on Russian or Chinese borders. It demands choosing deterrence over dominance in such theaters as the South China Sea, aiming to block potential Chinese aggression with far less expectation of power projection.[57] It also means indefinitely deferring NATO membership for some countries, a proposition many in Western circles find uncomfortable. However, it does not preclude creating other forms of affiliation, cooperation, and partnership beyond what has become a myopic fixation on NATO expansion.

As this last example suggests, the fourth and final characteristic of implementing a revised approach in U.S. strategy will be to confront hard choices and make painful compromises in dealing with Russia and China. These are major, resilient, and nuclear-armed adversaries, and there is no getting around the fact that these illiberal states will have a say in the order, just as the Soviet Union did before them,

The current confrontation is not only likely to be the new normal, it is also certain to continue as long as Putin is in power.

and just as the great powers did in the eras prior to the Cold War.

Absolutists will respond that any compromise on the order's rules and norms is tantamount to surrender.[58] In some of the more pitiless conceptions of a global order, that is certainly true:

51   Alison Smale, "Angela Merkel and Emmanuel Macron Unite Behind Paris Accord," *New York Times*, June 2, 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/02/world/europe/paris-agreement-merkel-trump-macron.html.

52   Shawn Donnan, "Globalization Marches On Without Trump," *Financial Times*, Nov. 6, 2017, https://www.ft.com/content/d81ca8cc-bfdd-11e7-b8a3-38a6e068f464; Koichi Hamada, "The Rebirth of the TPP," *Project Syndicate*, June 29, 2017, https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/tpp-revival-japan-us-by-koichi-hamada-2017-06?barrier=accessreg.

53   Besma Momani, "Xi Jinping's Speech at Davos Showed the World Has Turned Upside Down," *Newsweek*, Jan. 18, 2017, http://www.newsweek.com/davos-2017-xi-jinping-economy-globalization-protectionism-donald-trump-543993.

54   Robert R. Bowie and Richard H. Immerman, *Waging Peace: How Eisenhower Shaped an Enduring Cold War Strategy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 158-177.

55   Robert F. Worth, "Can Jim Mattis Hold the Line in Trump's 'War Cabinet'?" *New York Times*, Mar. 26, 2018, https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/26/magazine/can-jim-mattis-hold-the-line-in-trumps-war-cabinet.html.

56   Greg Jaffe and Damian Paletta, "Trump Plans to Ask for $719 Billion for National Defense in 2019 — A Major Increase," *Washington Post*, Jan. 26, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/trump-plans-to-ask-for-716-billion-for-national-defense-in-2019--a-major-increase/2018/01/26/9d0e30e4-02a8-11e8-bb03-722769454f82_story.html?utm_term=.aff638a5bce1.

57   See Terrence Kelly, David C. Gompert, and Duncan Long, *Smarter Power, Stronger Partners, Volume I: Exploiting U.S. Advantages to Prevent Aggression* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2016).

58   For an interesting perspective on spheres of influence and balance of power, see Robert Kagan, "The United States Must Resist a Return to Spheres of Interest in the International System," Brookings Institution, Feb. 19, 2015, https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2015/02/19/the-united-states-must-resist-a-return-to-spheres-of-interest-in-the-international-system/. For a similar argument on realism, see Roger Cohen, "The Limits of American Realism," *New York Times*, Jan. 11, 2016, https://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/12/opinion/the-limits-of-american-realism. html.

An unapologetic great power-centric order would embrace value-free spheres of influence. Some believe that this is the Manichean choice that confronts the United States in Europe and Asia and that no acceptable middle ground exists on which Russia and the West, or China and the United States, can each see their vital interests upheld

Simply put, American power, both relative and absolute, is insufficient to underwrite the order as it is currently conceived.

while the rules and institutions of a shared order persist. There is now a tragic degree to which this has become a reality. For the foreseeable future, the U.S.-Russian relationship will be adversarial and the potential for cooperation or engagement extremely small. In order for relations to stabilize, some form of settlement must come into place concerning Ukraine. And that may take a while.

The current confrontation is not only likely to be the new normal, it is also certain to continue as long as Putin is in power. There is no deal to be made with him for two reasons. First, there is a broad political consensus in Washington that, after interference in the 2016 elections, Putin is de facto beyond the pale, and any condominium with him would be tantamount to betrayal. The second is more practical: Congressional sanctions passed in July 2017 make the confrontation structural, and it is rather difficult to see any scenario in which these sanctions are lifted absent Putin's departure. Even if the executive branch were so inclined, Congress has dramatically curtailed its ability to make any deals with Russia. For much of the policy establishment, the confrontation with Russia is, if not personal, highly personalized when it comes to Vladimir Putin.

However, Washington can begin thinking about how to position itself in such a way as to avoid repeating this same tragic cycle after Putin's departure. Were he to stay, the problem would remain much the same. U.S. policymakers need

to take heed not to indulge in some fantasy that a new Russian leader, or elite power structure, will be willing to redefine how Russia conceives of its security. Russia not only should be constrained, but also dealt with — and the only effective way to strike the necessary balances will be through statecraft rather than missionary confrontation.

Absent a change in approach, the same fate will befall U.S.-Chinese relations, as many in Washington prepare for a confrontation with Beijing over its regional and global ambitions. From the perspective of the missionary mindset, China too has sinned, by failing to liberalize as its economic power grew and refusing to behave "responsibly" in the international system — code for not behaving like a classical great power.[59] The real complaint is that American missionary expectations have been unfulfilled: China is not simply "joining" the U.S.-led order as it stands, subordinating its own objectives, and interpretations of its interests, to American and Western models. Such an outcome should never have been expected. China's history, size, and self-conception mean that it ultimately wants no one but itself to determine at least the Asian regional order.

This is not, again, to suggest that the United States must accede to China's view of the regional order, and quietly accept any behaviors Beijing undertakes. Some Chinese provocations would be incompatible with central rules and norms of any meaningful international order: paramilitary aggression against the Senkaku Islands, military adventurism to claim sovereignty in the South China Sea, an unprovoked attack against Taiwan, or accelerated economic espionage and coercive industrial policies against outside companies. The United States should lead multilateral processes to deter such actions (though not always with military threats, even in the case of military aggression). But such negotiations can unfold in a mutually respectful dialogue between two great powers who retain fundamental respect for each other's prerogatives.

The risk today is that the U.S. national security dialogue on China is becoming increasingly overheated and theological, nominating China for the role of ideologically motivated militarist. The new *National Defense Strategy* already paints China as having a sinister, shared vision with Russia, to "shape a world consistent with their authoritarian model."[60] If the result is a replay, in different terms,

of the refusal to take Russian interests seriously that unfolded after 1991, then China, like Russia, will be likely to break with the rules of the post-war order in a more overt manner. The conflict will then become total and ideological, just as it has with Russia. Yet, if the United States has failed to cow or isolate Russia, the prospects for doing so with China are virtually nonexistent.

The truly dangerous dynamic here does not reflect the cliché of the Thucydides trap — the idea of an explosive relationship between a rising and an established power.[61] It is rather the reality of transforming any broad and nuanced strategy into a religion. When a predominant power, convinced of its indispensability, and viewing the world through the lens of moralism rather than statesmanship, holds so tightly to an immovable reading of shared rules and norms, it can provoke unnecessary opposition and perhaps even trigger a disaster.[62]

Correcting America's approach to these two rivals would require seeking a serious, renewed dialogue with Moscow and Beijing about what a stable regional order would look like. It would also mean taking seriously each country's interests and ambitions rather than dismissing their legitimacy under the shadow of global rights and wrongs. This new approach would lay down a few hard and fast rules designed to sustain the fundamentals of a rule-based order — prohibitions on outright territorial aggression, destructively predatory economic policies, and actions taken to disrupt and fracture the politics and societies of other states — but otherwise it would be open to compromise and half-measures.

At the same time, it would work even more energetically to gain truly multilateral support for that narrower set of rules. America would need to acknowledge that arguments about how to achieve a shared goal (such as Iranian or North Korean

59   For two powerful recent arguments to this effect, see Kurt M. Campbell and Ely Ratner, "The China Reckoning: How Beijing Defied American Expectations," *Foreign Affairs* 97, no. 2 (March/April 2018), http://heinonline.org/HOL/LandingPage?handle=hein.journals/fora97&div=37&id=&page=; and Hal Brands, "The Chinese Century?" *National Interest*, Feb. 19, 2018, http://nationalinterest.org/feature/the-chinese-century-24557.

60   *National Defense Strategy, 2018.*

61   Graham Allison, *Destined for War: Can America and China Escape Thucydides' Trap?* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2017). For good critiques, see Rosemary Foot, "Two Differing Views on U.S.-China Conflict Find Common Ground in Their Solutions," and Neville Morley, "History Can't Always Help to Make Sense of the Future," both in "Book Review Roundtable: Is War with China Coming? Contrasting Views," *Texas National Security Review*, Nov. 1, 2017, https://tnsr.org/roundtable/war-with-china-contrasting-visions/.

