

# STRIKING THE BALANCE: US ARMY FORCE POSTURE IN EUROPE, 2028



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**STRIKING THE BALANCE: US ARMY FORCE POSTURE IN EUROPE, 2028**

*A Study Sponsored by the Office of the Secretary of the Army*

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## FOREWORD

This study takes on one of the most difficult strategic decisions the Army faces today: how to plan for an uncertain and volatile future. In the context of Army force posture in Europe, these decisions are complicated by limited resources and by an evolving adversary that can employ asymmetric means to neutralize the impact of investments the Army makes today. In an effort to ensure Army capabilities endure over the long term and prevail in the event of conflict, the Army is implementing multidomain operations (MDO), which describes how the Army can compete with or, if necessary, defeat, an adversary across all domains, as part of the Joint Force. Conceived this way, MDO is more than simply Joint operations. MDO describes how the Army will fight alongside the other services in the air, land, sea, space, and cyber domains.

To this end, the study avoids specifying a particular force posture. Much work has already been done regarding the best course of action for defeating an adversary under worst-case conditions. This study does not seek to recreate that analysis but to draw on it to examine the kinds of strategic decisions that need to be made to account for the various trade-offs any particular force posture would entail.

Moreover, this study tries to avoid the bottom-up approach described in other studies. For example, rather than reviewing whether the Army should consider the Polish offer to station US forces, the study seeks to determine top-down frameworks that would illustrate the various tradeoffs making such a decision would entail. In this way, the study's authors seek to provide a map to navigate these decisions to provide an effective deterrent and, failing that, a response to potential Russian aggression, while preserving global flexibility to respond to what might be greater threats to the security of the United States, its Allies, and its partners in other regions.

The Strategic Studies Institute is pleased to publish what should be an informative and useful study for leaders across the government and other entities with an interest or responsibility in this subject.



DR. CAROL V. EVANS  
Director  
Strategic Studies Institute and  
US Army War College Press



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### THE CHALLENGE

In August 2018, then-Secretary of the Army Mark Esper directed the US Army War College to make recommendations regarding what US Army force posture, capabilities, footprint, and command and control structure in Europe were necessary to meet the objectives identified in the unclassified *Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy* (NDS) by 2028. The study also drew on key documents such as the *Army Vision*, *Army Strategy*, *Army Modernization Strategy*, and *The US Army in Multi-Domain Operations, 2028*.

The ideal force posture needs to accomplish a range of ongoing and contingency missions and also be adaptive enough to remain viable despite any number of potential swings in resources, military balance, or the domestic politics of allies. Put differently, the challenge of developing force posture is to develop one solution that might be put to the test by a range of different possible futures. Preparing for a range of possible futures leads the team to favor adaptability and resilience along with strategic and operational effect. In an era of upheaval, the US Army cannot afford to stake its utility to the nation on a force posture that can be rendered obsolete by a single budget, new technology, or foreign election.

Within the context of Europe, the US Army must develop a force posture that best navigates the tensions between three priorities identified in the unclassified summary of the NDS (any future reference to the NDS in this executive summary will be a reference to the unclassified summary of the NDS, referenced above): deterring or defeating armed conflict at acceptable cost, successfully competing below armed conflict, and maintaining global responsiveness and institutional flexibility through the global operating model and dynamic force employment. Any acceptable solution must fall within the bounds of all three—none can simply be disregarded as unimportant—but there is scope for hard decisions as to which elements should be emphasized over the others.

### POLITICAL AND OPERATIONAL CONTEXT: RUSSIA AND EUROPE

#### Russia

Like any country, Russia seeks security, prosperity, and influence. Russia's sense of security—or perhaps more accurately sense of insecurity—is deeply rooted in its historical exposure to outside invasion, and has been reinforced by NATO expansion and the emergence of “color revolutions” that threaten Moscow's influence in its near abroad. As a result, Russia will continue to perceive its neighbors' political and economic ties with the West as a threat. Moreover, Moscow seeks to maintain its status as a “global player with global influence.” These two overarching interests combined necessarily entail minimizing the influence of the United States and other Western powers, especially in Russia's near abroad, and elsewhere, like Syria, where Russia also has interests. Russia

also faces a growing Islamic threat from abroad and within, which it sometimes accuses the West of exacerbating.

Based on this analysis, the following general principles will likely guide Russian behavior over the foreseeable future.

- Russia will seek to maintain “escalatory dominance” over NATO. Part of that dominance will include efforts to undermine Alliance consensus on how to respond to Russian provocations.
- Because of dwindling resources, Russia desires de-escalation and armament reduction. A decrease in oil revenues will negatively impact Moscow’s military modernization and capacity building efforts.
- Russia is unlikely to conduct further offensive conventional military attacks into neighboring states unless Kremlin leaders perceive a competitive buildup of US or international NATO forces that threatens Russian conventional defensive overmatch or the persecution of ethnic Russians in border areas.
- Russia desires removal of sanctions and greater economic inclusion with the West.
- Russia will not return Crimea to Ukraine and will continue support to separatists in Georgia and the Donets Basin.
- Moscow will continue influence operations below the threshold of armed conflict to destabilize NATO relationships and protect Russia’s economic interests.
- Russia will try to increase engagement with the United States and will assume the worst if faced with an unpredictable large-scale NATO buildup on its periphery.
- Future admissions to NATO for states in Russia’s near abroad will likely be met with aggression.

The evolution of Russian military capabilities through 2028 will largely depend on how the Kremlin addresses the impact of the country’s limited economy and dwindling manpower pool on military readiness. Although it has largely retained Soviet-era nuclear capabilities, which will primarily be used for escalation management, the Russian military struggles with conducting sustained global power projection operations. But Russia’s investment and development of new military capabilities, specifically cyber and integrated combined arms operations, do provide them with a wide aperture for competing below the level of armed conflict, as well as conducting limited offensive military operations. Should Russia continue to refine its military capabilities, it will become a more dynamic adversary, capable of effectively challenging NATO and the United States at levels below armed conflict while providing scalable opportunities at levels above.

## **Europe**

Determining the optimal US Army force posture requires a solid contextual understanding of European partners and Allies and their anticipated future defense requirements. The US Army must consider Allies and partners’ perceived major threats and the forces and capabilities the Allies and partners will deploy to confront these threats. Unlike during the Cold War, Allies and partners do not share a common



view of the threat Russia could represent. While most see Russia as a *threat*, there are varying degrees to which they view Russia as a *partner*. As a result, willingness to invest in their own defense varies considerably. Some will opt for higher-end combat platform modernization, others for enhanced border security to deal with immigration issues, while others are more concerned with social resilience programs to hedge against Russian gray-zone activities.

These options are, of course, not exclusive and any particular partner will likely pursue something in all three depending on their threat perceptions, which in turn are driven by geography. In general, however, Eastern European governments are focused on Russia as a military threat to territorial sovereignty, while Western European threat perceptions tend to focus on terrorism and Russia's role in actively destabilizing their political and social institutions. The southern flank of Europe has been too busy dealing with waves of migrants filtering in from North Africa and the Levant to worry much about Russian threats.

The posture and capabilities of European Allies and partners will directly affect how the US Army postures forces in 2028. Trends in NATO and the EU indicate that Europe's military strength is on the rebound after the decades of downsizing following the Cold War. Increased defense spending, interoperability, and new organizational structures driven by European threat perceptions will provide more effective and efficient defense capabilities among US partners and Allies. Political trends and demographics are likely to be a drag on defense capability improvements but are unlikely to negate the positive trends in these capabilities. US Army leaders should plan a posture that reinforces Allied and partner capabilities and avoid the temptation to build a force structure in Europe designed to win military conflicts for them. Strategic communications plans for any national posture decisions should take into account potential international political-military impacts—in arms control and other realms.

## **BUILDING BLOCKS OF FORCE POSTURE: LEVERS**

Force posture is not just units and places but also the ability to move and the effects of activity, even if transitory. Force posture is determined by a number of related factors that function more or less as levers that can be set in combination relative to desired outcome, cost, and risks. Combined, these levers provide theater design, forces and capabilities, footprint and presence, authorities and permissions, and mission command relationships. This study considers seven different force posture levers, including

- multidomain command and control (MDC2) (field army or corps headquarters);
- long-range fires capability;
- brigade combat team location and status (forward-stationed or prepositioned stocks);
- the geographic "footprint" of training and other activities within Europe;
- investments with high implementation costs (munitions stockpiles, lines of communications improvements, dispersal, and hardening);
- investments with year-to-year costs (deployment exercises, enhanced status for prepositioned stocks, and building and maintaining regional expertise); and

- increases in high-demand units (logistics and mobility, special forces, and theater air and missile defense).

## ORGANIZING THE LEVERS: PROPOSED STRATEGIC APPROACHES

In a world of limitless resources, the US Army would want to select some or all of these levers. All would have some benefit. But because resources are scarce and some of these levers go together naturally, the levers must be assembled into packages of complementary options reflecting a coherent, top-down, strategic approach. The study team initially created three strategic approaches: *privilege dynamic force employment*, *privilege global competition*, and *privilege armed conflict*. Choosing the verb *privilege* was an acknowledgment that although one element can be considered more important, an acceptable force posture would strike an appropriate balance among all three. Upon further study, the team realized that *privilege armed conflict* posed such significant challenges in implementation that less ambitious approaches should be offered. Therefore, the team essentially developed two additional strategic approaches that each offer just one of the two major elements of that option: *invest in a multidomain alliance* and *build visible presence*.

