

## Section II

# Assessing Complex Regional Trends



During Operation *Tornado*, joint Afghan and ISAF troops meet with local leaders in Uruzgan Province, Afghanistan, October 2008

In a globalized world, every region is important. When viewed through a regional prism, some international challenges are magnified while others appear more manageable. This section posits some of the more likely challenges that may arise in major regions over the next decade.

The Greater Middle East is the epicenter of conflict today. Iraq's stability and Iran's appetite for power could top the global security agenda within the next 5 to 10 years. Declining U.S. support for Iraq may unleash divisive forces that lead to civil war and strengthen a nuclear-armed Iran under its Revolutionary Guard Corps. But if Iraq can increasingly stand on its own while the United States reduces its presence, and if a clash with Iran can be averted, then the region could become more stable before 2020. In particular, there may be scope for a renewed peace process by Israel and its neighbors. It is obvious that negotiations, with or without preconditions, will be mulled in many capitals. The United States will be pressed by its allies and partners—such as Israel, Jordan, Egypt, and the Gulf Arab states—who will look for reassurance in the face of a real and present danger as adversaries and spoilers remain suspicious of American motives. The United States might revive support for freedom and democracy, based on a recognition that reform comes from within societies, that effective governance takes decades to achieve, and that American values do not constitute a formula for regime change. Whether the Greater Middle East is more or less peaceful a decade from now may hinge on the capacity of Washington to work with a growing number of countries. But in a region noted for taking hesitant steps toward peace, any success will require significant investments of American prestige and largesse.

A growing insurgency in Afghanistan and along the Afghan-Pakistan border, which serves as an incubator for the Taliban, al Qaeda, and other extremist groups, ensures that South Asia will rival the Middle East as

the most dangerous security challenge in the next 10 years. The lesson of September 11, 2001, appeared to be that developed nations would not allow remote, almost ungovernable areas of the world to provide safe havens for terrorists—not when globalization has facilitated the destructiveness of ideologically motivated zealots who murder people of all faiths around the globe. But the antidote—stabilization, reconstruction, and state-building—is far more costly and takes more patience than originally contemplated. An international effort is needed to strengthen the fledgling government in Kabul against political violence and extremism, build local security forces and institutions, and provide alternatives to an economy fueled by the trade in illicit narcotics. Both the United States and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) will have to find effective ways to deliver nonmilitary assistance to the contested areas of Afghanistan, where Provincial Reconstruction Teams have been useful in recovery and state-building projects during stability operations. Meanwhile, finding the means to check violence emanating from Pakistan without undermining the new civilian government in Islamabad will require considerable finesse. Some may expect an increasingly powerful India to address regional problems, and no doubt it can help in reducing the risk of conflict with Pakistan, including nuclear escalation. But the role of India in solving the Afghanistan question is necessarily circumscribed, as even positive acts on its part are likely to be misperceived by Islamabad. Instead, a long-term solution would involve helping the more than 40 million Pashtuns in Afghanistan and Pakistan attain a better standard of living. While India will become increasingly active on the regional and global level, it is likely to seek greater latitude in its external affairs than it enjoyed as the leader of the Non-Aligned Movement. Consequently, building a strategic partnership with Delhi will be a gradual process. In addition, India will primarily focus on managing its economic



U.S. Army (Jim Greenhill)



U.S. Navy (John Gay)



U.S. Air Force (Adam M. Stump)

Left to right: Israeli soldiers provide security in Jerusalem; Afghan villagers meet with joint team investigating allegations of civilian casualties in Tagab; Georgian defense officials meet Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in Tbilisi

development in the foreseeable future while retaining a cautious role abroad, which is inseparable from its democratic coalitions.

If the Middle East and South Asia are likely to dominate the security agenda in the near term, East Asia continues as the most promising region in which to promote international security. An ascendant China, while encouraging hedging by neighbors, is more likely to be regarded as a responsible stakeholder or frontline state in meeting 21<sup>st</sup>-century transnational challenges, be it energy security, water supplies, or the environment than as a spoiler. The Korean Peninsula will remain a flashpoint as long as the closed society in the North clings to nuclear weapons for its survival. Developing a serious diplomatic framework to achieve tangible progress in reversing that trend could be the springboard for a new level of multilateral cooperation, including with respect to the Six-Party Talks that have been crucial in the nonproliferation effort. Although the region has overlapping agreements and forums, U.S. bilateral alliances, especially in the case of Japan, the Republic of Korea, and Australia, underpin regional security interests; maintaining alliances and transforming them into effective mechanisms for security cooperation will require sustained American leadership and involvement with the countries of the region. Moreover, the combination of problems facing the countries of Southeast Asia cannot be ignored. In all, East and Southeast Asia will continue to generate hope in a world seeking effective leadership and institutions to forge genuine solutions to current as well as future strategic challenges.