62   That model reflects a more accurate reading of the cause of war in Thucydides anyway — with the United States playing the role of the hubristic, overconfident Athens, gathering distant allies and goading Sparta into a war it neither desired nor sought. For a critique of the notion as applied to China, see Arthur Waldron, "There Is No Thucydides Trap," *Straits Times*, June 18, 2017, http://www.straitstimes.com/opinion/there-is-no-thucydides-trap.

denuclearization) are not tantamount to norm violations, and cease, for the most part, trying to coerce others into favored American tactics through such tools as "secondary sanctions."[63] This fresh approach to U.S. engagement would require admitting that, increasingly, the United States will have to compromise on some of its own favored policies to get the deals it wants. A new consensus limiting Russian-style political interference, for example, is likely to require painful concessions on U.S. efforts to promote democracy abroad.

A revised strategic mindset would redouble efforts, and offer bold compromises, in order to achieve or renew bilateral arms agreements with both Russia and China. The changing military balances in Europe and Asia-Pacific call for regional security arrangements, treaties, and political agreements on behavior in global domains, such as cyber or space. A more robust American military presence should be coupled with stabilizing initiatives in conventional arms control and measures to drive the competition into stable deterrence rather than security dilemmas and spiral decision-making models, which Washington can doubtfully afford to sustain. Russia's break with the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty may mean that this agreement will not survive, but Washington can only gain by looking for new ways to restrain Russian force modernization and expanded force posture in Europe.

As the single superpower with both global responsibilities and burdens and a normative vision for the international order, the United States has everything to defend, and only stands to lose from an uncontrolled competition. History offers valuable lessons here. Although the period of détente (1969–1979) failed to stop the Cold War, in part because of unrealistic expectations that it would do exactly that, it had a profoundly stabilizing effect at a time of transition in the global balance of power. This period led to formal arms control agreements, recognition of political borders, military confidence-building measures, and economic and cultural exchange along with an acknowledgment of the importance of human rights.[64] The Soviet Union sought to reduce tension on its Western borders at the same time as the

United States was dealing with an objective loss of global superiority. Then, as now, the policy establishment was looking to find its footing in the face of American decline in its predominance in both military and political spheres. Détente didn't last, but it was profoundly beneficial for Washington, and by engaging Moscow, it set in motion a host of processes that would ultimately lead to the Soviet Union's demise.

Today, similar forms of political, economic, and military agreements can be part of the recipe for reducing tensions with Russia and structuring the competition such that the United States retains leadership without eroding the order — that is, if the settlements become a way of reestablishing the order rather than forsaking it.[65] The challenge with this time period, unlike 1980, which saw the end of détente and a reinvigorated Cold War competition at a time of Soviet stagnation, is that history seems unlikely to repeat itself. Setting aside Washington's problems with Russia, rogue states, and international terrorism, China alone has the range of power and ambitions to confront the United States with a competition it would struggle to resource and sustain. Hence the United States should revisit stabilizing periods like détente, when deals and compromises were made with adversaries, and restore that element of pragmatism to its strategic outlook.

In sum, then, a new U.S. approach to international affairs would include treating Russia and China with a degree of political respect and legitimacy, rather than as miscreants opposed to the true and right vision of the future. This does not mean that the United States should abandon its efforts to hold them to some standard. Quite the contrary. It is *only* by reining in its absolutism and behaving in a more multilateral and flexible fashion that the United States is likely to gain the global support it needs to sustain the most essential rules of the post-war order. And it is only by addressing the rising grievances of these two potentially dangerous revisionist powers — rather than simply declaring those grievances illegitimate — that the United States will begin to create the basis on which China and Russia themselves feel able to compromise.

At the same time, to succeed in the intensifying

competition now underway, the United States will have to face the reality that if it does not get its own economic, political, and social house in order, it will be increasingly weak and vulnerable regardless of its military prowess. Americans have now elected four presidents in a row who claimed that making America strong internationally meant, first and foremost, attending to the domestic sources of national power. Yet pressing issues like exploding debt, entitlement reform, a crumbling infrastructure, criminal justice reform, climate change, political polarization, and information security, to name a few, continue to beg for solutions. But that will require the political will to conceive of bold answers. Major progress on several of these issues would do more to set back the ideological challenge of China and Russia and reaffirm the American model as the one to emulate, than any conceivable addition to the defense budget.

The strategic moment, in other words, demands a lighter and more flexible touch abroad combined with bold action at home. Left unattended, however, the missionary mindset of U.S. foreign policy is likely to drive the nation in precisely the opposite direction.

America's experience in creating and then managing the post-World War II international order has repeatedly disproven the idea that it must choose between appeasement and war, or between value promotion and compromise. In his seminal 1961 speech, John F. Kennedy rejected these rigid formulations, arguing that

> each of these extreme opposites resembles the other. Each believes that we have only two choices: appeasement or war, suicide or surrender, humiliation or holocaust, to be either Red or dead. Each side sees only 'hard' and 'soft' nations, hard and soft policies, hard and soft men.

Instead, he believed that "diplomacy and defense are not substitutes for one another" and that "as long as we know what comprises our vital interests and our long-range goals, we have nothing to fear from negotiations at the appropriate time, and nothing to gain by refusing to take part in them."[66] This is the vision that America must rekindle, and it is this kind of America that is missing from the world stage. ♟

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63   Yeganeh Torbati, "Sanctions 'Overreach' Risks Driving Business from U.S.: Treasury's Lew," *Reuters*, Mar. 30, 2016, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-sanctions-jacklew/sanctions-overreach-risks-driving-business-from-u-s-treasurys-lew-idUSKCN0WW1VM; and Aaron Arnold, "Watch Out for the Blowback of Secondary Sanctions on North Korea," *Diplomat*, Apr. 28, 2017, https://thediplomat.com/2017/04/watch-out-for-the-blowback-of-secondary-sanctions-on-north-korea/.

64   Robert G. Kaiser, "U.S.-Soviet Relations: Goodbye to Détente," *Foreign Policy* 59, no. 3 (America and the World 1980), https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russian-federation/1981-02-01/us-soviet-relations-goodbye-d-tente.

65   Steven Pifer, "Arms Control, Security Cooperation, and U.S.-Russian Relations," Brookings Institution, Nov. 17, 2017, https://www.brookings.edu/research/arms-control-security-cooperation-and-u-s-russian-relations/; and Strobe Talbott, "U.S.-Russian Arms Control Was Possible Once — Is It Possible Still?" Brookings Institution, Dec. 12, 2017, https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2017/12/12/u-s-russia-arms-control-was-possible-once-is-it-possible-still/.

66   John F. Kennedy, "Address in Seattle at the University of Washington's 100th Anniversary Program," Nov. 16, 1961, available at http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=8448.

MARCHING TOWARD A U.S.-NORTH KOREA SUMMIT: THE HISTORICAL CASE FOR OPTIMISM, PESSIMISM, AND CAUTION

Patrick McEachern

The history of denuclearization efforts on the Korean Peninsula gives reason for pessimism, caution, and optimism. Attempting to critically engage that history can help the United States narrow uncertainty, prepare for a long diplomatic process should one transpire, and perhaps learn some tactical lessons.

No man ever steps in the same river twice, for it's not the same river and he's not the same man.

–Heraclitus

"Here we go again." "It's Groundhog Day with North Korea." "We've seen this script before." These sorts of refrains have been common among North Korea watchers — and those who play them on TV — ahead of the summit slated for June 12 in Singapore between North Korea's leader, Kim Jong Un, and President Donald Trump. After significant brinkmanship over whether the meeting would take place, the on-again, off-again summit looks likely to be held as originally planned. The United States has engaged North Korea in two major denuclearization processes, not to mention separate inter-Korean and multilateral efforts, over the past quarter-century. All have failed to produce the complete, verifiable, irreversible denuclearization that the United States has sought on the Korean Peninsula.[1] Some skeptical of the bilateral summit charge that this history of failure is likely to repeat itself. Meanwhile, optimists suggest that something new in the upcoming process has opened the possibility of a different outcome.[2]

History can be a useful guide to avoid repeating mistakes, but events are rarely as neat and tidy as a sound bite seems to suggest. The history of nuclear negotiations between Washington and Pyongyang, as well as multilateral discussions such as the six-party talks, is far more complex than most voices in the media and policy circles acknowledge. This history offers cause for pessimism, optimism, and caution about current prospects for denuclearization.[3]

Pessimism: Denuclearization Is Harder Now Than During Past Efforts

Many of those who are pessimistic about the Trump-Kim summit point to failed efforts to achieve complete, verifiable, irreversible denuclearization and ask why this time should be any different. In one sense, the pessimists are not pessimistic enough. North Korea's nuclear program has advanced significantly since the last major diplomatic efforts at denuclearization. In the intervening years, the possibility of denuclearization has become even more distant. This section contrasts the situation today with the state of the North Korean nuclear threat when the 1994 Agreed Framework and the joint statement of the 2005 six-party talks were reached. Seen through that lens, contentions that history may repeat itself underestimate the current challenge.