*Privilege dynamic force employment.* The NDS places an emphasis on an active but relatively thin contact layer to resource robust blunt and surge forces. This approach hinges upon the ability to project these blunt and surge forces quickly and reliably despite an adversary's ability to contest strategic lines of communication.

*Privilege global competition.* This strategic approach offers visible reassurance to Allies, reflecting the insight that political will more than military capability is the center of gravity for NATO. This approach also accounts for continued competition below armed conflict—a far more likely scenario than armed conflict—while also providing the Army institutional maneuver space to respond in case of crises elsewhere or to adjust to changes in budget. Yet in contrast to the strict NDS approach, this approach recognizes that the meaning of dynamic force employment is quite different for large-scale, sustained ground operations than for air or naval forces.

*Privilege armed conflict.* The threat of a *fait accompli* attack stems not from an overwhelming Russian superiority but the unique combination of geography and force ratios in the Baltic region. This approach narrowly focuses force posture to reduce that specific area of Russian superiority. The approach most closely matches the requirements identified during MDO concept development.

*Invest in a multidomain alliance.* This strategic approach implements only the multidomain package of *privilege armed conflict* to increase the chance of successful implementation. The package consists of MDC2, long-range fires units, and munitions. This package best enables the Joint Force by setting the conditions for gaining air freedom of maneuver and Allies by creating a framework by which they can leverage some of the specific multidomain capabilities that only the United States can provide. This package accepts the risk that sufficient maneuver combat power will not be available to deter or defeat a Russian *fait accompli*.

*Build visible presence.* This strategic approach implements only the “maneuver presence package” of *privilege armed conflict* to increase the chance of successful implementation. The package consists of three armored brigade combat teams (ABCTs) ready for instant employment and a narrow geographic focus on northeastern NATO Allies, which, for the purposes of this discussion, includes the Baltic states and Poland. As opposed to the multidomain package, which enables Joint and Allied forces, this package improves the Army’s ability to conduct large-scale ground operations. It accepts the risk that Russian anti-access/area-denial (A2/AD) will be able to isolate ground forces.

## **ASSESSING THE STRATEGIC APPROACHES: DECISION CRITERIA AND RISK FACTORS**

To evaluate these different strategic approaches, the study team analyzed each against a range of criteria and risk factors. The study developed three categories of criteria and risk factors.

- Strategic and operational factors relate to the impact of the various strategic approaches on the ability of the Joint Force to achieve military and strategic objectives.
- Institutional factors assess the impact of the various strategic approaches on the Army across the entire force, not just in Europe.
- Environmental factors assess the sensitivity of the various strategic approaches to possible changes in the operational, strategic, and political environment.

Within these categories, the study team developed 17 criteria and risk factors intended to provide a comprehensive assessment that includes the strategic (S), operational (O), institutional (I), and environmental factors (E) of any given force posture. Eight of these criteria and risk factors were selected to influence the force posture recommendation.

- S1. The ability to defeat, and thereby credibly deter, Russian armed conflict directed against a NATO ally at acceptable cost. This achieves policy aim while avoiding Pyrrhic victory.
- S2. The ability to effectively compete below armed conflict with Russia.
- S3. The extent to which force posture provides escalation advantage and stability in a crisis by allowing decisionmakers on both sides the opportunity and time for restraint but does not force them into making escalatory decisions early in a crisis, and avoids the 1914 syndrome.
- S4. The extent to which force posture provokes Russian political and military reactions without the ability for policymakers to adjust subsequently as necessary.
- S5. The extent to which the force posture enhances the overall political cohesion of NATO and leads to increased political will and military capabilities of individual Allies.
- I1. The degree to which the force posture impacts Army global readiness and force generation.

- I2. The likely response from the various components, other services, the Department of Defense (DoD), Congress, or Allies and the degree to which negative responses can prevent successful implementation.
- E1. The extent to which the force posture is vulnerable to a significant reduction in future defense budgets, forcing a future Secretary of the Army to choose between *breaking the strategy* and *breaking the army*.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The principal investigators recommend *invest in a multidomain alliance*. As the name suggests, this strategic approach enables the Joint Force and multinational partners to maximize their capabilities. It makes best use of the Army's top modernization priority (long-range fires) in a way that alters the strategic balance of a theater to avert a potentially catastrophic, albeit low probability, scenario of armed conflict. More importantly, this strategic approach is far more stable in a crisis, as it does not place policymakers in having to rush this critical, escalatory capability into theater at a moment of high tension. As opposed to *build visible presence*, it also incentivizes allies to invest more by showing US resolve but in a manner that does not replicate capabilities that they can provide. Moreover, *invest in a multidomain alliance* has the flexibility to allow a later buildup of heavy forces if conditions still warrant.

Three alternative conditions worth noting would lead to the adoption of the other strategic approaches.

1. **If the combination of the other 1+3 threats (China, North Korea, Iran, violent extremist organizations) far outweigh that of Russia.** In this instance, *privilege global competition* provides maximum flexibility to respond to those other threats. This strategic approach competed so well because it is the closest to the current force posture, which is the product of an array of pressures, most of which still exist. This "status quo plus" option places a higher emphasis on institutional sustainability and satisfying multiple demands.
2. **If there is a high likelihood that defense budgets will significantly decline in the next several years.** *Privilege armed conflict* was eliminated as an option because it was deemed too difficult to implement so much in a short time. But this strategic approach becomes viable if there is only a short window to achieve (or at least initiate) significant change. In that case, the Army loses nothing by trying to accomplish as much as possible. Moreover, as the option with the lowest sustaining cost, it would continue to provide the greatest strategic and operational effect over time.
3. **If there is a high likelihood of war with China.** *Invest in a multidomain alliance* is a multidomain solution that seeks to enable the remainder of the Joint Force. But there would be little air and naval capability to enable in case of a war with China. In that scenario, it would be best to have the strongest possible presence of ground maneuver forces to maintain a credible deterrent against Russian opportunism.

## CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

### SCOPE AND CONCEPTUAL APPROACH

In August 2018, then-Secretary of the Army Mark Esper directed the US Army War College to make recommendations regarding what US Army force posture, capabilities, footprint, and command and control structure in Europe were necessary to meet the objectives identified in the unclassified *Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy* (NDS) by 2028. In addition to aligning this study with key documents such as the *Army Vision*, *Army Strategy*, *Army Modernization Strategy*, and *The US Army in Multi-Domain Operations, 2028*, the decade-long time horizon had two principal benefits. The first was to focus the study on specific, actionable recommendations. Overseas force posture is one of the most enduring – and difficult to alter – elements of Army structure; for results to be realized by 2028, work must begin now.

Yet at the same time, a great deal can change within nine years. If one looks back over the previous 10 years, much has changed in terms of US policy, the outlook of allies, the actions of competitors, and the trajectory of military developments. The aim point of 2028 forced the team to grapple with the implications of a wide range of plausible futures in the geostrategic, political, military, and technological environment. The ideal force posture needs to be adaptive enough to remain viable despite these potential swings in resources, military balance, or the domestic politics of allies. Put differently, **the challenge of developing force posture is to develop one solution that might be put to the test by a range of different possible futures.** Preparing for a range of possible futures led the team to favor adaptability and resilience along with strategic and operational effect. In an era of upheaval, the Army cannot afford to stake its utility to the nation on a force posture that can be rendered obsolete by a single budget, new technology, or foreign election.

By taking this conceptual approach, the group consciously adopted the metaphor of a projected storm track of a hurricane; the focus on 2028 forced the team to deal with a large cone of unpredictability. This approach is in contrast to the alternative approach of forecasting a single future and then designing a force posture optimized to that prediction. In an era of political and technological upheaval, others might feel confident enough to commit billions of dollars, thousands of troops, and, perhaps most importantly, the credibility of the United States on the accuracy of their foresight. Our group did not. If anything, the “stickiness” of force posture—commitments tend to persist for decades, long past their initial rationale—suggests that, if anything, 2028 is too close a time horizon. The study team, therefore, sought to account for a range of future possibilities.

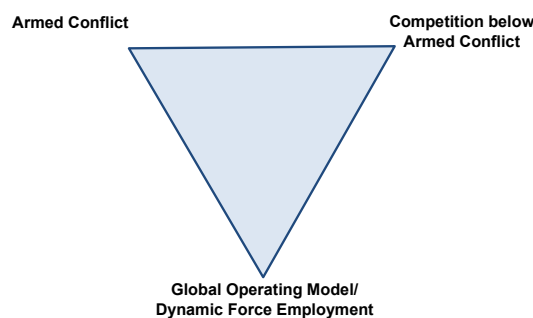
### STRATEGIC FOUNDATION: NATIONAL DEFENSE STRATEGY

The task of accounting for an uncertain future was made easier by the solid foundation of unusually specific strategies and concepts, genres that all too often default to amorphous generality. Though, undoubtedly, US policy and the US way of war will change with time, current plans at least provide a fixed point from which to shift.

