

A Smaller Military To Fight the War on Terror

By Charles V. Peña

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***Abstract:** The defense budget can be reduced and the U.S. military downsized because (1) the nation-state threat environment is markedly different than it was during the Cold War, and (2) a large military is not necessary to combat the terrorist threat. In fact, the Islamist terrorist threat is relatively undeterred by the U.S. military presence abroad, and U.S. forces abroad, particularly those deployed in Muslim countries, may do more to exacerbate than to diminish the threat. The arduous task of dismantling and degrading the terrorist network will largely be the task of unprecedented international intelligence and law enforcement cooperation, not the application of large-scale military force. To the extent the military is involved in the war on terror, it will be special forces in discrete operations against specific targets rather than large-scale military operations.*

The United States is in a uniquely safe geostrategic position against traditional, nation-state threats. No nearby foreign power possesses is capable of projecting power to attack the United States, while the U.S. nuclear arsenal is a powerful deterrent against any countries with long-range nuclear capability. So the United States does not need a large, conventional military to defend the homeland against nation-states. Today, the major threat to the homeland comes from transnational networks of Islamist terrorists, and in the war on terror, large-scale military operations will be the exception rather than the rule. Al Qaeda does not command a military force, and as a transnational terrorist organization, it does not have physical infrastructure and high-value targets that can be easily identified and destroyed by military force.

The military's role in the war on terror mainly involves Special Operations Forces in discrete missions against specific targets, not conventional warfare aimed at overthrowing entire regimes (such as Operation Iraqi Freedom). The rest of the war to dismantle and degrade Al Qaeda will largely be the task of unprecedented international intelligence and law enforcement cooperation. Therefore, an increasingly large defense budget—the Department of Defense projects the budget

to grow to more than \$492 billion by fiscal year 2010¹—is not necessary either to fight the war on terror or to protect America from traditional nation-state military threats.

Principal Military Threats

The U.S. military is by far and away the most dominant military force in the world. Although a strict numerical comparison does not tell the whole story because of the United States’ technological advantage, Table 1 compares various measures of military capability to illustrate the United States’ military advantage.

Table 1. Military Threat Comparison

	U.S.	Russia	China	North Korea	Iran	Syria	Cuba
ICBMs / warheads	550/1,700	635/2,622	30/20	0	0	0	0
SLBMs / warheads	432/3,168	216/1,732	1/12	0	0	0	0
Strategic bombers / warheads	114/1,100	78/624	0	0	0	0	0
Main battle tanks	7,620	22,800	7,580	3,500	1,613	4,600	900
Aircraft carriers	12	1	0	0	0	0	0
Other principal surface combatants	106	26	63	3	3	2	0
Tactical submarines	54	37	67	0	0	0	0
Long-range strike / attack	203	116	140	80	0	0	0
Tactical fighter aircraft / flying hours	3,513/189	908/20-25	1,000/180	504/<20	260/*	419/30	86/<50

* No data for flying hours, but serviceability of Iranian combat aircraft is estimated at 60-80 percent of full operational capability.

Data compiled from International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 2004–2005* (London: Oxford University Press, 2004).

Russia comes closest to being able to pose a military threat to the United States, but the Washington-Moscow relationship remains firm despite differences

¹ Department of Defense, “National Defense Budget Estimates for FY 2006,” Office of the Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller), April 2005, p. 67.

over Iraq.² Indeed, Russia now even has observer status with NATO, and in May 2002, Russia and the United States signed the Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty to reduce their strategic nuclear arsenals to between 1,700 and 2,200 warheads each by December 2012.

Even if Russia were to change course and adopt a more hostile position, it is not in a position to challenge the United States. In 2003, Russia's gross domestic product of \$1.3 trillion was little more than a tenth of the United States' \$10.9 trillion GDP.³ Although a larger share of Russia's GDP went on defense expenditures (4.9 percent vs. 3.7 percent),⁴ in absolute terms the United States outspent Russia by more than 6:1, spending \$404.9 billion. So Russia would have to devote more than 20 percent of its GDP to defense to equal the United States, which would be higher than Soviet defense spending during the height of the Cold War.

Certainly Chinese military developments bear watching. But even if China modernizes and expands its strategic nuclear force, as many military experts predict it will, the United States will retain a credible nuclear deterrent, with an overwhelming advantage in warheads, launchers, and a variety of delivery vehicles. Moreover, China does not possess the sea or airlift to be able to project its military power and threaten the U.S. homeland. According to a Council on Foreign Relations task force chaired by former secretary of defense Harold Brown:

[T]he People's Republic of China is pursuing a deliberate and focused course of military modernization but . . . it is at least two decades behind the United States in terms of military technology and capability. Moreover, if the United States continues to dedicate significant resources to improving its military forces, as expected, the balance between the United States and China, both globally and in Asia, is likely to remain decisively in America's favor beyond the next twenty years.⁵

And like Russia, China may not have the wherewithal to compete with and challenge the United States. The United States' GDP was almost eight times China's in 2003 (the last year for which there is comparative worldwide data). China spent fractionally more (3.9 percent) of its GDP on defense, but in absolute terms the U.S. defense expenditures were seven times China's. So China would have to devote one-quarter of its GDP to defense to equal the United States.

So-called rogue states such as North Korea, Iran, Syria, and Cuba are even less of a threat. Though these countries are unfriendly to the United States, none

² International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 2003-2004* (London: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 16.

³ IISS, *The Military Balance 2004-2005*, pp. 264 and 294.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 353-4.