In Brief: The Agreed Framework and Six-Party Talks

There have been two major diplomatic efforts to eliminate North Korea's nuclear program.

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1   The effort toward complete, verifiable, irreversible denuclearization is known as CVID.

2   The South Korean government has been at the forefront of the optimists, arguing that this round of summits could portend a different outcome than past attempts. See its website dedicated to the series of summits — called Peace, A New Start — and articles such as that by Xu Aiying and Sohn JiAe, "Inter-Korean Summit Makes Headlines Around the World," *Peace, A New Start: 2018 Inter-Korean Summit*, May 1, 2018, http://www.korea.net/Government/Current-Affairs/National-Affairs/view?affairId=656&subId=640&articleId=158382. For a critique arguing that history suggests greater pessimism around the summits, see Bruce Klingner, "Nice Try, North Korea and South Korea, But Your Pledges Are Airy, Empty Confections," *Los Angeles Times*, May 1, 2018, http://www.latimes.com/opinion/op-ed/la-oe-klingner-north-korea-declaration-is-mostly-empty-promises-20180501-story.html.

3   "Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula" is standard language that has been used throughout post-Cold War diplomacy with North Korea on its nuclear program. It is in the 1992 "Joint Declaration of South And North Korea on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula," the 1994 Agreed Framework, the 2005 "Joint Statement of the Fourth Round of the Six-Party Talks," and the 2018 Panmunjom Declaration, among other agreements. As operationalized in these agreements and pursued in practice, the phrase refers to the elimination of North Korean facilities that can produce fissile materials for nuclear weapons and verified removal of any nuclear weapons on the peninsula.

In the early 1990s, North Korea initiated an international crisis by taking provocative steps toward developing a nuclear bomb: removing fuel rods from its five-megawatt plutonium reactor at Yongbyon and initiating its withdrawal from the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, in which North Korea had legally pledged to forego nuclear weapons. The United States engaged Pyongyang in an effort to resolve the crisis, and the two sides signed the Agreed Framework in 1994. In short, North Korea agreed to freeze its nuclear program in exchange for energy and economic assistance, security guarantees, and political promises, including specific efforts toward the normalization of bilateral relations.[4]

The Agreed Framework faced challenges in implementation, however, and collapsed in late 2002 and early 2003. The United States, North Korea, South Korea, Japan, China, and Russia initiated the six-party talks later in 2003.[5] Seeking to distinguish between the 1994 framework's temporary freeze on nuclear production and a more comprehensive and lasting goal, the six countries announced, after two years and four rounds of negotiations, that

His is not a start-up business seeking proof of concept but, rather, an established enterprise with a demonstrated ability to detonate increasingly powerful nuclear weapons.

they "unanimously reaffirmed that the goal of the Six-Party Talks is the verifiable denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula in a peaceful manner."[6] The 2005 joint statement of those talks laid out the basic principles of a nuclear deal that would be refined more specifically in a pair of implementation agreements two years later. In late 2008, however, the participating countries reached an impasse over important technical verification

issues. Whereas in 1994 North Korea had pledged to freeze its nuclear program, in 2005 Pyongyang promised to abandon all nuclear weapons and programs in exchange for energy and economic assistance, security guarantees, normalized diplomatic relations, and negotiations toward a "permanent peace regime."[7] Although the two sets of negotiations were different in important ways, the broad structure was consistent: North Korea promised to move away from nuclear weapons in exchange for a similar basket of incentives.

Denuclearization Today

The North Korean nuclear program of 2018 is not the nuclear program of 1994, when Washington and Pyongyang negotiated the Agreed Framework. It is not even the nuclear program of 2005, when the six-party talks produced its joint statement. Since these diplomatic milestones, Pyongyang's nuclear development and long-range missiles have advanced in major ways, crossing a series of critical technical barriers. These programs have grown significantly more difficult to reverse since earlier denuclearization efforts were underway.

Since the 1990s, North Korea's nuclear weapons program has grown from a theoretical capability to an actual one. North Korea's first nuclear test occurred in 2006, a year after the joint statement of the six-party talks was released. Before this, the North Korean leadership could not be confident that their efforts to build a nuclear bomb would actually work. Indeed, the North's first nuclear test produced more of a whimper than a bang. The explosion yielded less than one kiloton, prompting a variety of theories about why it had been a low-yield test. As such, the fundamental challenge for these earlier negotiations was to *prevent* North Korea from building a nuclear weapon and to persuade Pyongyang to roll back its attendant programs. These efforts resembled something like the more recent nuclear negotiations between Iran and the five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council and Germany in the sense that American negotiators and their allies could capitalize on North Korea's uncertainty about whether it could succeed in building a bomb and crossing the nuclear-weapons threshold.

Today, by contrast, North Korean leader Kim Jong

Un controls a nuclear arsenal that has benefited from six tests. His is not a start-up business seeking proof of concept but, rather, an established enterprise with a demonstrated ability to detonate increasingly powerful nuclear weapons. After the 2006 nuclear test produced a lower-than-expected yield, then-leader Kim Jong Il ordered a second test, in 2009, that erased any doubt about North Korea's basic ability to build and detonate a nuclear weapon.[8] North Korea's third nuclear test, in 2013, came amid Pyongyang's pronouncements that the test provided critical information that would help the regime's effort to miniaturize a nuclear weapon in order to mount it on a missile. The third test may also have utilized uranium in its bomb design. The regime's previous tests used plutonium, thus, testing weapons using this second path to the bomb expanded its capabilities. North Korea's fourth test, in 2016, demonstrated the country's thermonuclear capability for the first time.[9] The fifth and sixth tests, in 2016 and 2017 respectively, sought bigger yields still.[10] Rather than preventing North Korea from crossing the nuclear-weapons threshold, the denuclearization challenge has become much harder: Somehow, the genie must be put back in the bottle.

Meanwhile, North Korea has steadily advanced its ability to develop, test, and field operational ballistic missiles that can deliver nuclear weapons. Critically, the regime has diversified its ballistic missile force to create a survivable second-strike capability, thereby securing an essential element to deter its primary adversary, the United States.[11] In 1994, North Korea was capable of striking some American bases and allies but not the U.S.

homeland. That year — the same year Washington and Pyongyang signed the Agreed Framework — North Korea began producing its Nodong medium-range ballistic missile and fielded the missile the following year. The Nodong could strike South Korea and most of Japan but still not the United States.[12] In 1998, North Korea flight-tested its Taepo Dong-1 prototype, which flew over Japan, rattling the Japanese government in particular and accelerating Tokyo's cooperation with Washington on missile defense. The flight test ushered in a new round of missile diplomacy between the United States and North Korea. Pyongyang maintained a unilateral moratorium on long-range-missile flight tests for six years, refraining from launching another Taepo Dong rocket until 2006.[13] As the two sides negotiated the Agreed Framework and, later, the joint statement of the six-party talks, North Korea did not have the capability to hit the United States with its missiles.

Today, however, North Korea is perilously close to having a demonstrated delivery vehicle to strike the continental United States with nuclear weapons. Since coming to power in December 2011, Kim Jong Un has ordered scores of missile launches, including long- and short-range ballistic missiles. Both long- and short-range ballistic missiles can test technologies used in the development of intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs).[14] In 2017, North Korea conducted three ICBM flight tests. After the third test, Kim Jong Un declared his nuclear deterrent complete.[15] While this claim was probably premature,[16] Kim expressed confidence that his country had attained a complete package of miniaturized nuclear weapons and survivable

4   For a more thorough overview of the 1994 Agreed Framework, see Kelsey Davenport, "The U.S.-North Korean Agreed Framework at a Glance," *Arms Control Association*, August 2017, https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/agreedframework.

5   For an overview of the six-party talks, see Kelsey Davenport, "The Six-Party Talks at a Glance," *Arms Control Association*, July 2017, https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/6partytalks.

6   Department of State, "Joint Statement of the Fourth Round of the Six-Party Talks," Sept. 19, 2005, https://www.state.gov/p/eap/regional/c15455.htm.

7   "Joint Statement of the Fourth Round of the Six-Party Talks."

8   For more on North Korea's first nuclear test, see Emma Chanlett-Avery and Sharon Squassoni, *North Korea's Nuclear Test: Motivations, Implications, and U.S. Options* (Washington: Congressional Research Service, Oct. 24, 2006), https://fas.org/sgp/crs/nuke/RL33709.pdf.