The starting point for this study is the unclassified summary of the NDS (any future reference to the NDS in this report will be a reference to the unclassified summary of the NDS, referenced above). As outlined in the unclassified summary of that document, the Department of Defense (DoD) is reorienting toward long-term strategic competition with China and Russia. One central element of this shift is the development of a lethal, agile, and resilient force posture capable of deterring and, if necessary, defeating armed aggression, while also enabling effective competition below armed conflict.

European force posture, however, cannot be viewed in isolation. The NDS also states the need for increased global strategic flexibility and freedom of action through dynamic force employment. The first assumption of this report is that these three imperatives—roughly stated as the ability to fight wars, the ability to provide useful options for policymakers outside of traditional armed conflict, and the need to preserve institutional flexibility—will all continue to be valid nonnegotiable requirements. These trade-offs, of course, have been the case throughout the history of the United States, and will likely continue. Past attempts to simplify strategic calculations by disavowing one of these imperatives has always proved untenable in the end. Typically, this mistake has featured a desire to withdraw solely into conventional state-on-state conflict, though calls to concentrate solely on counterinsurgency, irregular warfare, coercive diplomacy, or some other “war of the future” type are equally misguided. Conventional force is too tightly bound into the fabric of US diplomatic and informational power, and the risks of failure too great for any policymaker to accept. Similarly, however urgent any threat seems in the moment, policymakers must hedge against a range of threats as well as preserve long-term institutional health; both of these requirements favor retaining forces in the United States.

To visualize the requirement to account for all three imperatives, the study team developed the triangular graphic depicted in figure 1. To be acceptable, any strategic approach must fall within the boundaries, yet there is room for variation within that space. One strategic approach might privilege one apex or axis over another.



**Figure 1. Conceptual diagram of strategic trade-offs**

To emphasize this last point, figure 1 is not meant to imply that the three imperatives are mutually exclusive. In fact, given sufficient resources, all are equally achievable. But the study found no time in the past when national priorities did not require some trade-off. Thus, the ability to rapidly deploy forces, for instance, is the essence of dynamic



force employment but it also has significant benefits for the ability to conduct armed conflict or competition below armed conflict. Two factors, however, do necessitate some strategic trade-offs between these imperatives.

The first factor is the nature of the Russian threat. As we will discuss at greater length in the next chapter, the most likely geographic area for armed conflict is the Baltic region while the most likely areas for competition below armed conflict are the Balkan, Black Sea, and Caucasus regions. These probabilities do not, of course, preclude competition in the Balkans, Black Sea, and Caucasus from escalating into conflict or assume no competition below armed conflict in the Baltic states. Any posture will require investment in infrastructure to permit Army forces to respond where required, whether in response to conflict or competition below armed conflict. Included in that investment should be command and control relationships that allow a US Army headquarters to incorporate Allied and partner forces.

Thus, depending on how one weights the importance and likelihood of those missions, it will naturally lead to a different balance of geographic emphasis. Furthermore, there is a tension in the types of forces that are necessary. Armored brigade combat teams (ABCTs) have a role in competition below armed conflict and special operations forces have a role in armed conflict. But neither is the most critical capability for each respective mission set. When combined with the downward pressure on overseas force posture exerted by dynamic force employment, there are some difficult decisions to be made between the two.

The second factor is the nature of ground forces. Though air and maritime forces are certainly not immune from the tyranny of geography, in a mature theater like Europe, air forces in particular can quickly redeploy from elsewhere. Army forces are far more difficult and time-consuming to deploy. Consequently, the Army faces the most acute tensions between positioning forces where they are combat credible and maintaining strategic flexibility.

## **OPERATIONAL FOUNDATION: MULTIDOMAIN OPERATIONS AND ECHELONS ABOVE BRIGADE CONCEPTS**

By necessity, any recommendations for force posture in 2028 require a firm grasp of Army capabilities and methods at that time, plus some idea of the relative strengths and weaknesses of this future force in comparison to adversaries. Fortunately, the Army recently published two concepts that provide such a foundation: *The US Army in Multi-Domain Operations, 2028* and the *Echelons above Brigade Concept*. As concepts, they are neither policy nor doctrine. Some of the organizations and capabilities described within those documents will emerge in different form, while others might never be fielded. Nonetheless, both concepts were based on extensive analysis, wargaming, and experimentation. Thus, not only are they the most authoritative statements about how the US Army will look in 2028, they are also some of the best grounded.

Both *Multi-Domain Operations* and *Echelons above Brigade Concept* were published in late 2018, which allowed them to incorporate the strategic direction given in the NDS and the *Army Vision*. Indeed, they can be regarded as the Army's first draft of an operational vision to realize the NDS. This nesting is essential for this study because

the use of multidomain operations (MDO) as a basis ensures that any recommendations are complementary to the line of direction being pursued by the other services and also ensures the findings fit within the policy framework governing the US relationships with Allies and partners. It is a simple truth that any recommendations regarding US Army posture that do not take into account the Joint and multinational context would be entirely useless. Undoubtedly, US policy will evolve over the next decade. Nonetheless, the NDS provides an anchoring point to describe the framework within which the Army must work to achieve strategic objectives. For the reasons described above, this study will assess the various options in light of their vulnerability to change, but those “what ifs” will proceed from the common basis of the NDS.

For the purposes of this study, one of the most important ideas contained in MDO is *calibrated force posture*, a broad term that goes far beyond the mere matching of units to installations. Instead, calibrated force posture is the combination of capacity, capability, position, and the ability to maneuver across strategic distances. As such, it necessarily includes consideration of such elements as authorities and access, the balance of capabilities across the Total Army, unit readiness, and strategic transportation networks and an enemy’s ability to interdict them. Thus, the question directed by the Secretary of the Army is essentially to define calibrated force posture in greater detail and within the specific context of Europe in 2028.

Though compliant with the NDS and explicitly written to address the challenges of China and Russia, MDO is also the Army Operating Concept. Its purpose is to provide a generalized description of future operational methods and structures to guide force development. It therefore does not incorporate some considerations that are outside of the purview of concepts but that are essential to strategy, such as shocks that would alter its underlying assumptions, the reactions of adversaries, long-term institutional sustainability, the domestic political concerns of allies, or the effect of the concept on crisis stability. Concept writers deliberately exclude these considerations from their processes so they might develop the optimal operational solution to a problem.

The US Army War College is the right institution to build upon that operational analysis, filtering it through the lenses of policy and strategy to determine in what ways purely military solutions must be modified to achieve national aims in a real-world setting. Therefore, this study is a link in a larger dialogue between the DoD and the US Army. The Army took the NDS and developed MDO as a description of how that strategic guidance would translate into operational approaches. This study examines those solutions to make recommendations regarding European force posture; to inform the Army’s input to DoD on how the NDS might need to be modified and its input to the other services to give them further details regarding the Army’s path; and to inform the continued evolution of the Army’s MDO concept.

## **METHODOLOGY AND ORGANIZATION**

The study team drew on a wide array of sources. The literature review included official documents, classified and unclassified, as well as a large and diverse sample of the considerable open-source commentary on various aspects of future Army force structure. The team consulted with relevant offices within the Office of the Secretary of

Defense, the Joint Staff, the Department of the Army, US European Command (EUCOM), and US Army Europe. Additionally, team members drew on a number of external experts from think tanks in Washington, DC, and London, as well as many allies. Naturally, the findings and recommendations in this work are the sole responsibility of the study team. No entity outside of the US Army War College was asked to endorse or sanction any part of this study.

The study is organized in six chapters, including this introduction. The second and third chapters provide an overview of political and military trends in Russia and the remainder of Europe, respectively. The fourth chapter examines the likely state of US military capabilities in 2028, paying particular attention to the most important elements of force posture. These discrete elements (called *force posture levers* within this study) can be arranged in many different combinations. The fifth chapter is the heart of the study: It begins by identifying five different strategic approaches that combine these levers into internally coherent packages. The fifth chapter then offers a list of potential decision criteria and risk factors by which the strategic approaches can be evaluated. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the study team's recommendation, but we do not regard this bottom-line answer as the most important element of the study. Instead, the real value is the identification of the difficult trade-offs within the strategic approaches combined with the framework for decision embodied within the decision criteria and risk factors. The sixth chapter offers some final thoughts on immediate consequences and suggestions for further work. Appendices one through four provide a detailed explanation of the strategic approaches and criteria so that others can better assess, and hopefully improve upon, the study team's work. Lastly, the final appendix provides a background of the principal investigators and the contributing researchers of this study.



