TOWARD A SUSTAINABLE NATIONAL SECURITY POSTURE

Report of a National Defense University Study Group
Presentation to NDU Board of Visitors
May 2013
Several publications highlight rising fiscal and geopolitical challenges for U.S. NSS

Chairman Dempsey indicates concern about ends-means gap in U.S. defense policy
  - *Chairman’s Strategic Seminars*

Following publication of 2011 *Washington Quarterly* essay on “strategic insolvency,” J-5 asked NDU to investigate high-level strategic response

Cross-NDU team of regional and functional specialists

Three month core research & writing period
EMERGING STRATEGIC REALITIES SHAPING NEXT DECADE (selected)

- Relatively low direct threat but wider range of potential threats. Era characterized by uncertainty and volatility.
- Increasingly multipolar or “multinodal” system; more states become more assertive, and more non-state actors gain increasing influence as power diffuses.
- Rise of a number of powerful new technologies that empower a diverse array of actors.
- Thickening of networks and relationships creates risks of disruption and volatility that strike at the economic, social and psychological well-being.

Selected Implications

1. Uncertainty demands fungible, flexible capabilities.
2. Resolving the ends-means gap by abandoning ends—commitments—risks creating higher insecurity, given the significance of the U.S. world role. Best way forward is revised ways.
3. Becoming more aligned to the nature of the environment will produce more security than the size of budgets or forces.
4. Time is key variable; if on our side, changes the calculus of strategic requirements.
5. We need a revised theory of stand-off strike/retaliation that encompasses more domains.
6. Any sustainable strategy must bring rising powers into the management of the international system in more profound ways.
A U.S. GLOBAL ROLE APPROPRIATE TO ENVIRONMENT: A STRATEGY OF “DISCRIMINATE POWER”

- Basic requirement: Continued global leadership in more limited, targeted, discriminate ways
- From primacy and dominance to catalytic, collaborative role; first among equals but trusted and enabling partner who shares right to set global standards
- Key rule: Invest in capabilities/issues of comparative advantage and disproportionate effect; capabilities, issues, and moments w/highest leverage potential
- Key mistakes: wasting strategic effort on secondary problems; investing in capabilities that can be easily neutralized; buying expensive, high-tech systems to do jobs that could be done for far less

Elements of a Strategy of Discriminate Power

Pursue targeted, catalytic areas of competitive advantage that we bring to challenges and relationships
Pursue existing goals in more targeted, innovative ways; become more discriminate in application of power
Enable, allow and spur others to do more in multinodal and shared approach to leadership; “forward partnering”
SPECIFIC DEFENSE POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

CATEGORY ONE: WHERE TO RETHINK

• Forward presence: From large-scale deterrence to “forward partnering”
• Technology and acquisition: From highest tech to high-low strategy seeking wedge capabilities (space, modest#/high end tacair, C4/ISR, timely stand-off strike etc)
• Concepts of operation: From dominant/aggressive to discriminate and defensive
• Maritime assets: Preserve but rebalance toward survivable and collaborative
• Nuclear weapons: Sustain but rethink numbers, doctrine, modernization plan

CATEGORY TWO: WHERE TO INVEST

• Nontraditional security requirements: Cyber, space, bio, general resilience
• Non-military instruments of power (diplomatic, economic, presence, info)
• Sources of global awareness: C4/ISR, knowledge, intel
• Classic Special Warfare forces
• Timely stand-off strike
• Intellectual foundations: Education, training, research
• RDT&E Funding

CATEGORY THREE: WHERE TO TAKE RISK

• Large-scale, short-notice ground operations (rely more on reserve component)
• Ability to conduct more than one simultaneous major contingency
• Specific capabilities/platforms: Active-duty ground forces; large numbers of most advanced new tactical air; numbers of carriers
## Going Forward: Study as Platform for Analysis

### OUTSIDE NDU

- Support analysis of senior decision makers (J-5, OSD, CJCS, State, others)
- Continual feedback and iteration process
- Publication and outreach
- New cooperative efforts (New America Foundation; State FSI)

### INSIDE NDU

- Spur “one University” collaboration
- Potential for research entity follow-on studies
- Invitation to incoming student body to help senior leaders think through issues at critical time for U.S. security strategy
- Student writing and publication