9   Thermonuclear weapons, also known as hydrogen bombs, utilize fusion and can produce a more powerful blast, while atomic weapons utilize fission. For a short and readable article on the difference and its application to North Korea, see Stephanie Pappas, "Hydrogen Bomb vs. Atomic Bomb: What's the Difference?" *Live Science*, Sept. 22, 2017, https://www.livescience.com/53280-hydrogen-bomb-vs-atomic-bomb.html.

10   "North Korea Nuclear Tests: What Did They Achieve?" *BBC*, Sept. 3, 2017, http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-17823706.

11   Patrick McEachern, "North Korea's Nuclear Doctrine Under Kim Jong Un," APLN Policy Brief, Dec. 21, 2017, http://www.a-pln.org/_mobile/briefings/briefings_view.html?seq=1030.

12   "No Dong 1," Center for Strategic and International Studies Missile Defense Project, accessed June 1, 2018, https://missilethreat.csis.org/missile/no-dong/.

13   Alex Wagner, "Albright Visits North Korea; Progress Made on Missile Front," *Arms Control Association*, November 2000, https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2000_11/albrighttalks. "North Korea Test-Fires Several Missiles," *New York Times*, July 4, 2006, https://www.nytimes.com/2006/07/04/world/asia/04cnd-korea.html.

14   The U.N. Security Council has criticized North Korea's ballistic missile development and demanded the suspension of "all ballistic missile related activity" in a series of resolutions since North Korea's 2006 Taepo Dong-2 launch. U.N. Security Council Resolution 1695, adopted in 2006, demands that North Korea suspend "all ballistic missile related activity." The Security Council's demand is not limited to missiles of a certain range given the ability to test components of long-range missiles using short-range launches. Likewise, the resolutions' wording effectively demands the cessation of rocket launches configured as a space launch for satellites as these launches also can be used to test and refine technologies for long-range ballistic missiles.

15   Korean Central News Agency, "Kim Jong Un Guides Test Fire of ICBM Hwasong 15," Nov. 29, 2017.

16   Kim's claim is probably premature given some additional technical hurdles and unfinished business on some systems such as the GORAE-class ballistic missile submarine.

delivery vehicles that could reach the continental United States.[17]

The main components of North Korea's fissile material production have also shifted significantly. In the leadup to the 1994 Agreed Framework, North Korea had only one fissile material production site: the plutonium program at Yongbyon. The site was known, surveilled, and, in theory, could have been verifiably frozen with reasonable confidence. By the time of the six-party talks, the United States was aware of a nascent and covert North Korean uranium enrichment program that violated its Agreed Framework pledges. The CIA publicly disclosed to Congress its judgment that North Korea had started this program in 2000.[18] Other assessments date the origins of Pyongyang's uranium enrichment as early as 1996.[19] Regardless of whether Pyongyang started its uranium enrichment program then or in 2000, plutonium

than its plutonium program in absolute terms. One unclassified research project estimated that by 2020, North Korea's only five-megawatt reactor at Yongbyon could produce 14 nuclear weapons from plutonium, while two centrifuge plants could produce about 56 weapons from uranium.[20] Put another way, the North Korean uranium enrichment program produces far more fissile material for nuclear weapons today, and its higher annual output is central to the growth of Pyongyang's arsenal over time.

When it comes to trying to negotiate verifiable denuclearization, the distinction between the plutonium and uranium routes to the bomb is critical. In 2010, North Korean officials showed the uranium enrichment facility at Yongbyon to a prominent U.S. nongovernmental delegation. The manner and speed of the facility's construction suggested strongly that this was not the country's first enrichment facility.[21]

Commercial satellite imagery and other publicly available sources offer no proof of a third enrichment facility, but that should not provide much comfort. It is not clear how many uranium enrichment sites North Korea has because they are easier to hide than their plutonium counterparts.

This should concern American policymakers as verification was the shoal upon which the six-party talks foundered.[22] During those talks, Washington wanted to conduct soil and nuclear waste samples to verify North Korea's claims; Pyongyang refused. The "Second Phase Actions for the Implementation of the September 2005 Joint Statement," agreed to on Oct. 3, 2007, outlined what would be required of North Korea to disable its five-megawatt reactor. The agreement did not explicitly require North

> **It is not clear how many uranium enrichment sites North Korea has because they are easier to hide than their plutonium counterparts.**

production was North Korea's sole route to the bomb in 1994 and its primary but not exclusive nuclear production capability in 2005.

Today, North Korea acquires substantially more fissile material for weapons from its well-established uranium enrichment facilities than it does from its plutonium program. Pyongyang's uranium program also has more growth potential

Korea to allow these samples to be taken but stipulated that disablement would proceed in a "verifiable" manner.[23] Washington interpreted this to mean it could use sampling to verify Pyongyang's actions under the second-phase agreement before it proceeded. Pyongyang, however, saw things differently: It wanted to save the issue of sampling for a "third phase" agreement, at which point it could either demand additional concessions and use the sampling issue as a bargaining chip, or not agree to sampling at all.[24] Verification is, of course, central to any sustainable agreement. And the devil is in the details. These kinds of technocratic aspects, which political leaders tend not to ponder, have derailed high-level, multiyear diplomatic initiatives. Diplomatic efforts could again sink over critical technical details if negotiators do not learn from the past.

While Kim Jong Il may have hoped during negotiations in the 1990s and again during the six-party talks that his and his father's decades-long efforts to develop nuclear weapons would someday provide a deterrent against U.S. invasion, his son, Kim Jong Un, has this capability. In the past, North Korea's nuclear program was aspirational. Today, it is an active part of the country's national defense. Before, verifying a deal focused primarily on a plutonium program was difficult. Now, the prominence of the uranium program in addition to the plutonium program makes the challenge even greater. It is not the same river.

Caution: New Leaders on Both Sides

In addition to the technical advancements in Pyongyang's nuclear program since the last two major diplomatic efforts, important political changes have taken place in North Korea and the United States. During the Agreed Framework negotiations and the six-party talks, Kim Jong Il was effectively at the helm. Although North Korea's founder and charismatic leader, Kim Il Sung, was in power until his death in 1994, and famously held important roles such as receiving former President

Jimmy Carter in Pyongyang amid the crisis, Kim Il Sung told a Western reporter that by 1992 his son was running the country.[25] Kim Il Sung tapped his son as his successor in 1980 and gradually shifted power to him. As such, the Agreed Framework and six-party talks were, for North Korea, essentially a Kim Jong Il production. Today, Kim Jong Un is in charge and his personal stamp can be seen on nuclear diplomacy.

Kim the youngest differs substantially in ruling style and approach from his father, something that matters greatly for the current round of summits. Kim Jong Il was an introverted micro-manager. Living in the shadow of his larger-than-life father, North Korean founder Kim Il Sung, Kim Jong Il closely controlled process and avoided public appearances. While Kim Il Sung was known for his charisma, Kim Jong Il could not even manage to give the annual new year's day address. Instead, he instituted a policy of publishing the annual statement as an editorial in three newspapers.[26] Imagine if an American president decided to forego the annual State of the Union address and instead published his views on the White House website. That would be less of a break from past precedent than Kim Jong Il's decision. Kim Jong Il gave one — or possibly two — extremely short speeches in his entire tenure. He was also absent from public view during the first three years of his formal reign, citing the traditional mourning period after his father's death.

Kim Jong Un is a different kind of leader. He has explicitly modeled himself after his still-revered grandfather rather than his relatively unpopular father.[27] He has brought back the annual new year's day address. He appears in public with his wife, Ri Sol Ju, something Kim Jong Il had avoided. Kim Jong Un has also resurrected the Korean Workers' Party, restarting the long-defunct party congresses. Tapes smuggled out of North Korea in the 1980s showed Kim Jong Il privately expressing insecure views of his personal stature that are consistent with his psychological profile.[28] In contrast, Kim Jong Un exudes confidence and has shown himself ready to personally lead the current round of

17   Korean Central News Agency, "Kim Jong Un Guides Test Fire of ICBM Hwasong 15," Nov. 29, 2017.

18   CIA, Untitled Unclassified Estimate, Nov. 19, 2002, GALE Document Number KQUSOP990053924. Former Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf later noted that Pakistani nuclear scientist A. Q. Khan delivered centrifuges to North Korea in 2000, as recounted by Sigfried Hecker, former director of the Los Alamos National Laboratory. Siegfried S. Hecker, "What I Found in North Korea: Pyongyang's Plutonium Is No Longer the Only Problem," Foreign Affairs, Dec. 9, 2010, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/northeast-asia/2010-12-09/what-i-found-north-korea?page=show.