⁵ Harold Brown, Joseph W. Prueher, and Adam Segal, *Chinese Military Power*, independent task force sponsored by Council on Foreign Relations, June 2003, p. 2.

have any real military capability to threaten or challenge vital American security interests. These four countries' collective GDP was \$590.3 billion in 2003, or less than 5.5 percent of the United States'. Military spending is even more lopsided: \$11.3 billion, less than 3 percent of the United States'.⁶

North Korea is a concern because of its nuclear weapons and ballistic-missile programs.⁷ But even if the North Koreans eventually acquire a long-range nuclear capability that could reach the United States, the U.S. strategic nuclear arsenal would continue to act as a powerful deterrent. Iran is also pursuing a ballistic-missile program and may be attempting to develop nuclear weapons, but its programs are less advanced than North Korea's. And both North Korea's and Iran's conventional military capabilities pale in comparison to those of the U.S. military.

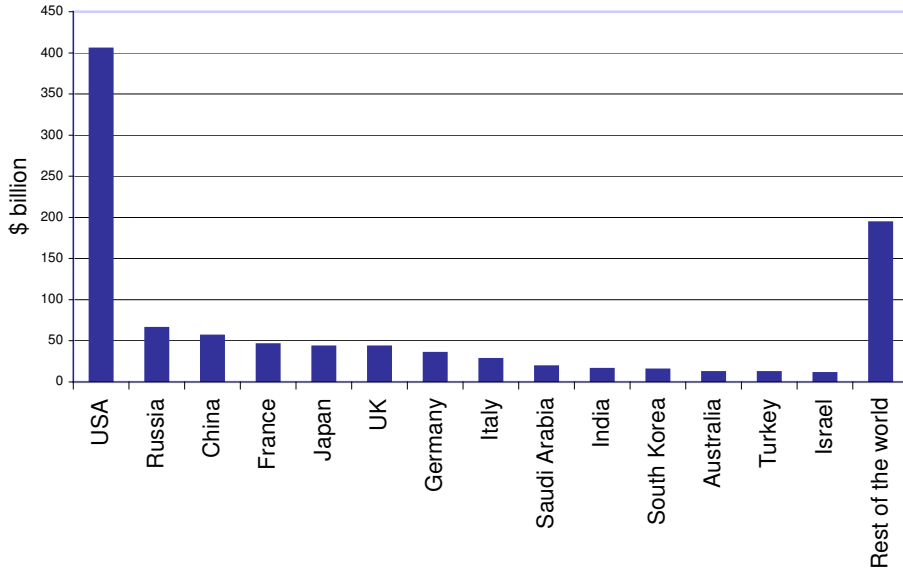
In 2003, total United States defense expenditures were \$404.9 billion (current dollars).⁸ This amount exceeded the combined defense expenditures of the next 13 countries and was more than double the combined defense spending of the remaining 158 countries in the world, as shown in Figure 1. The countries closest in defense spending to the United States were Russia (\$65.2 billion) and China (\$55.9 billion). The next five countries—France, Japan, the United Kingdom, Germany, and Italy—are all U.S. allies. In fact, the United States outspent its NATO allies nearly 2:1. And the combined defense spending of what's left of the "axis of evil" nations (North Korea and Iran) was about \$8.5 billion, or 2 percent of the United States'.

⁶ IISS, *The Military Balance 2004–2005*, pp. 264, 322-3, 302, 305, and 336, 355, 354-6. North Korea's GDP was \$22 billion, Iran's was \$128 billion, Syria's \$21.7 billion, and Cuba's \$30.2 billion; defense expenditures were \$5.5 billion for North Korea, \$3.1 billion for Iran, \$1.5 billion for Syria, and \$1.2 billion for Cuba.

⁷ The North Koreans could have as many as eight nuclear weapons. See David E. Sanger and William J. Broad, "Atomic Activity in North Korea Raises Concerns," *New York Times*, Sept. 12, 2004. And they have deployed new medium- and intermediate-range ballistic missiles with an estimated range of 2,500-4,000 kilometers based on the decommissioned Soviet R-27 SLBM (NATO designation SS-N-6) rather than cruder Scud missiles. See Joseph Bermudez, "North Korea deploys new missiles," *Jane's Defence Weekly*, Aug. 4, 2004, p. 6.

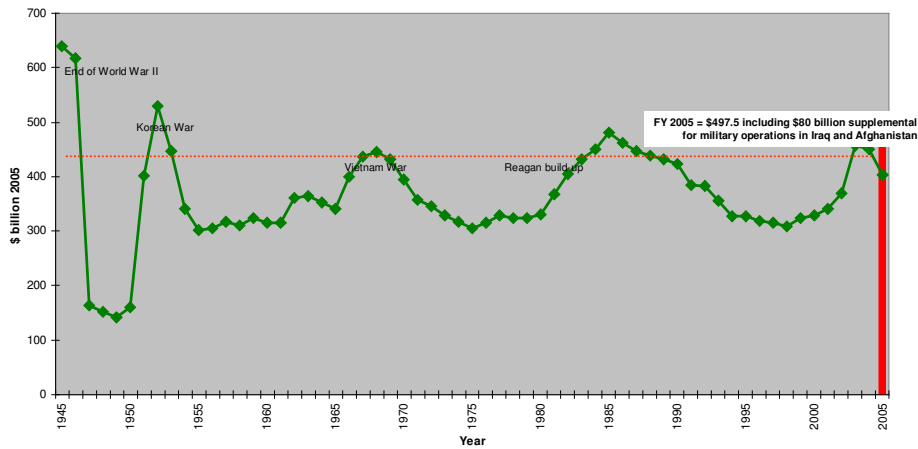
⁸ Data compiled from IISS, *The Military Balance 2004-2005*, pp. 353–8.