## CHAPTER 2. A STRATEGIC AND OPERATIONAL ANALYSIS OF RUSSIA IN 2028

The year 2019 may mark the lowest point for Russo-American relations since the fall of the Soviet Union. Russia's annexation of Crimea, ongoing support to secessionists in the Donets Basin region of Ukraine, disruptive cyber activities, support for President Bashar al-Assad's regime in Syria, and recent military posturing have made talk of a "reset" in Russo-American relations seem at best naïve. Russia appears to be rejecting the post-World War II order in favor of a "great-power politics" that emphasizes—echoing Thucydides—"fear, honor, and interest."<sup>1</sup> One should not be surprised then that the United States' 2017 *National Security Strategy* labels Russia a "revisionist power" and a "rival" determined to "shift regional balances of power in their favor."<sup>2</sup> Moreover, the 2018 NDS states that Russia and China "want to shape a world consistent with their authoritarian model—gaining veto authority over other nations' economic, diplomatic, and security decisions."<sup>3</sup> In 2018, General Curtis M. Scaparrotti, then-commander of EUCOM, described Russia as determined to "destabilize regional security and disregard international norms."<sup>4</sup>

Russia's revisionism, however, does not fully account for its aggressive behavior. Like any country, Russia seeks security, prosperity, and influence. Russia's sense of security—or perhaps more accurately sense of insecurity—is deeply rooted in its historical exposure to outside invasion, and has been reinforced by NATO expansion and the emergence of color revolutions<sup>5</sup> that threaten Moscow's influence in its near abroad. See appendix 4 for a more comprehensive account of Russian history's influence on its foreign policy.<sup>6</sup> These physical security concerns threaten Russia's sense of its own civilization and plays on cultural notions of honor that are deeply felt by the Russian population. As a result, political assassination attempts, reckless military flybys, declarations to protect the Russian diaspora, inter-theater missile launches, and other micro-aggressions are often welcomed by Russian citizens and serve to bolster President Putin's domestic standing.

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1. Thucydides, *The Landmark Thucydides: A Comprehensive Guide to the Peloponnesian War*, trans. Richard Crawley, ed. Robert B. Strassler (New York: Free Press, 1996), 43.

2. Donald J. Trump, *National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, DC: The White House, 2017).

3. James Mattis, *Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy* (Washington, DC: Office of the Secretary of Defense, 2018).

4. *Hearing to Receive Testimony on the United States European Command in Review of the Defense Authorization Request for Fiscal Year 2019 and the Future Years Defense Program, before the United States Senate Committee on Armed Services*, 115th Cong. (March 8, 2018) (statement of General Curtis M. Scaparrotti, USA).

5. Darya Korsunskaya, "Putin Says Russia Must Prevent 'Color Revolution,'" Reuters, November 20, 2014, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-russia-putin-security-idUSKCN0J41J620141120>; and Neil MacFarquhar, "Vladimir Putin, in First Remarks on Russian Protests, Warns of Potential Chaos," *New York Times*, March 30, 2017.

6. Korsunskaya, "Putin Says."

Such actions, of course, are not simply for public consumption, but also serve specific interests. Prime among those is the establishment of an exclusive military, political, and economic sphere of influence that includes the former Soviet states.<sup>7</sup> This exclusion means Russia will perceive political and economic ties with the West as a threat. Moreover, Moscow seeks to maintain its status as a “global player with global influence.”<sup>8</sup> These two overarching interests combined necessarily entail minimizing the influence of the United States and other Western powers, especially in Russia’s near abroad, and elsewhere, like Syria, where Russia also has interests.<sup>9</sup>

Russia’s perspective is in large part a reaction to perceived encroachment by the West, especially the United States. In the mind of Putin’s Secretary of the Security Council, the United States attempted to “redesign the post-Soviet space in America’s interests.” In Russia’s worldview, “the US created the conditions and pretexts for the color revolutions and financed them lavishly,” with Secretary of the Security Council of Russia Nikolai Patrushev listing US Agency for International Development (USAID), Department of State, and Pentagon contributions to Ukraine totaling \$5 billion over the last two decades.<sup>10</sup> Of course, this view ignores the fact these revolutions and the spread of Western influence is also a function of Russia’s oppressive history. Despite this blind spot, Russia’s pursuit of its interests is in general “fundamentally rational and devoid of eccentricity.”<sup>11</sup> Russian military expert and Center for a New American Security analyst Michael Kofman describes Russian strategy as “reasonable sufficiency,” investing minimum power to achieve maximum strategic goals. Russia’s recent history in Afghanistan and the collapse of the Soviet Union drives a “healthy fear of commitment that could result in overextension, quagmires, and offer opportunities for opponents to counter.”<sup>12</sup>

The fact that Russia prefers to measure its responses should not obscure the seriousness with which they view the West as a threat. Responding to “democratization” initiatives that are funded by the USAID, US Department of State, and pro-democracy nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), the 2016 *Russian National Security Strategy* accused the United States of hubris and ill-intended consequences: “instead of democracy and progress, there is now violence, poverty, social disasters, and total disregard

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7. Robert Person, “Russian Grand Strategy in the 21st Century,” in “Russian Strategic Intentions” (white paper, US Army Training and Doctrine Command [TRADOC], September 25, 2019), 8; and Raphael S. Cohen and Andrew Radin, *Russia’s Hostile Measures in Europe: Understanding the Threat* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2019), 5–8.

8. Person, “Russian Grand Strategy,” 9.

9. Person, “Russian Grand Strategy,” 11.

10. Nikolai Patrushev, “Ukraine Crisis – The View from Russia,” *Guardian*, October 25, 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/oct/24/sp-ukraine-russia-cold-war>, quoted in Matthew Olson, *Deterrence and Reassurance in the Baltics – A Balanced Approach*, Strategy Research Project (Carlisle Barracks, PA: US Army War College, April 1, 2018), 15, <http://publications.armywarcollege.edu/pubs/3586.pdf>; and Peter Conradi, *Who Lost Russia?: How the World Entered a New Cold War* (London: Oneworld, 2017), 167.

11. Gleb Pavlovsky, “Russian Politics under Putin,” *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2016, 10.

12. Michael Kofman, “A Comparative Guide to Russia’s Use of Force: Measure Twice, Invade Once,” *War on the Rocks*, February 16, 2017, <https://warontherocks.com/2017/02/a-comparative-guide-to-russias-use-of-force-measure-twice-invade-once/>.



for human rights.”<sup>13</sup> In each case—not to mention the 2003 Iraq invasion—Putin and many other Russian statesmen believe the American role in bringing down sovereign governments as a form of either malign statecraft or ignorant blunders. Seventeen years removed from the 9/11 attacks, Russia sees Western attempts to spread its version of liberal democracy and free market principles as actions that undermine Russia’s economic and security interests within its historical sphere of influence and, more importantly, its own domestic context.<sup>14</sup>

General of the Army Valery Gerasimov, Chief of Staff of the Russian Federation Armed Forces, has described this kind of “hybrid warfare” as a US and NATO strategy of using military force to promote economic interests “under the slogan of protecting democracy or instilling democratic values in some country.” Gerasimov further described “nonmilitary forms” of confrontation “shifting in the direction of extensive employment of political, economic, diplomatic, information, and other nonmilitary measures, implemented with the involvement of the protest potential of a population.” Gerasimov proposed that Russia implement “new-type warfare” (now known as the “Gerasimov doctrine” by Western analysts) as a response to US confrontations below the threshold of armed conflict.<sup>15</sup>

Russia also faces a growing Islamic threat from abroad and within, which it sometimes accuses the West of exacerbating. In his 2015 UN speech, Putin acknowledged the mistakes of past Soviet dogma, stating, “We remember examples from our Soviet past, when the Soviet Union exported social experiments, pushing for changes in other countries for ideological reasons, and this often led to tragic consequences and caused degradation instead of progress” and then noted the United States was “equally irresponsible” for manipulating Islamic extremist groups to achieve political goals.<sup>16</sup>

From Moscow’s perspective, radical Islam threatens “the very integrity of the Russian state.”<sup>17</sup> This sentiment is of course exacerbated by the secessionist movement in largely Muslim Chechnya, where between 10,000 and 15,000 Russians have died fighting two wars since 1994. Moreover, through immigration (both legal and illegal) and a high birthrate (relative to Slavs), Russia’s Muslim population has grown 40 percent since the collapse of the Soviet Union, now representing 15 percent of the total Russian population. In 1990, Russia had 500 mosques, compared to 8,000 in 2008. By some estimates,

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13. Vladimir Putin, *Russian National Security Strategy* (Moscow, Russia: The Kremlin, December 31, 2015).

14. Vladimir Putin, “Speech at the Munich Conference on Security Policy” (speech, Munich Security Conference, Munich, February 10, 2007).

15. Valery Gerasimov, “Contemporary Warfare and Current Issues for the Defense of the Country,” trans. Harold Orenstein, *Military Review* 97, no. 6 (November–December 2017).

16. Vladimir Putin, “Address to the UN General Assembly” (speech, UN Headquarters, New York, NY, September 28, 2015).

17. Ilan Berman, *Implosion: The End of Russia and What it Means for America* (Washington, DC: Regnery, 2013), 39, quoted in George Michael, “Is a Greater Russia Really So Bad?,” *Military Review* 95, no. 1 (January–February 2015): 105.