19   A prominent North Korean defector claimed that a decision to enrich may have been made as early as 1996, and the South Korean foreign minister asserted the same. North Korean imports of the critical components followed in subsequent years. Kim Yong Hun, "North Korea Obtained HEU from Pakistan," DailyNK, Aug. 11, 2010, http://english.dailynk.com/english/read.php?cataId=nk02200&num=6680. Choe Sang-hun, "North Korea Started Uranium Program in 1990s, South Says," New York Times, Jan. 6, 2010, https://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/07/world/asia/07korea.html.

20   For an excellent technical discussion, see David Albright, "North Korea's Nuclear Capabilities: A Fresh Look," Aug. 9, 2017, http://isis-online.org/isis-reports/detail/north-koreas-nuclear-capabilities-a-fresh-look-power-point-slides/10. Albright cautions that these estimates are "rough" and require a variety of informed assumptions about North Korea's nuclear operations, bomb design, and other variables. Numbers cited here are rounded to the nearest whole nuclear weapon and reflect median estimates for "weapons equivalents."

21   Siegfried S. Hecker, "Nuclear Developments in North Korea," (Stanford University: Center for International Security and Cooperation, Mar. 20, 2012), https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/HeckerPBNCfinal.pdf.

22   Condoleezza Rice, No Higher Honor (New York: Crown Publishers, 2011).

23   Department of State, "Second-Phase Actions for the Implementation of the September 2005 Joint Statement," Oct. 3, 2007, https://2001-2009.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2007/oct/93217.htm.

24   Choe Sang-hun, "North Korea Limits Tests of Nuclear Site," New York Times, Nov. 12, 2008, https://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/13/world/asia/13korea.html.

25   Kim Hakjoon, Dynasty: The Hereditary Succession Politics of North Korea (Stanford, CA: Walter Shorenstein Asia-Pacific Research Center, 2015), 101.

26   Patrick McEachern, Inside the Red Box: North Korea's Post-Totalitarian Politics (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 43–44.

27   Andrei Lankov, "NK's Founding Father, Kim Il-Sung," Korea Times, Apr. 17, 2016, http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/opinon/2016/04/638_202760.html.

28   Barbara Demick, "Secret Tape Recordings of Kim Jong Il Provide Rare Insight into the Psyche of his North Korean Regime," Los Angeles Times, Oct. 27, 2016, http://www.latimes.com/world/asia/la-fg-kimtapes-snap-20161026-story.html.

nuclear diplomacy through a series of summits with South Korea, China, and the United States.

It is natural and appropriate to look to the history of U.S.-North Korean and multilateral denuclearization efforts for insights into the upcoming talks. First, however, one must consider whether Kim Jong Un is following his father's playbook. On the critical issue of his ruling style, Kim Jong Un has parted ways with his father. It stands to reason, then,[29] that his priorities and methods concerning nuclear diplomacy may not be a carbon copy of his father's approach. Kim Jong Un proposed summit diplomacy with Trump, rather than having lower-level officials work toward a possible capstone summit by hashing out the details first. The younger Kim has taken the political risk upon himself and made it more difficult to blame subordinates for possible diplomatic failure. Leaders are always important in high-stakes diplomacy, but the summit approach makes their personality and predilections even more central to the outcome. The United States is only at the head of a long trail of diplomacy, and it is not at all clear that previous journeys foreshadow the current one.

On the American side, there is also a new sheriff in town. The United States negotiated the Agreed Framework and the joint statement of the six-party talks under Presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush, respectively. Their administrations had different views on diplomacy with North Korea. Senior members of the Bush administration criticized the Agreed Framework negotiated under Clinton, which suffered a number of implementation challenges, including — but not limited to — the revelation of North Korea's nascent uranium enrichment program.[30] The differences between the two U.S. administrations were stark enough that some insiders dubbed the Bush administration's approach "ABC — Anything But Clinton."[31] The

Bush administration, however, quickly shifted to its own diplomatic effort with the North Koreans after the final collapse of the Agreed Framework. This time around, there were more seats at the table, different areas of emphasis, and intra-government intrigue,[32] but two things remained constant: the basic parameters of seeking a complete and permanent denuclearization of North Korea, and recognition that this would require some reciprocal and unpopular concessions. With a few notable exceptions, the two U.S. administrations operated — at the most general level — alike.

Donald Trump fashions himself a new kind of political leader. His engagement in tit-for-tat rhetorical barbs in 2017 — such as when he threatened to bring down "fire and fury"[33] on North Korea, or when he called Kim Jong Un "little rocket man"[34] — marked an outlier for American presidential behavior. Trump's public comments about military options — including limited military strikes that could not denuclearize North Korea by force but, it was hoped, would push Kim Jong Un back to the negotiating table — prompted substantial criticism about the wisdom of such an approach.[35] Trump quickly shifted gears in 2018, however, by accepting Kim Jong Un's summit invitation, conveyed through the South Korean president. He has sent Mike Pompeo to Pyongyang twice — first as director of the CIA and secretary of state-designate and then as secretary of state — to advance the summit and secure the release of three unjustly imprisoned Americans.[36] Trump's policy tools, including carrots, such as peace regime negotiations and sanctions relief, and sticks, including renewed sanctions and military moves, remain roughly the same as those available to his predecessors. But his willingness to meet Kim Jong Un early, to call off the summit, and to recommit to it within days demonstrates the greater element of uncertainty as to how the United States will begin

and sustain a diplomatic process with the North Koreans. The men entering the river are different.

Optimism: Allies, Peace Regime, and Learning

Achieving complete, verifiable, and irreversible denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula is a tall order. Getting it on the cheap or for free is taller still. If success is framed in these terms alone, there is little room for optimism. If, however, progress is defined as concretely minimizing the North Korean nuclear threat and moving toward an ultimate goal of denuclearization in such a way that the benefits to national interests outweigh the costs of concessions, then there is room to be optimistic. In short, optimists can argue that a successful agreement is one that leaves the United States and its allies better off than they are in the current situation and on the current trajectory. The U.S.-South Korean combined approach, serious consideration of creating a peace regime, and the real possibility of learning from past agreements together provide reason to be cautiously optimistic about the way forward in U.S.-North Korean diplomacy.

The U.S.-South Korean Combined Approach

North Korea gains tactical advantage when it can split the United States from its Northeast Asian allies, specifically South Korea. The United States, South Korea, and Japan have many more shared interests and values than differences, but North Korea knows where to find natural cleavages and has traditionally sought to exploit them. North Korea has long favored bilateral diplomacy with the United States in hopes of sidelining South Korea and Japan.

Tensions in the U.S.-South Korean alliance have also challenged previous efforts to maintain a united front against North Korea. Han Sung-joo, who served as South Korea's foreign minister during the Agreed Framework negotiations, noted that then-South Korean President Kim Young-sam wanted to ensure the Americans were not "too soft" on the North Koreans. At the same time, the South Korean president did not want to raise the risk of military conflict that threatened to destroy his capital. The conservative South Korean president,

worried about his domestic political support, also needed to assure his people that the United States was closely consulting him at every turn.[37] He wanted to make sure the American approach was neither too hot nor too cold at each stage of negotiations and sought to communicate this to South Koreans. The United States and South Korea were not in lockstep during the Agreed Framework, and Seoul worried about not having direct access to the North Koreans on a matter central to its national security.

Kim Young-sam's successor, Kim Dae-jung, came from the opposite end of the South Korean political spectrum and wholeheartedly endorsed engaging North Korea. Kim Dae-jung made history with the first inter-Korean summit in 2000 — just five months before the election of George W. Bush. Kim Dae-jung's "Sunshine Policy" sought to change North Korean behavior through unconditional engagement, while Bush settled on a more confrontational approach to North Korea's objectionable actions. Alliance managers sought to keep the two sides linked, but it remained an ongoing challenge.[38]

> # The long-term consequences of the unilateral use of force in Europe at a time of Russian weakness and insecurity would only be realized years later.

Differences among allies are inevitable, but the combined approach provides reasons for optimism that this time may be different. Never before has an inter-Korean summit, let alone two, been explicitly set up ahead of a U.S.-North Korea summit. The South Korean presidential office recognizes that it cannot push North Korean denuclearization alone and has sought to influence U.S. engagement with the North Koreans as well as its own. South Korean President Moon Jae-in has met early success with balancing his policy of engaging North Korea while keeping the United States firmly invested in the process. The road is long, and it will become

29   For a more in-depth discussion of differences in ruling style and approach between Kim Jong Il and Kim Jong Un, see Patrick McEachern, "Centralizing North Korean Policymaking Under Kim Jong Un," *Asian Perspective* (forthcoming).

30   Charles Kartman, Robert Carlin, and Joel Wit, "Policy in Context: A History of KEDO, 1994–2006" (Stanford, CA: Center for International Security Cooperation and Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies, June 2012), https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/A_History_of_KEDO-1.pdf.