Figure 1. U.S. vs. Rest of the World Defense Expenditures Comparison (2003)



Such large U.S. defense spending must be put in perspective relative to today's threat environment, which is less severe than during the Cold War. The fiscal 2005 defense budget, including supplemental funding for military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, was more than \$495 billion—exceeding defense spending during the Vietnam War and the height of the Cold War during the Reagan military buildup in the 1980s, as shown in Figure 2. Yet the United States is not confronted by a strategic military challenger as it was during the Cold War. The reality is that today's environment does not require the United States to maintain a global military presence, which is a significant part of an unnecessarily large defense budget.

Figure 2. U.S. Defense Spending 1945-2005 (in billion \$)



Source: Department of Defense, “National Defense Budget Estimates for FY 2005,” Office of the Undersecretary of Defense (Comptroller), March 2004; Richard Wolf, “White House expected to seek \$80B more for wars,” *USA Today*, Jan. 24, 2005. For FY 2005, the \$497.5 billion includes \$80 billion supplemental for military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The Islamist terrorist threat is relatively undeterred by the U.S. military presence abroad: our expansive defense perimeter and forward-deployed forces did not stop the 9/11 hijackers. And U.S. forces abroad, particularly those deployed in Muslim countries, may do more to exacerbate than to diminish the terrorist threat. We know, for example, that the presence of 5,000 U.S. troops in Saudi Arabia after the 1991 Gulf War was one basis for Osama bin Laden’s hatred of the United States. So reducing the U.S. military presence around the world—particularly in the Muslim world—is likely to do more to reduce America’s profile as a target for terrorism. This is true even for U.S. forces currently in Iraq. However noble the goal of attempting to create democracy in Iraq may be, the U.S. military is nonetheless occupying an Islamic country, which is a powerful tool for Islamist radicals to incite anti-American sentiment. And despite the administration’s claims that we are fighting the terrorists in Iraq so that they cannot attack the United States, the U.S. presence in Iraq may in fact be doing more to train terrorists. According to a CIA assessment, Iraq may be a more potent training and breeding ground for Islamist terrorists than Afghanistan was in the 1980s. It serves as a real-world laboratory for militants to hone their tradecraft in an urban combat environment.⁹

⁹ Douglas Jehl, “Iraq May Be Prime Place for Training of Militants, C.I.A. Report Concludes,” *New York Times*, June 22, 2005.

The “Balancer-of-Last-Resort” Strategy

Prior to Operation Iraqi Freedom, the total number of U.S. active-duty military personnel was more than 1.4 million troops, of which 237,473 were deployed in foreign countries.¹⁰ Assuming twice as many troops need to be deployed in the United States in order to rotate those deployments at specified intervals,¹¹ then over 700,000 active-duty troops, along with their associated force structure, are required to maintain a global military presence. Since the United States does not in fact have to maintain its current worldwide deployments, U.S. security against nation-state threats can be achieved at significantly lower costs.

Instead of a Cold War–era extended defense perimeter and forward-deployed forces, today’s nation-state threat environment affords the United States the opportunity to adopt a “balancer-of-last-resort” strategy. Such a strategy would place greater emphasis on allowing countries to build regional security arrangements, even in important areas such as Europe and East Asia. In 2001, Ivan Eland argued:

The regional arrangements could include a regional security organization (such as any newly formed defense subset of the European Union), a great power policing its sphere of influence, or simply a balance of power among the larger nations of a region. Those regional arrangements would check aspiring hegemonic powers and thus keep power in the international system diffuse.¹²

Ted Galen Carpenter at the Cato Institute also argues in favor of a balancer-of-last-resort strategy:

The United States no longer faces a would-be hegemonic rival, nor is any credible challenger on the horizon. That development should fundamentally change how we view regional or internecine conflicts. In most cases such disorders will not impinge on vital U.S. interests. Washington can, therefore, afford to view them with detachment, intervening only as a balancer of last resort when a conflict cannot be contained by other powers in the affected region and is expanding to the point

¹⁰ DoD, “Active Duty Military Personnel Strengths By Regional Area and By Country,” Dec. 31, 2002.

¹¹ A 3:1 rotation ratio—i.e., three total units required to keep one unit on duty—is a realistic planning assumption for a volunteer military force. See, e.g., Douglas Holtz-Eakin, “The Ability of the U.S. Military to Sustain an Occupation in Iraq,” Congressional Budget Office testimony, Nov. 5, 2003, Appendix C: Deployment Tempo and Rotation Ratios, pp. 34–39.

¹² Ivan Eland, *Putting “Defense” Back into U.S. Defense Policy: Rethinking U.S. Security in the Post–Cold War World* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2001), p. 85.

where America's security is threatened.¹³

Stephen Walt of the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University echoes Eland and Carpenter in his argument for an offshore balancing strategy:

The final option is offshore balancing, which has been America's traditional grand strategy. In this strategy, the United States deploys its power abroad only when there are direct threats to vital American interests. Offshore balancing assumes that only a few areas of the globe are of strategic importance to the United States (that is, worth fighting and dying for). Specifically, the vital areas are the regions where there are substantial concentrations of power and wealth or critical natural resources: Europe, industrialized Asia, and the Persian Gulf. Offshore balancing further recognizes that the United States does not need to control these areas directly; it merely needs to ensure that they do not fall under the control of a hostile great power and especially not under the control of a so-called peer competitor. To prevent rival great powers from doing this, offshore balancing prefers to rely primarily on local actors to uphold the regional balance of power. Under this strategy, the United States would intervene with its own forces only when regional powers are unable to uphold the balance of power on their own.¹⁴

Therefore, instead of being a first responder to every crisis and conflict, the U.S. military would only intervene when truly vital U.S. security interests were at stake. That would allow U.S. forces to be expeditionary—i.e., mostly stationed in the United States, rather than being forward-deployed in other countries around the world. Such a posture might require prepositioning of supplies and equipment and negotiating access and base rights, but would not require large numbers of troops to be stationed in foreign countries.