The conflict between Russia and Georgia in August 2008 seemingly ended two decades of imagining Europe as a whole and free region. The price of hydrocarbons served as a catalyst for Russia's startling economic revolution. Trade in energy resources, in turn, emboldened Moscow to assert itself, especially on the periphery of the old Soviet empire. While many

observers were bewildered by the first intervention by Russia outside its borders since the Cold War, frustration had been mounting in the Kremlin because of real and perceived slights to its national prestige and interests. Yet a new Cold War is not looming on the horizon, if only because few predict that Russia can manage its own enormous challenges, including diversifying an economy addicted to energy, achieving ethnic and religious integration in the face of demographic trends that sharply reduce the number of ethnic Russians, and maintaining control and legitimacy within a semi-authoritarian state. But cooperating with Moscow in the next decade will be problematic, not least because of its neighbors. How Europe and the United States work with the countries on Russia's periphery, from the Baltic to Ukraine and Georgia and energy-rich Central Asia, will be a major challenge in the short and medium term. Even cooperation among major powers over shared interests such as nuclear nonproliferation may be difficult, since Russia seems prone to take issue over its differences with the West rather than to seek areas of agreement. Whether the relationship between Russia and China deepens may turn on the ability of the United States to overcome its popular depiction as a unilateral military power and whether Beijing can convince Moscow that its ascendancy does not pose a challenge to Russia's centrality in Eurasia.

A strong and prosperous united Europe will ensure that the transatlantic community performs its vital security role while dealing with emerging problems of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Increasingly, the European Union and NATO seem more synergistic and less competitive than once feared. Yet Europe is divided on how much to focus on its own security versus that of the other regions of the world. Clearly, the challenges in the Balkans will continue, as future stability pivots on Kosovo and Serbia. Turkey, which apparently has passed the high water mark of secular Kemalism, is torn by questions about its identity with regard to religion and



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Left to right: High-rise buildings in Beijing; Leaders from Germany, France, and Great Britain discuss financial crisis during EU summit, October 2008

civil-military relations, demands by ethnic Kurds, and integration into Europe. Meanwhile, many European nations are increasingly concerned about terrorism on their soil, whether imported or homegrown, and seeking ways to promote internal security and multicultural assimilation. In the aftermath of U.S. intervention in Iraq, some European governments implied a normative if not moral superiority to America, which they thought had slipped from its ethical moorings; a new administration in Washington provides an opportune moment to broach the Atlantic divide on issues of institutional values that have arisen in Europe and elsewhere in the recent past.

The myriad problems of Africa warrant greater attention than the international community has mustered until now. The continent is more accurately perceived as a series of subregions and not as a vast homogeneous land mass, with North Africa, the Sahel Belt, West Africa, Central Africa, the Great Lakes, East Africa, and Southern Africa presenting far more differences than similarities. The Horn of Africa—Somalia, Sudan and Darfur, Ethiopia, and Eritrea—is the most dangerous area, both on land and offshore. Although weak states explain some of the risks, including piracy and communal strife in Somalia, ethnic cleansing in Darfur can be attributed to Sudan, which could descend into civil war. Ineffective multilateral institutions and mechanisms for resolving conflicts point to the need for external assistance, but it remains unclear whether U.S. Africa Command can become a credible source of whole-of-government approaches to the problems of the region, only some of which are related to terrorism and military threats. While the United States and other developed nations agree on the need for increased cooperation with African states and organizations, the global financial crisis may curtail or delay integrated plans for assistance and collaboration with a new generation of enlightened African leaders.

Both positive trends and latent risks in the Americas pose a dilemma for Washington: while the region eschews a hegemon, it does not benefit from U.S. neglect or retrenchment. Brazil has emerged on the regional and international scene in an impressive fashion, though how it forges closer relations with the United States will define the region for the next decade. Meanwhile, the establishment of subregional communities and trading blocs offers the potential for dealing with problems through multilateral dialogues on the local level, provided an actor such as Venezuela does not succeed in destabilizing them. Regional security challenges will increasingly center on global and transnational issues such as development, energy dependence, and the environment. The succession of Raul Castro in Havana does not necessarily imply that the future transition of Cuban society will be a crisis-free process. Moreover, despite enormous progress in the period since September 11, 2001, cooperation by the United States, Canada, Mexico, and The Bahamas on border security is a daunting task. Washington will have to cooperate with many states in the region to tackle basic problems rather than their symptoms, including poverty, governance, and narcotics. Indeed, the last of these challenges underscores a wider problem—that of drug cartels and their associated criminal networks—which will only proliferate in the years ahead.

In the decade ahead, every region has the potential to contribute to international order and stability. But as nations attempt to enhance their own security and prosperity, new challenges will require innovative approaches and institutions. Moreover, some regional troubles may demand greater effort on the part of the international community as a whole. The combination of enduring threats and emerging global and transnational issues will tax the most influential and fastest rising individual states and the most affluent regions, even while they deal with traditional concerns. **gsa**



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Left to right: Djiboutians gather for opening of new well; Skyline of Sao Paulo, Brazil, overlooking Favela Morumbi slum