31   James B. Steinberg, "The Bush Foreign Policy Revolution," Brookings Institution, June 1, 2003, https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-bush-foreign-policy-revolution/.

32   Mike Chinoy, *Meltdown: The Inside Story of the North Korean Nuclear Crisis* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2008).

33   Noah Bierman, "Trump Warns North Korea of 'Fire and Fury,'" *Los Angeles Times*, Aug. 8, 2017, http://www.latimes.com/politics/washington/la-na-essential-washington-updates-trump-warns-north-korea-of-fire-and-1502220642-htmlstory.html.

34   "Trump Calls Kim Jong Un 'Little Rocket Man' on Twitter," *Los Angeles Times*, Nov. 30, 2017, http://www.latimes.com/politics/la-pol-updates-everything-president-trump-calls-kim-jong-un-little-rocket-1512093131-htmlstory.html.

35   For the most comprehensive and succinct criticism of the idea of limited military strikes, see Abraham M. Denmark, "The Myth of the Limited Strike on North Korea," *Foreign Affairs*, Jan. 9, 2018, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/north-korea/2018-01-09/myth-limited-strike-north-korea.

36   Carol Morello, Anna Fifield, and David Nakamura, "North Korea Frees 3 American Prisoners Ahead of a Planned Trump-Kim Summit," *Washington Post*, May 9, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/pompeo-north-korea-can-haverichly-deserved-opportunities-in-return-for-peace/2018/05/09/b51febfa-51a4-11e8-b00a-17f9fda3859b_story.html.

37   "Living History with Former ROK Foreign Minister Han Sung-joo," *Beyond Parallel*, Dec. 5, 2016, https://beyondparallel.csis.org/living-history-han-sung-joo/. Choe Sang-hun, "Korean Crisis Is Different This Time," *New York Times*, Aug. 3, 2009, https://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/04/world/asia/04iht-letter.html.

38   Charles L. Pritchard, *Failed Diplomacy: The Tragic Story of How North Korea Got the Bomb* (Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 2007).

even more difficult. The two sides will face tough choices and trade-offs as the North Koreans begin to articulate their core demands. Nevertheless, Washington and Seoul have gotten off to a solid start.

Peace Regime

In contrast to previous diplomatic rounds, North Korea's long-held demand to negotiate a peace treaty to replace the armistice and formally end the Korean War seems to be on the table. The Agreed Framework did not mention a peace regime or peace-treaty negotiations, but it opened the door to four-party talks —among the United States, North Korea, South Korea, and China — on these topics.[39] The Agreed Framework contained U.S. security guarantees to Pyongyang but lacked a specific and concrete quid pro quo on denuclearization and a peace regime. The 2005 joint statement promised to "negotiate a permanent peace regime on the Korean Peninsula at an appropriate separate forum."[40] The Russians convened the Northeast Asia Peace and Security Mechanism Working Group in Moscow three times. It was one of the five working groups of the six-party talks, but it did not produce concrete outcomes. The United States favored discussing a peace regime after North Korea denuclearized, and Pyongyang did not want to wait.[41] The six-party talks, in practice, produced an agreement for denuclearization in exchange for sanctions relief and aid.

Demanding that North Korea denuclearize amounts to asking it to voluntarily relinquish the world's most powerful weapons. And reminders that its nuclear development violates international law do not move Pyongyang. Likewise, sanctions relief and aid can contribute to North Korea's economy but would not supplant the security that it believes nuclear weapons provide. Declassified documents from Pyongyang's socialist-bloc allies demonstrate that, in the 1970s, North Korean leader Kim Il Sung saw peace-treaty negotiations as a means to try to reduce and ultimately end the U.S. military presence on the Korean Peninsula. One of his senior party officials told a friendly foreign delegation in 1972,

The international public sees as just and honest our proposal to conclude a peace treaty between the two Koreas, to withdraw American forces and to reduce the militaries. If we conclude a peace treaty, the Americans would have no reason to stay there.[42]

The intervening four decades have produced varying assessments of North Korea's intentions and objectives regarding peace regime negotiations. The United States will have to wait for Kim Jong Un's articulation of his specific demands to adjudicate between competing assessments. One thing, however, is fairly certain: North Korea will seek to supplant its perceived security losses from denuclearization with phased and reciprocal adjustments to the U.S. military presence on and around the Korean Peninsula.

How is this good news? Most analysts say that North Korean denuclearization is simply impossible.[43] Kim Jong Un does not want to go the way of Saddam Hussein or Muammar Gaddafi, who, lacking a nuclear deterrent, met their violent deaths after U.S.-led or -supported military operations. The peace regime issue brings to the fore difficult trade-offs and options for the highest-level decisions by elected U.S. leaders and American allies. After hearing the North Korean demands, seeking to negotiate them down, and considering the verifiable implementation measures, the United States and its allies will face a basic decision: Is the trade-off worth it at any stage?

Elected leaders may have to consider difficult adjustments to the U.S. military presence on the peninsula, such as the size and scope of military exercises, strategic asset deployment, and the nature of the permanent presence in exchange for verified, late-stage steps toward denuclearization. They may decide that whatever deal is on the table with North Korea is not worth the cost, but an acceptable deal might be laid out as well. Having North Korea's demands communicated directly from its leader to America's is superior to wading through the many contrasting assessments of what North Korea really wants.

Learning

The Trump administration has the benefit of being able to learn from the past. Secretary of State Pompeo has noted repeatedly that he has read the CIA's history of negotiations with North Korea and vowed not to repeat past mistakes. Unlike the Agreed Framework negotiators, Pompeo has historical points of reference on negotiating with North Korea about its nuclear program. One lesson is the importance of blocking North Korea from pocketing concessions. If Pyongyang can reverse its concessions, the United States and its allies must be able to do the same. This simple lesson has not been followed in earlier negotiations.

In 2007, the six parties agreed to "Initial Actions for the Implementation of the Joint Statement," which laid out in specific terms the first round of reciprocal steps to implement the 2005 agreement. North Korea pledged to disable its Yongbyon reactor, allow International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspectors to monitor the disablement, and issue a "list of all of its nuclear programs as described in the Joint Statement." The "parallel" action from the United States included removing North Korea from its list of state sponsors of terrorism, lifting sanctions imposed through the Trading with the Enemy Act, and providing an initial tranche of heavy fuel oil as energy assistance.[44] North Korea's disablement procedures were temporary, reversible, and intended to elicit further implementation protocols that did indeed come.

When the six-party talks failed in 2008 over verification issues, North Korea was in a position to expel IAEA inspectors and move to restart the Yongbyon reactor immediately, though it delayed the restart for several years. After North Korea expelled the inspectors, the United States quickly reimposed by executive order the same authorities found in the Trading with the Enemy Act,[45] and

39   James L. Schoff and Yaron Eisenberg, *Peace Regime Building on the Korean Peninsula: What's Next?* (Cambridge, MA: Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis, May 2009), 3, http://www.ifpa.org/pdf/PeaceRegimeInterimMay09.pdf.

40   "Joint Statement of the Fourth Round of the Six-Party Talks," https://www.state.gov/p/eap/regional/c15455.htm.

41   R. Michael Schiffer, "Envisioning a Northeast Asian Peace and Security Mechanism," in *Understanding New Political Realities in Seoul*, ed. L. Gordon Flake and Park Ro-byug (Washington: Maureen and Mike Mansfield Foundation, 2008), 59–78.

42   P. Urjinlhundev, "Protocols of the Talks between Mongolian and North Korean Government Delegations," Mar. 17, 1972.

43   For a sophisticated statement of this position and its implications for policy, see Sung Chull Kim and Michael D. Cohen, eds., *North Korea and Nuclear Weapons: Entering the New Era of Deterrence* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2017).

44   Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, "Initial Actions for the Implementation of the Joint Statement," Feb. 13, 2007, http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/n_korea/6party/action0702.html.

45   The White House, "Letter – Imposing Additional Sanctions with Respect to North Korea," Jan. 2, 2015, https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2015/01/02/letter-imposing-additional-sanctions-respect-north-korea.

North Korea lost out on deliveries of heavy fuel oil. The United States could not, however, reinstate North Korea on the terrorism list immediately. Once removed, relisting legally required North Korea to commit another terrorist act, and the United States did not reimpose this designation until 2017.[46] While some have argued that the United States could have relisted North Korea earlier under certain legal interpretations, the sort of "snapback" sanctions like those embedded in the Iran nuclear agreement did not exist to discourage North Korea from trying to pocket concessions in the first place. In the absence of an external

It is natural and appropriate to look to the history of U.S.-North Korean and multilateral denuclearization efforts for insights into the upcoming talks. First, however, one must consider whether Kim Jong Un is following his father's playbook.

enforcement mechanism or a broader relationship that keeps other international agreements on track, carefully crafted quid pro quos that have equal degrees of reversibility and importance can help sustain lasting agreements by maintaining the same incentive structure for both sides to continue abiding by the terms.