Force Structure

Since the Korean War, the U.S. military has maintained a significant overseas presence (see Figure 3), which accounts for a large percentage of U.S. defense spending. If the United States adopted a balancer-of-last-resort strategy, virtually all U.S. foreign military deployments (excepting, for example, U.S. Marine Corps personnel assigned to embassies) and twice as many U.S.-based troops could be cut. Applying this rule of thumb to the various services would result in the following active duty force size:

¹³ Ted Galen Carpenter, *Peace & Freedom: Foreign Policy for a Constitutional Republic* (Washington, D.C.: Cato Institute, 2002), p. 10.

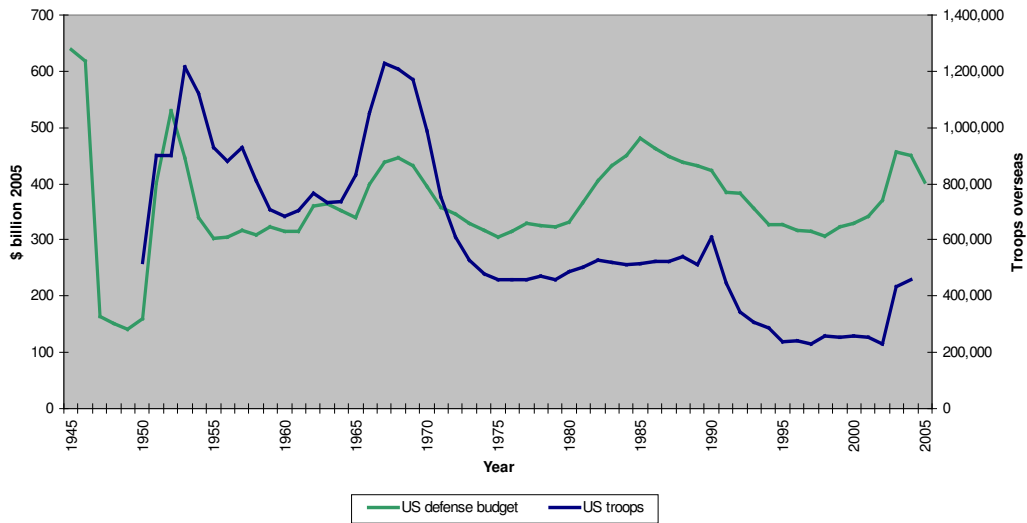
¹⁴ Stephen M. Walt, "In The National Interest," *Boston Review*, Feb./Mar. 2005; see also his *Taming American Power: The Global Response to U.S. Primacy* (Norton, 2005).

Smaller Military

- U.S. Army: 189,000 (a 61 percent reduction)
- U.S. Navy: 266,600 (a 31 percent reduction)
- U.S. Marine Corps: 77,000 (a 56 percent reduction)
- U.S. Air Force: 168,000 (a 54 percent reduction)
- Total: 699,000 (a 50 percent reduction)

Admittedly, this is a very top-level approach, assuming as it does that the current active-duty force mix is appropriate. But it is one way to assess how U.S. forces and force structure could be reduced by adopting a balancer-of-last-resort strategy.

Figure 3. U.S. Defense Budget and Overseas Troop Deployments



The fiscal 2006 Department of Defense budget request was \$419.9 billion, which does not include funding for military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. The personnel budget for active-duty forces is \$91.7 billion (out of a total of \$108.9 billion for military personnel). If forces were reduced as suggested above, the overall savings in the active-duty budget would be \$42.1 billion, and total military personnel spending would fall from \$108.9 billion to \$66.8 billion.¹⁵

¹⁵ Office of the Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller), "Military Personnel Programs (M-1)," DoD Budget Fiscal Year 2006, pp. 16 and 18. For these purposes, it is assumed that a 40-percent reduction in military personnel would yield a 40-percent cost savings. Depending on the type of personnel reduced, the actual cost savings might be marginally more or less.

If U.S. active-duty forces are substantially reduced, the associated force structure could be similarly reduced, resulting in lower operations and maintenance (O&M) costs. Using the same percentage reductions applied to active-duty forces above, the total savings would be \$44 billion and the total spent on O&M would fall from \$147.8 billion to \$103.8 billion. The savings in military personnel and O&M costs combined would be \$86.1 billion, or about 21 percent of the total defense budget. Military personnel and O&M are the two largest portions of the defense budget, at 26 percent and 35 percent, respectively, so significant reductions in defense spending can only be achieved if these costs are reduced. And the only way to reduce these costs is to downsize active-duty military forces.

Defense transformation is another reason U.S. military forces can be downsized. Technological advances act as force multipliers that allow U.S. forces to achieve equal or greater combat effectiveness with fewer troops. For example, both Operation Enduring Freedom (Afghanistan) and Operation Iraqi Freedom demonstrated that the U.S. military could engage and defeat on the battlefield the military forces of adversaries using significantly smaller force size than required in previous conflicts. If fewer soldiers are needed to fight wars, a smaller military can be a capable and effective fighting force. And although it seems counterintuitive, even a smaller U.S. military would still be able to apply the Powell Doctrine of “overwhelming force,” because of superiority achieved via advanced technology rather than sheer numbers.