Russia is on a glide path to be a majority Muslim state by the middle of the century with significant domestic and geopolitical implications.<sup>18</sup>

Today, more than 2.5 million Muslims live in Moscow alone, more than any European city other than Istanbul, Turkey, and more than in any other non-Islamic country.<sup>19</sup> Fueled by economic stagnation and ethnic isolation, more than a thousand domestic terrorist attacks have occurred in Russia since 2001, which accounts for more than 3,067 civilian deaths.<sup>20</sup> In this light, Russia has a vested interest in countering the rise of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria and other terrorist groups, and the future of Afghanistan and Syria (given regional interests, terrorist movements, and refugee migrations that influence Russia's border countries and domestic Muslim population).

Based on this analysis, the following general principles will likely guide Russian behavior over the foreseeable future.

- Russia will seek to maintain “escalatory dominance” over NATO. Part of that dominance will include efforts to undermine Alliance consensus on how to respond to Russian provocations.
- Because of dwindling resources, Russia desires de-escalation and armament reduction. A decrease in oil revenues will negatively impact Moscow's military modernization and capacity building efforts.
- Russia is unlikely to conduct further offensive conventional military attacks into neighboring states unless Kremlin leaders perceive a competitive buildup of US or international NATO forces that threatens Russian conventional defensive overmatch or the persecution of ethnic Russians in border areas.
- Russia desires removal of sanctions and greater economic inclusion with the West.
- Russia will not return Crimea to Ukraine and will continue support to separatists in Georgia and the Donets Basin.
- Moscow will continue influence operations below the threshold of armed conflict to destabilize NATO relationships and protect Russia's economic interests.
- Russia will try to increase engagement with the United States and will assume the worst if faced with an unpredictable large-scale NATO buildup on its periphery.
- Future admissions to NATO for states in Russia's near abroad will likely be met with aggression.

## EVOLUTION OF RUSSIAN MILITARY CAPABILITIES

The evolution of Russian military capabilities through 2028 will largely depend on how the Kremlin addresses the impact of the country's limited economy and dwindling manpower pool on military readiness. The Russian military today is a fragment of the armed forces of the former Soviet Union and is unlikely to return to such a status in the next decade. Although it has largely retained Soviet-era nuclear capabilities, the Russian

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18. Michael, “Greater Russia,” 104.

19. Michael, “Greater Russia,” 104.

20. “Russian Terrorism Database,” *Global Terrorism Tracker* online, CHC Global & Start, accessed January 4, 2019, <http://globalterrorismdatabase.com/rf/rfexcel.html>.

military struggles with conducting sustained global power projection operations.<sup>21</sup> But Russia's investment and development of new military capabilities, specifically cyber and integrated combined arms operations, do provide it with a wide aperture for competing below the level of armed conflict as well as conducting limited offensive military operations. Should Russia continue to refine its military capabilities, it will become a more dynamic adversary, capable of effectively challenging NATO and the United States at levels below armed conflict while providing scalable opportunities at levels above.

## DEVELOPMENT OF THE FUTURE RUSSIAN FORCE

Russia's economic limitations will restrict what capabilities it will be able to develop and field. Domestically, Russia is a nation in relative economic decline.<sup>22</sup> In 2016, Russian defense spending was 4.5 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) or \$60.83 billion (USD). But the impact of Western sanctions and low oil prices forced Russian leaders to reduce defense spending to 3.1 percent or \$42.28 billion (USD).<sup>23</sup> In comparison, the US spent \$600 billion in 2016 and China \$228 billion (both USD); for China, that represented 1.9 percent of GDP.<sup>24</sup>

The impact of US and EU sanctions and Russia's current economic conditions are much debated. Russia is financially and politically isolated from EU and Western markets, limiting foreign capital investment opportunities abroad. Oil and gas exports were temporarily disrupted due to Western companies pulling out of shared development plans and denied extraction equipment and parts that were being imported from the West. Despite an overall 24 percent decline in energy infrastructure investments due to the drop in oil prices, imports of specialized extraction equipment from Western companies dropped by 50 percent, while Chinese imports rose by 8 percent.<sup>25</sup> This disruption represented a loss for both Russia and those companies, which were responsible for more than 26 percent of extraction.<sup>26</sup> Some indicators suggest the country's economic plight, specifically price increases and unemployment, rank far higher as a concern for the Russian public than restricted political freedoms. A recent Levada Center Poll indicated that economic concerns ranked highest among the population, specifically, price increases (62 percent), poverty (44 percent), and unemployment (36 percent). Civil rights

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21. Adam Taylor, "How Scary is Putin's Russia Compared to the Soviet Union? This Chart Has some Answers," *Washington Post*, March 14, 2014.

22. Andrew Movchan, *Decline, Not Collapse: The Bleak Prospects for Russia's Economy* (Moscow, Russia: Carnegie Moscow Center, February 2017), 1-2.

23. "Russian Military Budget," GlobalSecurity, updated February 12, 2019, <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/russia/mo-budget.htm>.

24. "What Does China Really Spend on Its Military?," ChinaPower, October 9, 2018, <https://chinapower.csis.org/military-spending/>.

25. Richard Connolly, "The Empire Strikes Back: Economic Statecraft and the Securitisation of Political Economy in Russia," *Europe-Asia Studies* 68, no. 4 (June 2016): 750-773; and Robert Blackwill and Jennifer M. Harris, *War by Other Means: Geoeconomics and Statecraft* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016), 167.

26. Putin, "Speech at the Munich Conference."

and democratic freedoms were comparatively low at 6 percent.<sup>27</sup> Most tellingly, Russia's growth rate in 2017 measured 173rd in the world. Russia's growth rate plummeted from its 7 percent, 10-year spike, to a negative 0.2 percent growth rate in 2016 before inching back into a positive 1.5 percent growth rate in 2017.<sup>28</sup> Russia's GDP growth for 2019 is 1.2 percent.<sup>29</sup> Military spending appears to be in comparable decline from its 2015 peak of 5.4 percent of GDP, notably with 60.5 percent of that dedicated to procurement and research and development.<sup>30</sup>

Though it is currently stagnant, Russia's economy appears stable. Russia's GDP purchasing power parity ranks 6th in the world and Russia's \$35 billion current account balance is 11th in the world, on this measure, the United States ranks dead last given its deficit of \$449 billion.<sup>31</sup> In 2017, Russia's national debt as a percentage of GDP was 12.6 percent with a \$103 billion trade surplus compared to an EU average debt percentage of 81.6 percent.<sup>32</sup> Russia's two largest income earners have been largely unaffected. Oil revenue accounts for over half of Russia's economy, with 20 percent of its budget originating from European oil and natural gas sales, and Russian energy exports remain critical to Europe with Germany importing half of its gas from Russia.<sup>33</sup> Russia continues to be the world's second largest arms and munitions exporter.<sup>34</sup>

Ironically, the long-term effect of Western imposed economic sanctions could potentially strengthen Russia's domestic economy and drive it closer to China. Russia has turned east for Western import substitutions and has made modest improvements in its domestic agricultural and manufacturing industries.<sup>35</sup> Additionally, the sanctions have provided Putin a convenient and timely external scapegoat. As noted by Richard Connolly, a British expert on Russia's political economy, "Instead of causing elite dissatisfaction, elite cohesion appeared to have strengthened. And instead of imposing significant economic pain, sanctions merely gave the leadership a convenient alibi for what was already a poorly performing economy."<sup>36</sup>

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27. "The Most Alarming Problems," Yuri Levada Analytical Center, March 14, 2019, <https://www.levada.ru/en/2019/03/14/the-most-alarming-problems-2/>.

28. "Russia," The World Factbook, CIA, accessed March 3, 2020, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/rs.html>.

29. World Bank Group, *Russia Economic Report: Weaker Global Outlook Sharpens Focus on Domestic Reforms*, 42nd ed. (Washington, DC: World Bank, December 2019), <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/russia/publication/rer>.

30. Connolly, "Empire Strikes Back," 756.

31. "Russia," The World Factbook.

32. Allen C. Lynch, "What Russia Will Be," *American Interest*, October 25, 2018.

33. Connolly, "Empire Strikes Back"; Lynch, "What Russia Will Be"; and Andrew Holland, "What Trump Should Have Told Germany about Russian Gas," *Politico*, July 11, 2018.