Learning from history also requires a balanced understanding of past events. Since writing history is the practice of selecting which past events are significant enough to merit recording, there is always room for author bias. A one-sentence history of North Korea-related nuclear negotiations could simply note that no effort has achieved North Korea's complete denuclearization. At this most

basic level, American and allied negotiators failed to meet their core objective. If one delves more deeply, however, the history quickly becomes more complex.

Both nuclear agreements delayed and degraded North Korea's nuclear program — and a reciprocal price was paid for these concessions. The Agreed Framework verifiably froze for eight years North Korea's plutonium program, which was its only fissile material production facility at the time of the negotiations. North Korea had three plutonium reactors under construction ahead of the Agreed Framework — one five megawatts, one 50 megawatts, and one 200 megawatts. The smallest of the three was the most developed, but the Agreed Framework effectively put the nail in the coffin of the other two.[47] Some point to a counterfactual to highlight the value of this nuclear agreement: "Experts estimate that without the Agreed Framework, North Korea could have hundreds of nuclear weapons at this point."[48]

But the Agreed Framework was a nuclear agreement, not a plutonium agreement, and North Korea cheated by initiating a uranium enrichment path to the bomb during the framework's shaky years of implementation. The United States provided North Korea with more than $400 million in energy assistance. South Korea and Japan contributed additional significant sums through the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO).[49] Concurrently, the United States and its international partners provided humanitarian assistance to North Korea during its late 1990s famine, which was never explicitly linked to the nuclear agreement. Critics charged that the aid propped up the regime amid its greatest existential crisis since the Korean War.[50]

Likewise, the six-party talks verifiably shut down North Korea's plutonium reactor for six years. It did not concretely address, however, the nascent but growing uranium enrichment threat. North Korea also received sanctions relief, some of which was not reversed until last year. Pyongyang was returned its unfrozen assets from a Macau bank

and, more significantly, changed its banking practices to limit America's ability to impose the same type of financial pain using the same tool.[51]

Proponents and opponents of engagement argue about what would have happened without these agreements. But counterfactuals are a dangerous analytical tool. It is impossible to know what would have happened if one historical variable had shifted. Would North Korea have more than 100 nuclear weapons today with three functioning plutonium reactors had there been no Agreed Framework? Or would the regime have collapsed under its own weight without the Western aid? It is impossible to say. Everyone has preconceived ideas and biases, but critical readers of this history who seek to genuinely learn from the past should be equally wary of counterfactuals that support or oppose preconceived ideas.

Conclusion

History is messy. Neither proponents nor opponents of the Trump-Kim summit should feel confident that history is on their side. History reveals reasons for pessimism, optimism, and caution. Attempting to critically engage the history of these nuclear negotiations can help the United States narrow uncertainty, prepare for a long diplomatic process should one transpire, and perhaps learn some tactical lessons. Given the paucity of concrete data on Kim Jong Un and his decision-making, humility in analysis is warranted. Confident statements about what the North Korean leader seeks before he tells us are misplaced. North Korea's nuclear program has advanced significantly since the last nuclear deals, but the two sides seem to be getting closer to a formula for a possible deal. Any deal — if one is indeed possible — is likely to involve difficult trade-offs for both sides. Experts can help illuminate public debate on the merits of these trade-offs, but elected leaders will ultimately need wisdom for the hard decisions ahead. 🔥

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to International Order (*Routledge: 2018*). *The views expressed in this essay do not necessarily reflect those of the Department of State or the U.S. government.*

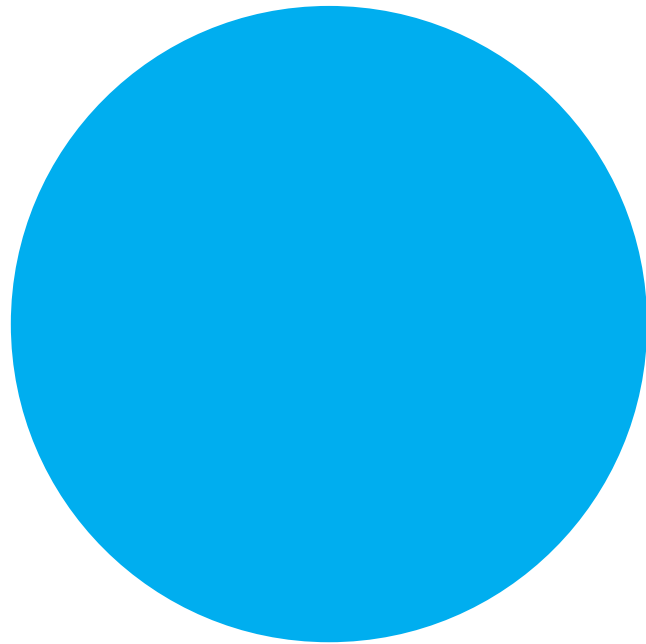46   Michael D. Shear and David E. Sanger, "Trump Returns North Korea to List of State Sponsors of Terrorism," *New York Times*, Nov. 20, 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/20/us/politics/north-korea-trump-terror.html.

47   Federation of American Scientists, "Yongbyon," March 4, 2000, https://fas.org/nuke/guide/dprk/facility/yongbyon.htm.

48   Davenport, "The U.S.-North Korean Agreed Framework at a Glance."

49   Mark E. Manyin and Mary Beth D. Nikitin, *Foreign Assistance to North Korea* (Washington: Congressional Research Service, April 2014), https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R40095.pdf.

50   For a succinct and contemporary review of competing arguments for and against aid, among other considerations, see Robert A. Manning and James Przystup, "Starve North Korea — Or Save It? Right Now We're Doing Both," *Washington Post*, June 23, 1996, https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/opinions/1996/06/23/starve-north-korea-or-save-it-right-now-were-doing-both/97ea3f5d-511b-4286-b743-be7e6ef1efa9/.

51   John Park and Jim Walsh, *Stopping North Korea, Inc.: Sanctions Effectiveness and Unintended Consequences* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Security Studies Program, August 2016), 16, https://www.belfercenter.org/sites/default/files/legacy/files/Stopping%20North%20Korea%20Inc%20Park%20and%20Walsh%20.pdf.

The Roundtable

Roundtables are where we get to hear from multiple experts on either a subject matter or a recently published book. This edition features Kori Schake's analysis of the rising threat China poses to the United States.

AMERICA FACES THE STAKES AND STYLE OF A COLD WAR IN ASIA

Kori Schake

While the Cold War era and the growing competition with China do share many similarities, China is a much weaker adversary than the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, the Cold War analogy is still useful for thinking about the threats a rising China poses to the United States.

Every American president since 1990 has emphasized the cooperative nature of relations between the great powers and the prospect that rising powers could be co-opted into the existing international order. President Donald Trump, in his 2017 *National Security Strategy*, instead placed the focus on conflict, especially with China, proclaiming that, "after being dismissed as a phenomenon of an earlier century, great power competition returned."[1] The tone is almost celebratory, a harkening back to a time when the country and its challenges seemed clearer. But are we really seeing the emergence of a new Cold War with China?

The circumstances that American leaders are facing today do bear some interesting resemblances to the Cold War, especially the mid-1950s. Now, as then, there is anxious concern about the success and durability of the U.S. economic system. People who had lived through the Great Depression and America's near-run victory over two authoritarian economic powerhouses didn't have the luxury of believing in the natural superiority of the American way of life. Americans have arguably never been as safe or as prosperous as they are now. Yet, especially with real wages stagnant and the 2008 financial collapse, Americans worry that free market liberalism is no longer competitive with the dynamism of an authoritarian China. This anxiety parallels very closely with CIA estimates from the 1950s about the Soviet economy overtaking the U.S. economy.[2] What is more, the weaknesses of the American economy are a major theme in Chinese discussions of their increasing power and global prominence.[3]

Comparing Then and Now

The two eras bear a number of similarities. The first has to do with social and political division. In the decade following the end of World War II, America's domestic political order was badly frayed — then even more so than it is now. Sen. Joseph McCarthy was holding hearings seeking to uncover traitors in the Army and State Department, writers were prevented from working because of their politics, and the military was enforcing an end to segregation of schools in the South.