Weapons Programs

Further savings could be realized by eliminating unneeded weapon systems. The Pentagon has already cancelled two major weapon systems: the Army’s Crusader artillery piece and Comanche attack helicopter, with program savings of \$9 billion and more than \$30 billion, respectively.¹⁶ But this is simply a good start. Other weapon systems that could be canceled include the F-22 Raptor, V-22 Osprey, Virginia-class attack submarine, and DD(X) destroyer.

¹⁶ Associated Press, “Army ends 20-year helicopter program,” CNN.com, Feb. 23, 2004.



An F/A-22 Raptor from Nellis Air Force Base, Nev., June 23,2004. (AP Photo/HO/U.S. Air Force photo/ Tech Sgt. Kevin J. Gruenwald)

The Air Force's F-22 Raptor fighter/bomber was originally designed for air superiority mission against advanced, futuristic Soviet tactical fighters that were never built. The F-22 is intended to replace the best air superiority fighter in the world today, the F-15 Eagle (\$55 million unit cost vs. estimated \$338 million for the F-22).¹⁷ But the U.S. Air Force has not faced an adversary that can seriously challenge it for air superiority. The U.S. Air Force flew virtually unopposed in the 1991 Gulf War, in the 1999 air war over Kosovo and Bosnia, enforcing the no-fly zones in northern and southern Iraq from 1991 to 2003, and in Operation Iraqi Freedom.

The V-22 Osprey is a tilt-rotor aircraft that takes off and lands vertically like a helicopter but flies like an airplane by tilting its wing-mounted rotors to become propellers. If carrying a payload at maximum speed to maximum range is the only or most critical mission, then the V-22 would seem to be more capable than helicopters. But the need to be able to project power from long-range or far inland is more of a convenient justification for the V-22 than a real operational requirement. Most Marine Corps ship-to-shore operations occur at distances far less than the maximum range of the V-22 (25 to 50 miles offshore vs. nearly 500 miles). And long-range inland operations would still require support from slower helicopters because the V-22 cannot carry enough heavy equipment or large amounts of supplies to support the troops it would be transporting.

¹⁷ Global Security, "F-15 Eagle Specifications," at www.GlobalSecurity.org; DoD, "SAR [Selected Acquisition Report] Program Acquisition Cost Summary," June 30, 2005.

During the Cold War, U.S. submarines were developed to counter two threats: a land war in Europe and Soviet nuclear ballistic missile submarines (SSBNs). The United States feared that the technologically advanced Soviet submarines could attack U.S. warships and convoys supporting a European war or mount an offensive nuclear strike. Accordingly, the United States built quiet, nuclear-powered attack submarines that could hunt the Soviet submarines in either scenario. But we no longer have to perform these missions, and so do not need the Virginia-class submarine. And even if China is seen as a potential future threat, it only has one deployed SSBN and five Han-class nuclear-attack submarines (compared to the U.S. Navy's fifty-four nuclear-attack submarines).¹⁸

The U.S. Navy currently has forty-four DDG-51 Arleigh Burke-class Aegis destroyers and twenty-six CG-47 Ticonderoga class Aegis cruisers in the fleet. With 91 and 122 vertical launch system (VLS) cells each, respectively, these ships provide ample capacity (over 7,000 VLS launch cells) to dedicate a substantial portion to the land-attack mission. Thus, the U.S. Navy will have formidable land-attack capabilities that obviate the need for the new DD(x) destroyer, which is designed for major wars and according to the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) “would be an exceptionally large and expensive ship to use for those [terrorism, drug smuggling, violations of economic sanctions, illegal immigration, and arms trafficking] missions.”¹⁹

Training Emphasis and Operational Doctrine

When she was the U.S. ambassador to the UN, Madeleine Albright asked then-chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Colin Powell, “What’s the point of having this superb military that you’re always talking about if we can’t use it?”²⁰ By definition, a military based on a balancer-of-last-resort strategy would be used less than the U.S. military has been used in the last two decades, because operations not germane to U.S. security would not be undertaken. Moreover, a smaller military in support of a balancer-of-last-resort strategy means that policymakers will have to weigh potential interventions very carefully. In simple terms, the U.S. military would only be used to fight wars against real threats to the United States and its core security interests. As such, U.S. troops would not need to be trained for humanitarian assistance, peacekeeping, stability, or reconstruction operations. To

¹⁸ IISS, *The Military Balance 2003-2004*, pp. 153 and 19. “China has stated that it has built two Xia-class SSBNs, each of which can carry 12 JL-1 SLBMs [submarine launched ballistic missiles]. However, reports conflict as to whether China has actually deployed two SSBNs. Most analysts estimate only one is operational (the 09-2).” Nuclear Threat Initiative, “China’s Nuclear Submarine Program,” at www.NTI.org.

¹⁹ Congressional Budget Office, *Budget Options*, p. 19.

²⁰ Colin L. Powell, *My American Journey* (New York: Random House, 1995), p. 576.

the extent that some of the skills associated with these types of operations would be necessary in a post-conflict situation, they should reside with the National Guard and Reserves, who would be called up only for wars of necessity that threaten U.S. security—not wars of choice, such as the Iraq War. But given that the military may have to be employed against terrorist threats, greater emphasis needs to be placed on counterinsurgency and urban combat training and operations.

Instead of spending hundreds of billions of dollars to maintain the current size of the armed forces and on weapons such as the F-22, V-22, Virginia-class submarines, and DD(X) destroyers, fighting the war on terrorism would be better served by investing in better intelligence gathering, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), Special Operations Forces, and language skills.