34. Connolly, "Empire Strikes Back," 756.

35. Connolly, "Empire Strikes Back," 762.

36. Connolly, "Empire Strikes Back," 769.

In summary, Russia's economy has gone through multiple phases, generally aligned with the last three decades: a near collapse from 1989 to 1998, unprecedented growth from 1998 to 2008, a relative slowdown toward decline during the years 2009 through 2014, and a stable but fragile existence since 2014. Currently, Russia works to diversify its import economy, strengthen its domestic agricultural and manufacturing base, and diversify from an overreliance on the volatile energy and defense sectors. Health care, infrastructure, and information technologies continue to sag, and inflation and unemployment are slowly increasing. Russia's economy has trended positively and negatively with oil prices, but a domestic budget surplus and state reserves have given Putin monetary tools to keep inflation under control. Russia is weaker and less apt to enact export bans, and Putin most likely cannot absorb much more economic pressure without considerable domestic unrest. Military investments have likely plateaued, leaving Russia challenged to maintain its current military capacity and unlikely to expand it. Declining oil prices forced Russia to shelve plans for a long-term expansion of its armed forces in 2014.<sup>37</sup> Kofman has observed that Russia is not creating a large reserve of the type that would be necessary for a foreign occupation.<sup>38</sup> What's more, Russian advancements in ground force systems have not materialized in large-scale production. Despite proclamations in 2016 to purchase 2,300 T-14 Armata main battle tanks, the tank is just past prototype development, and the Russian industrial base will most likely not be able to produce the desired numbers. In fact, Russia's "New Look" reform is focused on optimizing the Russian army for local and limited conflicts in post-Soviet space, not large-scale conflict against NATO.<sup>39</sup>

If it continues along its current trajectory, Russia's economic decline will negatively impact military reforms in the next 10 years, despite serious and significant efforts to modernize the force. On the land component, the Russian military has been working to modernize its force with the intent of increasing its lethality and survivability. By developing better long-range conventional strike capabilities, integrated fire control systems, and better intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) assets, Russia seeks to acquire a faster, more lethal "kill chain."<sup>40</sup> Russia has also been addressing command and control shortfalls, seeking a Unified Information Space (defined as "enhanced military command, control, communications, computer, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance systems (C4ISR) to enable centralized command and control within a military

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37. Lynch, "What Russia Will Be."

38. Michael Kofman, "Permanently Stationing US Forces in Poland Is a Bad Idea, but One Worth Debating," *War on the Rocks*, October 12, 2018, <https://warontherocks.com/2018/10/permanently-stationing-u-s-forces-in-poland-is-a-bad-idea-but-one-worth-debating/>.

39. Dave Majumdar, "Russia's Armata: The Super Tank Coming in Tiny Numbers with No Real Enemy to Fight," *National Interest*, November 14, 2017, <https://nationalinterest.org/blog/the-buzz/russias-armata-the-super-tank-coming-tiny-numbers-no-real-23195>; and Andrew Osborn, "Despite Putin's Swagger, Russia Struggles to Modernize Its Navy," *Reuters*, February 21, 2019, [https://www.reuters.com/article/us-russia-military-insight/despite-putins-swagger-russia-struggles-to-modernize-its-navy-idUSKCN1QA0U7?utm\\_source=applenews](https://www.reuters.com/article/us-russia-military-insight/despite-putins-swagger-russia-struggles-to-modernize-its-navy-idUSKCN1QA0U7?utm_source=applenews).

40. Scott Boston and Dara Massicot, *The Russian Way of Warfare: A Primer* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2017), 6-7.

‘unified space’ integrated into a larger government ‘unified information space’),<sup>41</sup> and has increased integration of air defense systems within its formations.<sup>42</sup> Directly related to landpower, Russia has begun to develop new-generation armored systems, such as the T-14 Armata, which are superior in a number of ways to current versions of the American M1 tank.<sup>43</sup>

Moreover, the current projection for land component manpower available to Russia in 2028 also indicates the potential decline in human capital available for military service. According to the Finnish Defence Research Agency, “The lack and quality of human resources are among the key problems facing the Russian armed forces. It is expected that the number of working age males in the population aged 15–59 will gradually decline from 44 million in 2014 to under 37 million in 2035.”<sup>44</sup> Russia is working diligently on improving the image of the armed forces as well as adjusting age and fitness standards to address the predicted shortfalls in available military manpower.<sup>45</sup> Russian estimates vary widely, but there were approximately 425,000 contracted soldiers in 2018 as opposed to only 300,000 in 2015.<sup>46</sup>

Maintaining a larger number of contract soldiers will require a significant sustained investment in personnel that will also detract resources from its already shrinking military budget. Priority, however, will be likely given to the Western Military District, though at the expense of units in other districts where the perceived threat is lower.

To overcome some of these manpower concerns, the Military Industrial Commission of Russia (MICR) is trying to leverage artificial intelligence (AI) technologies and intends to have 30 percent of its combat power be remote-controlled or autonomous by 2030.<sup>47</sup> Russia spends \$12.5 billion a year in AI research compared to \$7.4 billion for the United States and China’s \$3 billion.<sup>48</sup> Although Russia has a limited ability to invest in AI, Moscow will likely pursue selective conventional military and defense technologies where they could hold a competitive advantage over the United States and low-cost

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41. Dave Johnson, *Russia’s Approach to Conflict—Implications for NATO’s Deterrence and Defence*, NDC Research Papers Series, no. 111 (Rome: NATO Defence College, April 2015), 4.

42. Boston and Massicot, *Russian Way of Warfare*, 7.

43. Kris Osborn, “Tank Fight: Russia’s Killer T-14 Armata Tank vs. America’s M1 Abrams (Who Wins?),” *Buzz* (blog), *National Interest*, October 13, 2018, <https://nationalinterest.org/blog/buzz/tank-fight-russias-killer-t-14-armata-tank-vs-americas-m1-abrams-who-wins-33431>.

44. Arseniy Svynarenko, *The Russian Demography Problem and the Armed Forces: Trends and Challenges until 2035* [in Finnish], Publication 6/2016 (Riihimäki, Finland: Finnish Defence Research Agency, 2016), 76.

45. Svynarenko, *Russian Demography Problem*, 79–80.

46. Scott Boston et al., *Preparing for Near-Peer Conflict on the Ground: Comparing US and Russian Conventional Ground Combat Capability* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2018), 154.

47. Greg Allen and Taniel Chang, *Artificial Intelligence and National Security* (Cambridge, MA: Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, 2017), 21.

48. Julian E. Barnes and Josh Ching, “The New Arms Race in AI,” *Wall Street Journal*, March 2, 2018, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-new-arms-race-in-ai-1520009261>; and Alina Polyakova, *Weapons of the Weak: Russia and AI-Driven Asymmetric Warfare* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institute, November 15, 2018) <https://www.brookings.edu/research/weapons-of-the-weak-russia-and-ai-driven-asymmetric-warfare/>.

asymmetric warfare to correct the imbalance between Russia and the West in the conventional domain. Much of this technology will support low-cost asymmetric measures associated with information operations, as well as intelligence collection and analysis, for which the United States and NATO are not well-prepared.<sup>49</sup> What is not clear is, even if they can acquire the technology, the Russian military will not be able to field it over the next 10 years.

These points suggest that while the Russians will be able to concentrate highly capable forces in relatively small areas as well as compensate for conventional shortcomings, they will be challenged to sustain long-term operations across a broad front or respond to geographically dispersed threats. Given the combination of economic and demographic factors, we expect the following five trends will impact the development of Russian landpower.

- First, the land component will be approximately the same size as today, which is about 771,000 active personnel, or perhaps slightly smaller.<sup>50</sup>
- Second, if current economic conditions remain, Russia's plan for military modernization will be frustrated. Russia may field improved combat systems, such as the T-14 or S-400 upgrades, etc.; however, they may not field their desired quantity.
- Third, lack of investment in logistics and mobility systems on the scale required will leave the Russian army challenged in sustaining combat operations greater than a few weeks, less in a contested environment.
- Fourth, Russia will adapt to shortcomings in funding by relying on asymmetric capabilities as well as proxy forces, including contractors. Their nuclear arsenal will also serve as a means of escalation management, so we would expect them to consider first use conditions.
- Fifth, Russia will avoid military operations that involve direct armed conflict with the West. Instead, Russia will focus on informational activities to discredit NATO, the EU, and member organizations and governments. Examples of these information-based operations include election interference, malign cyber activities, propaganda, and exploiting internal differences.

These limitations will continue to limit Russian adventurism to short-duration events based on deception and speed in hopes of accomplishing a *fait accompli* to achieve national objectives.<sup>51</sup> Although Russia is improving its military transportation and infrastructure, the authors estimate that this improvement is unlikely to progress to a point that allows Russian forces to conduct sustained and prolonged offensive and defensive operations longer than 8 to 12 weeks against a strong peer competitor, based upon the buildup for the 7-day Vostok 2018 exercise, the volume of operations, and the conduct

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49. Polyakova, *Weapons of the Weak*.

50. "Russian Armed Forces," ArmedForces.eu, n.d., <https://armedforces.eu/Russia>.

51. *Implementation of the National Defense Strategy: Hearings before the Senate Armed Services Committee, 116th Cong.* (January 29, 2019) (statement of Elbridge A. Colby, Director of the Defense Program, Center for a New American Security).

of the exercise in a permissive environment.<sup>52</sup> Russia will maintain a capacity to conduct limited expeditionary operations on a regional basis, though operations conducted further from Russia are more likely to include Spetsnaz advisors, mercenaries, air support, and other high-yield/low-density capabilities vice traditional ground troops. Russian investment in long-range strategic conventional weaponry such as the 9K720 Iskander with the 9M728 cruise missile, the S-300 with the 9M82MD missile and the S-400 with the 40N6 missile will serve as a deterrent to offensive operations by an adversary. But it is unlikely Russia will have the necessary quantity of these systems to prevent a sustained response.<sup>53</sup>

## **HYBRID WAR: OVERCOMING CONVENTIONAL SHORTCOMINGS WITH NONMILITARY MEANS**

Because of these projected conventional military shortcomings, Russia will continue to rely on and develop nonmilitary means capable of achieving (alone or in concert with military force) its strategic objectives. These nonmilitary means fall into the broad categories of diplomatic, economic, and informational. The following paragraphs discuss how Russia employs each of these means to coerce political behavior.

