

# 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