Because the terrorist threat is diffuse and decentralized, intelligence is critical to knowing who comprises the threat, analyzing disparate pieces of information to understand the nature of the threat, anticipating their next steps, and thwarting their plans. The war on terrorism requires:

- *Less emphasis on spy satellites as a primary means of intelligence gathering.* That does not mean abandoning the use of satellite imagery. Rather, it means recognizing that spy satellite images may have been an excellent way to monitor stationary targets such as missile silos or easily recognizable military equipment, such as tanks and aircraft, but may not be as capable at locating and tracking individual terrorists.
- *Recognizing the problems involved with electronic eavesdropping.* Our enemy has learned how to hide many of its transmissions from electronic eavesdropping satellites. The difficulty of finding and successfully monitoring the right conversations is further compounded by the challenge of sifting through the voluminous terrorist chatter and determining what bits of information are useful.
- *Greater emphasis on human intelligence gathering.* Spies on the ground are needed to supplement—and sometimes confirm or refute—what satellite images, electronic eavesdropping, interrogations of captured Al Qaeda operatives, hard drives on confiscated computers, and other sources indicate. Analysis and interpretation needs to be backed up with as much “inside information” as possible. This is perhaps the most critical missing piece in the intelligence puzzle. The task is made even more difficult because of the distributed and cellular structure of Al Qaeda and the fact that the radical Islamic ideology that fuels the terrorist threat has expanded beyond the formal Al Qaeda structure of September 2001 into a larger, more loosely knit movement in Muslim world.

As important as human intelligence is, technology still has its place. For example, the potential utility of UAVs for the war on terror has been demonstrated in Afghanistan and Yemen. In Afghanistan, UAVs moved beyond playing a supporting role for combat aircraft, as they had in the Balkans and then in Iraq in the mid-1990s, providing surveillance and later designating targets for laser-guided bombs. They became offensive weapons when armed with Hellfire missiles.²¹ In February 2002, a Predator UAV armed with Hellfire missiles and operated by the CIA in the Tora Bora region attacked a convoy and killed several people, including a suspected Al Qaeda leader. In November 2002, a Predator in Yemen destroyed a car containing six Al Qaeda suspects, including Abu Ali al-Harithi, one of the suspected planners of the *USS Cole* attack in October 2000.

If parts of the war on terror are to be fought in places such as Yemen, Sudan, Somalia, and Pakistan, UAVs could be key assets for finding and targeting Al Qaeda operatives, with their ability to cover large swaths of land for extended periods of time in search of targets. A Predator has a combat radius of 400 nautical miles and can carry a maximum payload of 450 pounds for more than twenty-four hours. One unmanned sentry could survey the same area as ten or more human sentries.²²

Armed UAVs offer a cost-effective alternative to deploying troops or having to call in manned aircraft to perform combat missions against identified terrorist targets. According to Dyke Weatherington, deputy of the DoD's UAV Planning Task Force, without armed UAVs "we either couldn't get strikes to the target in time or the manned aircraft couldn't find that target the UAV had found."²³ One can only wonder what might have happened if the spy Predator that took pictures of a tall man in white robes surrounded by a group of people—believed by many intelligence analysts to be bin Laden—in the fall of 2000 had instead been an armed Predator capable of immediately striking the target. According to retired General Wayne Downing, "We were not prepared to take the military action necessary. . . . We should have had strike forces prepared to go in and react to this intelligence, certainly cruise missiles."²⁴

Another factor that makes UAVs particularly attractive is their low cost, especially when compared to manned aircraft. Their developmental costs are actually about the same as they are for a similar manned aircraft, but their

²¹ Reported in Gail Kaufman, "UAVs Shifted Role in Iraq Operations," *Defense News*, Dec. 8, 2003.

²² Office of the Secretary of Defense, "Unmanned Aerial Vehicles Roadmap: 2002–2027," December 2002, p. iv.

²³ Quoted in Jim Garamone, "Unmanned Aerial Vehicles Fly High After Afghanistan," Armed Forces Press Service, April 2002, at www.DefendAmerica.mil.

²⁴ Quoted in Lisa Myers, "Osama bin Laden: missed opportunities," MSNBC.com, Mar. 17, 2004.

procurement costs are substantially lower, at an average unit cost of \$16 million over three years.²⁵ O&M costs for UAVs are also expected to be lower than for manned aircraft. So the \$10 billion in planned spending on UAVs over the next decade (compared to just \$3 billion in the 1990s) is a smart investment in the war on terror. Even doubling the budget to \$20 billion over the next ten years would make sense and would represent less than 1 percent of an annual defense budget based on a balancer-of-last-resort strategy. An added benefit is that pilots' lives are not at risk with every sortie.

But we cannot rely solely on UAVs to track and find terrorists. U.S. special operations forces—units such as Navy SEAL teams and Army Green Berets, Rangers, and Delta Force—are ideally suited for this kind of mission. Indeed, counterterrorism is the number-one mission of Special Operations Forces, who are specifically organized, trained, and equipped to conduct these missions, including intelligence operations, attacks against terrorist networks, hostage rescue, and recovery of sensitive material from terrorist organizations in hostile environments.²⁶

Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld has been a strong advocate of using Special Operations Forces against terrorist targets. In August 2002, he issued a classified directive to U.S. Special Operations Command (SOCOM) to capture or kill bin Laden and other Al Qaeda leadership.²⁷ Secretary Rumsfeld has also proposed sending these forces into Somalia and Lebanon's Bekaa Valley, lawless areas that are thought to be places where terrorists can hide.