### **The Diplomatic Instrument of Russia's National Power**

Russian diplomacy is often described as hyperactive, tactically confrontational, deceptive, and reliant on denial tactics through diplomatic channels.<sup>54</sup> This diplomatic engagement includes ruses and falsehoods, as well as deception campaigns directed at any entities that can influence the outcome, regardless of whether the entities are directly involved in the competition. Russia targets its adversaries with these tactics, as well as sometimes targeting neutral countries and even its own allies.<sup>55</sup>

Across Eurasia, Russia relies heavily on diplomatic means to two broad ends. First, it aims to gain influence among former Soviet republics (for example, Belarus, Moldova, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Kazakhstan). Second, Russia attempts to destabilize its near abroad and create weak or failed states where its neighbors are attempting to align more closely with the West. Through these tactics, Russia seeks to achieve *political capture* of foreign governments through diplomatic channels.<sup>56</sup> In doing so, the Kremlin erodes democratic establishments, manipulates state entities, and appeals to corrupt officials in

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52. "Breaking Down Russia's Vostok Exercise," War on the Rocks, September 25, 2018, <https://warontherocks.com/2018/09/breaking-down-russias-vostok-exercise/>.

53. Boston and Massicot, *Russian Way of Warfare*, 4.

54. Hiski Haukkala and Nicu Popescu, "Introduction: Russian Futures," in *Russian Futures: Horizon 2025*, ed. Haukkala and Popescu, Report no. 26 (Paris: European Union Institute for Security Studies, March 2016), 7.

55. Picard578, "Surprise and Deception in War (Carl von Clausewitz Expanded)," *Defense Issues: Military and General Security* (blog), September 17, 2018, <https://defenseissues.net/2018/09/17/surprise-and-deception-in-war-carl-von-clausewitz-expanded/>.

56. Heather A. Conley et al., *The Kremlin Playbook: Understanding Russian Influence in Central and Eastern Europe* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, October 2016), 2.



influential positions. Collectively, these actions subvert national policies and decisions, and challenge liberal systems from within.

The Center for Strategic and International Studies identified four drivers that foster Russian political capture. First, Russia sponsors right wing political parties, individuals, and NGOs to help the leaders of these organizations rise into positions of power and influence. Second, Russia invests in the media sector to relay misinformation that weakens opponents, improves public sentiment toward the political parties it favors, and inspires anti-Western sentiment. Third, Russia's hybrid political regime, characterized by democratic and predominantly authoritarian traits, inspires other leaders to emulate it. Finally, the Kremlin backs pro-Russian businessmen to gain political offices.

### **The Economic Instrument of Russia's National Power**

Russia exerts economic influence over many countries to achieve lasting *economic capture*. The Center for Strategic and International Studies analyses of economic data from 2004 to 2014 show that Russia's economic footprint in Bulgaria, Hungary, Latvia, Serbia, and Slovakia was significant, ranging from 11 to 22 percent of GDP.<sup>57</sup> Four factors emerge that explain how Russia gains influence.

First, corruption is a key enabler. Russian companies thrive in opaque business environments with weak or loosely enforced regulations. All five countries in the Center for Strategic and International Studies study finished in the bottom half among European countries rated in Transparency International's *Corruption Perceptions Index 2019*.<sup>58</sup> Second, Russia undermines public opinion and confidence among population segments that have not benefited from globalization, and this fuels sentiments that Western democratic and economic systems are unviable.<sup>59</sup> Third, Russia makes politically motivated direct investments in key economic sectors such as finance, media, telecommunications, transportation, and real estate. These investments increase Russian influence among the policymakers who rely on media, for example, to communicate to the public. Finally, massive multibillion-dollar Russian business deals offer promises of economic growth and are powerful means to gain influence and expand corruption.

For example, over the last year the extent to which Russia has used European banks to launder hundreds of billions of dollars has come to light.<sup>60</sup> Baltic banks, particularly in Estonia and Lithuania, were often the vehicles for deposits of illicit Russian money that was then transmitted to other financial institutions across Europe. Deutsche Bank alone has been accused of laundering €160 billion, having acted as a correspondent bank for Danske Bank's branch in Estonia from 2007 to 2015.<sup>61</sup>

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57. Conley et al., *Kremlin Playbook*, xi-xii.

58. Transparency International, *Corruption Perceptions Index 2019* (Berlin, DE: Transparency International, January 2020), <https://www.transparency.org/cpi2019>.

59. Conley et al., *Kremlin Playbook*, 5.

60. Gregory L. White, "How Europe's Banks Wound up Laundering Russia's Money," *Washington Post*, March 6, 2019.

61. Olaf Storbeck, "Deutsche Bank Launches Second Probe into Danske Scandal," *Financial Times*, January 15, 2019.

Russia also exploits its energy sector for political gain. The oil and natural gas industry is Russia's biggest at an estimated 16 percent of GDP, and by far comprises its most significant export.<sup>62</sup> The sector is predominantly government-owned, and thus a massive source of government revenue. At the same time, overreliance on energy makes the Russian economy vulnerable to fluctuating oil prices, as well as to consumer countries opting to purchase energy resources elsewhere if political disagreements culminate. Sanctions that target oil and gas hit Russia hard, at least in the short term, with the industry rebounding by June 2018 and Moscow's oil and gas index at an all-time high.<sup>63</sup>

Low-interest loans are also part of Russia's economic toolkit. For example, in January 2012 Russia extended a \$3.2 billion, below market rate, emergency loan to Cyprus during its financial crisis when other international creditors refused. In exchange, Russia apparently sought preferential consideration for rights to tap natural gas reserves off the coast of Cyprus, enabling them to better control the global supply.<sup>64</sup> A similar situation recurred in 2014, when Greece looked for alternatives to European creditors by initiating discussions with Russia; this was either a sign of true desperation or very savvy politics. The move ignited concerns that Russia was incentivizing Greece to reject the EU. Others considered it a Greek negotiating tactic against European creditors. Although Russian aid was ultimately not forthcoming, global concerns expanded from focusing on Greek debt to trepidation about greater Russian geostrategic influence through Greece to sow EU discord.<sup>65</sup>

### **The Information Instrument of Russia's National Power**

In 2014, then-Supreme Allied Commander Europe General Philip Breedlove declared that Russia was engaged in "the most amazing information warfare blitzkrieg we have ever seen in the history of information warfare."<sup>66</sup> Russia uses disinformation extensively, with Russian meddling becoming a focus of debate in the United States after the 2016 presidential elections, as well as subsequent elections in Europe. Gerasimov himself expounded the power of information warfare: "The information space opens wide asymmetrical possibilities for reducing the fighting potential of the enemy . . . It is necessary to perfect activities in the information space, including the defense of our own objects."<sup>67</sup> Frequent targets include both NATO Allies and Russia's neighbors, chiefly to the west.

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62. "World Development Indicators: Contribution of Natural Resources to Gross Domestic Product," World Bank, 2010, <https://databank.worldbank.org/2010Contribution-of-Natural-Resources-to-Gross-Domestic-Product-of-Russia/id/386d7a9b>.

63. Henry Foy, "Russian Oil Industry Proves its Resilience," *Financial Times*, June 5, 2018.

64. Jack Ewing, "Greek Crisis Leaves Cyprus Mired in Debt," *New York Times*, April 11, 2012.

65. Paul Sonne and Matina Stevis, "Busting the Myth of Russian Aid to Greece: Kremlin Officials Back Away from Any Idea of Aid Package for Athens," *Wall Street Journal*, July 12, 2015.

66. John Vandiver, "SACEUR: Allies Must Prepare for Russia 'Hybrid War,'" *Stars and Stripes*, September 4, 2014, <https://www.stripes.com/news/saceur-allies-must-prepare-for-russia-hybrid-war-1.301464>.

67. Valery Gerasimov, "The Value of Science Is in the Foresight: New Challenges Demand Rethinking the Forms and Methods of Carrying Out Combat Operations," trans. Robert Coalson, *Military Review* 96, no. 1 (January–February 2016): 27.

When Russia moves into a space, it utilizes information warfare and propaganda to exploit Russian-speaking people and destabilize populations by stoking societal discord.<sup>68</sup> The US *National Security Strategy* points out, “Russia uses information operations . . . to influence public opinion across the globe. Its influence campaigns blend covert intelligence operations and false online personas with state-funded media, third-party intermediaries, and paid social media users or ‘trolls.’”<sup>69</sup> Through these means, Russia attacks and undermines views that counter its interests often in subtle ways that leave people unaware that they are being manipulated.<sup>70</sup>

A recent RAND study highlighted four characteristics of Russian propaganda. First, Russian propaganda is high-volume and multichannel. Flooding the internet overwhelms legitimate messages with false ones. This flooding increases the likelihood that false messages reach people, while also raising perceptions that they are credible. Second, Russian propaganda is rapid, continuous, and repetitive.<sup>71</sup> These characteristics create opportunities for propagandists to form highly resilient first impressions on people. Furthermore, repeating the same messages through multiple channels increases people’s familiarity with it, making it appear substantiated. Third, people often misjudge whether information is false, regularly forget if it is later disproven, are often persuaded by fake evidence, or are duped by seemingly credible propaganda because it seems to be communicated in objective ways. Finally, inconsistencies do not constrain Russian propaganda because people tend not to detect them.