Then, as now, America faced an authoritarian regime with ambitions to change the rules of the international order. In both eras, America had a tendency to overstate the strengths of its competitor and underestimate its own.[4] Then, as now, America's success was deeply reliant on holding together fractious allies whom it worried were insufficiently concerned with the threat and inadequately cooperative to provide the basis for U.S. strategy. We often romanticize the golden age of alliance commitment, so it merits remembering that in 1953, President Dwight Eisenhower and Secretary of State John Dulles concluded that "the NATO concept (was) losing its grip in Europe."[5]

The final similarity between the Cold War and the contemporary challenge that China poses is the risk that the adversary possesses "superior military capabilities in certain local areas," and that those capabilities "can be exercised without substantial risk of provoking general war."[6] In both eras, the United States has lacked confidence that its general military strength could be tailored to counter localized advantages of the adversary.

1   The White House, *The National Security Strategy of the United States*, December 2017, https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf.

2   Angus Maddsien, "Measuring the Performance of a Communist Command Economy: Evaluating the CIA Estimates for the USSR," *Review of Income and Wealth* 44, no. 3 (September 1998), https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1475-4991.1998.tb00284.x.

3   Liu He, "Overcoming the Great Recession: Lessons from China," M-RCBG Associate Working Paper no. 33, Harvard Kennedy School, 2014, https://www.hks.harvard.edu/centers/mrcbg/publications/awp/awp33.

4   James Fallows, "How America Can Rise Again," *Atlantic* (January/February 2010), https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2010/01/how-america-can-rise-again/307839/.

5   "Memorandum by the Secretary of State, September 6, 1953," *Foreign Relations of the United States 1952-1954, National Security Affairs*, vol. II, part 1, doc. 88, 457-460, https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1952-54v02p1/d88.

6   "National Intelligence Estimate 100-5-55: Implications of Growing Nuclear Capabilities for the Communist Bloc and the Free World, June 14, 1955," *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1955-1957, National Security Policy*, vol. XIX, doc. 27, p. 86, par. 31, https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1955-57v19/d27.

Yet there are important differences between the early Cold War and today's concerns about a rising China. For one thing, China is much weaker internationally than the Soviet Union was. While we may fear China's ideological appeal, it has nowhere near the soft-power magnetism that communism did, especially for states just emerging from colonial control in the post-World War II era. China has sought to build attractive narratives with its Confucius Institutes and the Belt and Road Initiative that echoes the Marshall Plan. Yet both face major hurdles after China's attempts to intimidate independent scholars overseas and its seizures of foreign ports and other infrastructure as collateral for non-performing loans to smaller foreign governments. Smaller regional powers have grown especially skittish amid suspicions that Chinese lending terms have been unduly lenient in order to create debt-for-equity swaps, giving China control over other nations' infrastructure.[7] China

has no allies to speak of and seems to want only tributaries. Its main appeal is overtly commercial, leaving it vulnerable to the collapse of its influence concurrent with any economic setbacks it might experience. China is also economically dependent on global market access in ways the Soviet Union never was. That market dependence gives the United States more tools with which to craft strategy.

But the United States, too, is different than it was during the Cold War. While Trump's *National Security Strategy* talks about great power competition, it is difficult to imagine any recent president thinking, as Eisenhower did, that if the United States went to war against the Soviet Union, he should be impeached for sending reinforcements to Europe, because the American military would be needed in the United States for "reestablishing order in American cities after the (nuclear) exchange."[8] Also, the current president

does not seem to believe in "the security of the stalemate" that produced strategic stability between great powers during the Cold War.[9] Nor do recent American presidents worry that "if we wage such a war to establish respect for free government in Europe and Asia, we won't have that type of government left ourselves."[10]

There was, especially during the early years of the Cold War, a healthy modesty about America's ability to affect the world, particularly through the use of military force. Eisenhower's Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Adm. Arthur Radford, once remarked that the United States

> can only contribute by deterring military action, thus borrowing time during which the political, economic, and psychological programs of the Free World can function. The relative strengths of the opposing Blocs will, to a large extent, be determined by the success of the non-military elements of our national security strategy.[11]

One may hear echoes of that sentiment from the current defense secretary, but less so by elected leaders in either the executive or legislative branches of government.

America has grown so powerful, and so flabby in its strategic thinking, that its presidents no longer believe, as Eisenhower did, that the nation's chief executive owes the people both security and solvency. Contemporary presidents of both parties have had their senses so dulled by the exorbitant privilege of affordable debt that they have become inured to the risk that penury may force military capitulation (as the United States imposed on Britain during the 1956 Suez crisis).

Given these many differences between the 1950s and today, it bears asking, does the Cold War analogy do more harm than good? No.

Even with all these variations on the theme, the Cold War analogy is still useful for thinking about the threats a rising China poses to the United States. The comparison helps give a sense of proportion to what America faces. Identifying China as an adversary clarifies U.S. strategic thinking on the matter and suggests policy courses of action commensurate to the challenge. The most vital challenge in this regard is recognizing the

value of friendships and alliance relationships that allow the United States to share the burden of a long struggle and foreclose assets to its adversary. The comparison also suggests the magnitude of effort that will be required, over an extended period of time, to preserve U.S. autonomy. And not just governmental effort, although that, too, will need to be much more serious and coordinated than it has been since the collapse of America's Cold War adversary. It will also require civil society to mobilize its businesses and faith communities, its schools and language and family networks, and all the panoply of strengths free societies have in abundance but that the government does not control.

The Choices Facing Asia's Small States

Asia's smaller states have to worry not only whether the United States is able to repeat its previous success against a major adversary, but also whether it will choose to do so. Being the hegemon of the international order requires a state to have both the ability to set the rules and the willingness to enforce them. America's recent behavior has called both aspects of that equation into doubt. The United States currently has a president who does not appear to believe in mutually beneficial trade, and who is burning through goodwill that accrued to the United States by legitimating its power through international institutions and norms by which lesser powers have been able to participate in shaping the rules that bind the international order. Can the United States continue to set rules for other countries when its own society is so divided, and the world is in the midst of a technological revolution? Any rules that the United States sets might be perceived as predatory at a time when the president doesn't seem to subscribe to mutually beneficial trade and looks at America's allies as burdens, often treating them poorly. Furthermore, it's unclear whether Americans will be willing to enforce international order as new competitors rise, weapons of mass destruction proliferate, and the homeland comes to feel itself at risk to the same worrying degree it did during the Cold War. Asia's smaller states have fewer sentimental claims on American attention

7   Elizabeth Redden, "Confucius Controversies," *Inside Higher Education*, July 24, 2014, https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2014/07/24/debate-renews-over-confucius-institutes," "Maldives: Trouble in Paradise," *Japan Times*, Feb.13, 2018, https://www.japantimes.co.jp/opinion/2018/02/13/editorials/maldives-trouble-paradise/#.WqcL5JPFLVo.

8   "Diary Entry by the President's Press Secretary (Hagerty), February 1, 1955," *Foreign Relations of the United States 1955-1957, National Security Policy*, vol. XIX, doc. 8, p. 40, https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1955-57v19/d8.

9   "Memorandum of Discussion at the 230th Meeting of the National Security Council, Washington, January 5, 1955," *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1955-1957, China*, vol. II, doc. 2, p. 26, https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1955-57v02/d2.

10   "Memorandum of Discussion at the 257th Meeting of the National Security Council, Washington, August 4, 1955," *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1955-1957, National Security Policy*, vol. XIX, doc. 30, https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1955-57v19/d30.

11   "Memorandum from the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Radford) to the President, Washington: Military and Other Requirements for National Security, Apr. 17, 1956," *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1955-1957, National Security Policy*, vol. XIX, doc. 73, https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1955-57v19/d73.

than do its long-standing allies, which claim bonds of values and shared history, making the reliability of American guarantees correspondingly paler.

Given China's economic heft and the degree to which the economies of smaller Asian states are interwoven with China's, refusing Chinese investment to curtail its influence would be prohibitively costly for these countries. They could bilaterally lash themselves to the U.S. mast or choose non-alignment, leaving them exposed to China's depredations. However, neither option offers much appeal. Alternatively, smaller powers could pursue a dual-track policy of tacit acceptance of Chinese international policies coupled with maintaining enough military power to drive up the cost of conflict to China, as Finland did in response to the Soviet Union. Probably the best option is the one that is most widespread in Asia: encouraging economic interaction while hedging against exposure by cultivating American interest and engaging in frenetic cooperation with other "rise of the rest" countries. Banding together to cascade training and equipment, demonstrate a growing sense of collective security, reduce their exposure either to U.S. abandonment or Chinese pressure, and set consensual terms for economic and political action is probably the best any of Asia's smaller countries can achieve.

What's at Stake

The Cold War comparison provides a bracing recognition that America could fail. It gives a sense of what the consequences would be of losing autonomy. For nearly forty years, the jury was out on whether the United States and its allies were winning the Cold War. That America won was a highly contingent outcome. Just because the United States overestimated Soviet power does not mean it is overestimating China's potential now. Nor does it mean — having succeeded before in overcoming all obstacles and mistakes — that the United States will remain capable of repeating that hat trick. ●

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