Like UAVs, Special Operations Forces are relatively inexpensive. The fiscal 2005 budget for SOCOM was \$6.5 billion,²⁸ only about 1.6 percent of the total defense budget. Surprisingly, even though these forces are critical for success in the war on terror, the proposed FY 2006 budget request for these forces is less: \$4.1 billion,²⁹ just 1 percent of the total defense budget. The budget for Special Operations Forces could in fact be significantly increased without adversely affecting the overall defense budget. There are currently about 34,000 active-duty and 15,000 reserve personnel from the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force—

²⁵ "Unmanned Aerial Vehicles Roadmap: 2002-2027," p. 59.

²⁶ DoD, "United States Special Operations Forces: Posture Statement 2003-2004," p. 36.

²⁷ Barbara Starr, "Sources: Rumsfeld calls for Special Ops covert action," CNN.com, Aug. 2, 2002.

²⁸ Sgt. 1st Class Doug Sample, "DoD official updates Congress on special ops transformation," Armed Forces Press Service, Mar. 30, 2004.

²⁹ Donald H. Rumsfeld, "Statement of Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld, FY 2006 Department of Defense Budget," Senate Armed Services Committee, Feb. 17, 2005, p. 9. U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations, "Defense Subcommittee hearing on FY 2006 Budget for the Department of Defense: Testimony of the Honorable Tina W. Jonas, Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller)," Mar. 2, 2005.

or about 2 percent of all U.S. active and reserve forces—in Special Operations.³⁰ Given the importance and unique capabilities of these forces, it would make sense to increase the size and funding for Special Forces, aiming to double the force size.

In the timeless treatise of strategic thinking, *The Art of War*, Chinese military theorist Sun Tzu stressed the importance of knowing the enemy: “Knowing the other and knowing oneself, in one hundred battles no danger. Not knowing the other and knowing oneself, one victory for one loss. Not knowing the other and not knowing oneself, in every battle certain defeat.”³¹

In order to truly know the enemy, the United States must train a cadre of experts to teach and analyze the languages of the Muslim world—Arabic, Pashtu, Urdu, Dari, and Malay, to name a few. But according to a GAO report, in fiscal year 2001 only half of the Army’s eighty-four positions for Arabic translators and interpreters were filled and there were twenty-seven unfilled positions (out of a total of forty) for Farsi.³² Undersecretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness David Chu has acknowledged that the Defense Department is having a very difficult time training sufficient numbers of linguists.³³ Even if progress has been made to fill these shortfalls, clearly we are starting with a large deficit. Language skills for the war on terror are in short supply.

The Defense Language Institute in Monterey, California, is the largest language school in the world, providing 85 percent of the language training for the federal government. In 2001, it graduated 2,083 students in basic language training in twenty languages. Such training lasts from twenty-five to sixty-three weeks, depending on the difficulty of the language. Two of the four most difficult languages for native English speakers to learn are Arabic and Farsi. Thus, the lead-time to teach most Americans even the basics is relatively long. Finding instructors and creating language courses are also challenges. According to Ray Clifford, the Institute’s retired chancellor, the faculty we need are not being produced by U.S. universities, and coursework often has to be developed from scratch. Neil Granoin, a former Russian instructor and dean of the Institute’s Korean school, notes that very little work has been done over the past century on languages like Uzbek or Pashto, most of what work that has been done having been done under Queen

³⁰ Andrew Feickert, “U.S. Special Operations Forces (SOF): Background and Issues for Congress,” Congressional Research Service Report RS21048, Sept. 28, 2004, p. 1.

³¹ Sun Tzu, *The Art of War* (Boston: Shambala, 2002), pp. 14–15.

³² General Accounting Office, “Foreign Languages: Workforce Planning Could Help Address Staffing and Proficiency Shortfalls,” GAO-02-514T, testimony of Susan S. Westin before the Subcommittee on International Security, Proliferation, and Federal Services, Committee on Governmental Affairs, U.S. Senate, Mar. 12, 2002, p. 6.

³³ Quoted in “Pentagon People Person,” GovExec.com, Feb. 9, 2004.

Victoria's reign.³⁴ The military's policies may hinder the ability to train qualified linguists, as well. Over a two-year period, thirty-seven linguists from the Institute were discharged from the military for being gay under the "don't ask, don't tell" policy.

Global Force Posture and Basing Arrangements

A balancer-of-last-resort strategy would still allow the United States to project power if vital U.S. national security interests were at risk, but the requirement to project power would be reduced because other countries would be acting as balancers-of-power in their respective regions, thereby eliminating the need for the U.S. military to have large numbers of troops stationed in foreign countries. Instead of permanent bases and large numbers of troops deployed at those bases, the ability to rapidly project power if necessary would be made easier by pre-positioning of supplies and equipment (for example, at Diego Garcia) to allow the U.S. military to respond more rapidly (troops can be deployed faster if their associated equipment does not have to be deployed simultaneously) and negotiating access and base rights with friendly countries.

Although it is counterintuitive, forward deployment does not significantly enhance the U.S. military's ability to fight wars. The U.S. military's comparative advantage is airpower, which can be dispatched relatively quickly and at very long ranges. Indeed, during Operation Enduring Freedom, the U.S. Air Force was able to fly missions from the United States. Some B-2s flew 44-hour missions to Afghanistan directly from the Whiteman (Missouri) Air Force Base.³⁵

In a balancer-of-last-resort strategy, the United States would emphasize its long-range airpower capabilities as the first response in the rare case of a necessary military intervention. Eland argues that "most of the ground forces should be provided by the nations benefiting from U.S. intervention."³⁶ If U.S. ground forces are needed to fight a major war, they could be deployed using strategic airlift and sealift, sized appropriately for a smaller force structure.

It is worth noting that Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom were both conducted without significant forces already deployed in theater. In Enduring Freedom, the U.S. military had neither troops nor bases adjacent to Afghanistan, yet military operations commenced less than a month after 9/11. In the case of Iraqi Freedom, even though the U.S. military had over 6,000 troops (mostly Air Force) deployed in Saudi Arabia, the Saudi government had to forbid, at least publicly, the use of its bases to conduct military operations from that country.

³⁴ Quoted in Katherine McIntire Peters, "Lost in Translation," *Government Executive Magazine*, May 1, 2002, GovExec.com.

³⁵ John A. Tirpak, "Enduring Freedom," *Air Force*, February 2002, p. 34.

³⁶ Eland, *Putting "Defense" Back into U.S. Defense Policy*, p. 104.

Instead, the United States used Kuwait as the headquarters and the jumping-off point for military operations. Similarly, the Turkish government prevented the U.S. Army's 4th Infantry Division from using bases in that country for military operations in northern Iraq, forcing some 30,000 troops to be transported via ship through the Suez Canal and Red Sea to the Persian Gulf, where they arrived too late to be part of the initial attack. Despite these handicaps, U.S. forces swept away the Iraqi military in less than four weeks.

And at least in the case of South Korea, the 31,000 forward-deployed U.S. ground forces³⁷ in that country are insufficient to fight a war. Operation Iraqi Freedom—against a smaller and weaker military foe—required more than 100,000 ground troops to take Baghdad and topple Saddam Hussein, and more to occupy the country afterwards. So if the United States were to mount an offensive military operation against North Korea, the 31,000 U.S. troops stationed in South Korea would have to be reinforced—which would take almost as much time as deploying the entire force from scratch if South Korea agreed to be a willing host for staging such an operation. If North Korea (with a nearly one-million-man army) were to invade South Korea, the defense of South Korea would rest primarily with that country's 700,000-man military, not 31,000 U.S. troops. Nor does the U.S. military presence in South Korea alter the fact that North Korea is believed to have tens of thousands of artillery tubes that can hold the capital city of Seoul hostage. At best, U.S. forces are a tripwire but clearly not a bulwark for defending South Korea.

Alliance Relationships and Structures

By definition, a balancer-of-last-resort strategy means that other countries would take primary responsibility for their own security and for regional security in their area of the world. Therefore, the United States could shed entangling alliances, NATO being the obvious first choice. Since the Soviet military threat no longer exists, neither does the need for NATO. Nonetheless, the United States is obligated under Article 5 of the NATO Treaty to come to the defense of other NATO countries. One of the newest members of NATO is Latvia, which was admitted to the alliance in April 2004. Russia has expressed its concern that over 460,000 Russian-speaking Latvians were barred from voting in March 2005 municipal elections. If Russia and Latvia were to come to blows over the issue of ethnic Russian Latvians, U.S. security would clearly not be at stake, but U.S. forces might be compelled to intervene. That is exactly the kind of situation in which the United States must avoid entangling itself.

Not only does the post-Cold War threat environment give the United States the luxury of allowing countries to take responsibility for security in their own

³⁷ Department of Defense, "Active Duty Military Personnel Strengths By Regional Area and By Country," December 31, 2004.

neighborhoods, but the economic strength of Europe and East Asia means that friendly countries in those regions can afford to pay for their own defense rather than relying on the United States to underwrite their security.

In 2003, when the United States' total defense expenditures were 3.7 percent of its \$10.9 trillion GDP, the 15 EU countries defense spending was less than 2 percent of their combined GDP of \$10.5 trillion. Without a Soviet threat to Europe, the United States does not need to subsidize European defense spending and the European countries have the economic wherewithal to increase military spending, if necessary.

Likewise, America's allies in East Asia are capable of defending themselves. South Korea outspends North Korea on defense nearly 3:1, \$14.6 billion vs. \$5.5 billion (North Korea's GDP in 2003 was \$22 billion compared to South Korea's \$605 billion). Japan's GDP was \$4.34 trillion and its defense spending \$42.8 billion, almost eight times that of North Korea. So South Korea and Japan certainly have the economic resources to adequately defend themselves against North Korea. They even have the capacity to act as military balancers to China, which had a GDP of \$1.43 trillion and spent \$22.4 billion on defense.³⁸

Conclusion

The defense budget can be reduced and the U.S. military downsized because (1) the nation-state threat environment is markedly different than it was during the Cold War, and (2) a large military is not necessary to combat the terrorist threat. In fact, the military can only play a limited role in homeland defense against terrorism, since the Posse Comitatus Act prohibits its use for domestic policing actions. (It does, however, remain an important source of intelligence information that must be analyzed and integrated with other sources of intelligence to anticipate and defeat terrorist attacks.)

The shorthand phrase "war on terror" can be misleading. As to whom the enemy is, President Bush has recently made more clear that the war is really one on what "some call evil Islamic radicalism; others, militant jihadism; and still others, Islamo-fascism."³⁹ As to how this struggle is waged, the term "war" implies the use of military force as the primary instrument, where traditional military operations should be the exception rather than the rule in the conflict with Al Qaeda. The arduous task of dismantling and degrading its network will largely be the task of unprecedented international intelligence and law enforcement cooperation, not the application of large-scale military force. To the extent the military is involved in the

³⁸ HISS, *The Military Balance 2004-2005*, p. 322-3.

³⁹ "President Commemorates Veterans Day, Discusses War on Terror, Tobyhanna Army Depot, Tobyhanna, Pennsylvania," Nov. 11, 2005, at www.whitehouse.gov.

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war on terror, it will be special forces in discrete operations against specific targets rather than large-scale military operations.