The primary channels for Russia’s influence operations are the internet and social media. Platforms like Facebook are particularly ideal because of the echo chamber effect, in which users select sources that mirror and amplify their own prejudices.<sup>72</sup> The Kremlin employs internet trolls to mass produce misinformation around the clock, spread fake news, create faux political scandals, and interfere with political processes.<sup>73</sup>

Russian information warfare is incredibly difficult to counter. Messages consist of outright fiction or partial truths, which enable Russian propagandists to create false narratives much faster than targets can counter them.<sup>74</sup> Disinformation can be produced and disseminated at great speed from anywhere with an internet connection, and is highly effective relative to its low cost.

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68. Kathleen Hicks et al., *Evaluating Future US Army Force Posture in Europe: Phase II Report* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2016), 69.

69. Trump, *National Security Strategy*, 35.

70. Christopher Paul and Miriam Matthews, *The Russian “Firehose of Falsehood” Propaganda Model: Why It Might Work and Options to Counter It* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2016), 1-2.

71. Paul and Matthews, *Firehose of Falsehood*, 1-2.

72. “Waging War with Disinformation: The Power of Fake News and Undue Influence,” *Economist*, January 25, 2018, <https://www.economist.com/special-report/2018/01/25/waging-war-with-disinformation>.

73. Dmitry Volchek and Daisy Sindelar, “One Professional Russian Troll Tells All,” *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, March 25, 2015, <https://www.rferl.org/a/how-to-guide-russian-trolling-trolls/26919999.html>.

74. Hicks et al., *Future US Army Force Posture*, 46.

For its part, the Kremlin firmly believes that the West, and particularly the United States, targets Russia through the same means. Russia blames Western misinformation for inciting instability and revolution. Washington think tank the Atlantic Council points out:

To the Kremlin, Western support of independent media and NGOs caused the revolutions in Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, and Ukraine (twice) as well as the Arab Spring. Especially in the case of Russia's near neighbors, pro-democratic revolts were considered anti-Russian at their core. In other words, the Kremlin believes that but for Western meddling, those uprisings would not have occurred and neighboring countries would not have pivoted away from Russia.<sup>75</sup>

These beliefs contribute to the Russian government viewing the US State Department and USAID as major threats.<sup>76</sup>

Of course, these measures aren't exclusively employed at levels below armed conflict. At levels above armed conflict they combine with military measures to overcome conventional shortcomings and increase the lethality and speed of the force.

## COMPETITION AT THE LEVEL OF ARMED CONFLICT: THE GRAY ZONE

Russia's gray-zone strategies are typically characterized by three features: hybridity, menace to convention, and risk confusion. Hybridity refers to unique combinations of methods across instruments of national power and domains. Menace to convention refers to the character of these hybrid methods that can achieve outcomes that are traditionally reserved for war.<sup>77</sup> Risk confusion then emerges when the hazards associated with action or inaction appear equally disadvantageous.<sup>78</sup> Essentially, effective gray-zone operations create a security dilemma that transfers the risks of action from the belligerents to the responder.<sup>79</sup> The 2018 seizure of Ukrainian naval assets in the Sea of Azov demonstrates this security dilemma. Although Russian actions violated international norms, those actions compel Ukraine to either accept the seizure or risk armed conflict to regain its personnel and equipment.

In the initial stages of armed conflict, diplomatic efforts and all other levers of national power would be utilized to their fullest capacity to terminate the conflict as quickly as possible. Russia will attempt to dominate the information domain for both its domestic audience and their adversary's public. Misinformation, deceit, and fiction will be utilized to create confusion and doubt about the actual circumstances of the conflict to discredit NATO and to highlight how Western actions are violating international norms. Ultimately, Russia will rely on its military to conduct effective combat operations

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75. Anton Barbashin, *Improving the Western Strategy to Combat Kremlin Propaganda and Disinformation* (Washington, DC: Atlantic Council, May 2018), 2.

76. Charles K. Bartles, "Getting Gerasimov Right," *Military Review* 96, no. 1 (January–February 2016): 33.

77. Nathan Freier, "The Darker Shade of Gray: A New War Unlike Any Other," Center for Strategic and International Studies, July 27, 2018, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/darker-shade-gray-new-war-unlike-any-other>.

78. Freier, "Darker Shade of Gray."

79. Freier, "Darker Shade of Gray."

to deny Western objectives, while attaining time for the diplomatic, informational, and economic efforts to influence or end the conflict.

Employing speed and deception will remain key characteristics of Russian warfare, with the goal of *fait accompli* in hopes of achieving many smaller successes vice a large overwhelming decisive action. Russians continue to focus on air-ground integration capabilities, which both branches are currently developing. One lesson Russia took away from the 2008 conflict in South Ossetia was the need for joint operations across the air and land domains.<sup>80</sup> Russia's movement toward joint air-land operations does have its limits, and at the tactical level, units will fight similar to today by enforcing speed and deception.

While a *fait accompli* may be Russia's best chance for military success, it is not the only one. A number of factors, especially Allied political will and mobility, could allow Russia to defeat NATO forces in combat. Multidomain operations (MDO) facilitate the prevention of Russian military success by improving the US and participating Allies' ability to provide a rapid, coordinated response that would buy time for additional US and Allied forces to arrive. How MDO facilitates that response is considered in chapter 5 and varies by course of action.

At the operational level, Russia will seek to achieve objectives as quickly as possible. Russia will rapidly emplace anti-access/area-denial (A2/AD) capabilities to shape operations and deter counteroffensives. During a ground combat scenario between Russia and the West, one can expect Russia to tailor A2/AD systems against Western strengths such as airpower and command and control capabilities first, and secondly to exploit Russian advantages of indirect fires over Western forces. Russia will expect the West to focus heavily on an aerial campaign. Although Russia will try to create parity between their air forces and that of the West, the gap will remain significant in 2028. Combat operations near Russian borders will present Western aviation planners with the most challenging of scenarios. Russia will continue to maintain three significant air defense rings (Kaliningrad, St. Petersburg, and Moscow), but it should be expected that they will develop more capabilities in other areas as well, such as in Crimea. For example, in 2018, the Russian military emplaced four battalions of S-400 systems in Crimea.<sup>81</sup> These systems provide Russia with significant A2/AD capabilities that can target up to 36 aircraft per missile.

Additionally, each S-400 battalion can provide anti-ballistic and cruise missile capabilities. Russia will most likely continue to upgrade its military capabilities in Crimea to protect the Black Sea Fleet and its southern flank. The Russian goal for its A2/AD capabilities in air defense will be to protect population centers and critical military infrastructure, and to prevent or limit the West's ability to use its preferred Joint doctrine.

After removing the air-ground integration superiority of the West, Russia will rely heavily on indirect fires that can range tactical and operational depths. Comparing current organic indirect systems between an American ABCT and a Russian motor rifle

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80. Boston and Massicot, *Russian Way of Warfare*, 3.

81. "Russia Announces New S-400 Missile Deployment in Crimea amid Ukraine Naval Stand-Off," *Moscow Times*, November 28, 2018, <https://themoscowtimes.com/news/russia-announces-new-s400-missiles-deployment-crimea-amid-ukraine-naval-standoff-63629>.

brigade, Russia maintains a sizable overmatch to the United States.<sup>82</sup> Russian strategic fire systems, such as the 9K720 Iskander with cruise missiles, are capable of reaching deep into the Western rear area with a range of up to 500 kilometers,<sup>83</sup> but the number of available systems will limit what Russia does with the missiles. Russian military commanders will need to be extremely selective in their targeting, focusing on power projection disruption, command and control, and other high value targets.<sup>84</sup>

Russia will also use electronic warfare to disrupt its adversary's ability to communicate to disorient the force. Russia will use GPS jammers to disorient and degrade command and control networks and actively jam communication networks. By 2020, the Russian military will most likely have reequipped and modernized 70 percent of its electronic warfare units.<sup>85</sup> Russia will also use the cyber domain to shape the perceptions of civilian populations, destroy power projection capabilities, target infrastructure, and disrupt network reliability. These activities can be expected to occur in areas inside and outside of contested areas, meaning Russia will target the adversaries' homeland with these operations. Scott Boston of RAND notes, "Russian units will not be expected to follow the same rules in combat as those of Western countries. Their rules of engagement and potentially their authorities to employ capabilities like offensive cyber tools will be different and likely more permissive to better empower their soldiers to gain an advantage on the battlefield."<sup>86</sup> This expectation should be applied to nuclear weapons as well.

## **RUSSIA'S NUCLEAR POLICY**

With the end of the Cold War in 1989, it is hard to imagine any scenario over the next decade where either Russia or the United States would rely on nuclear weapons in any particular conflict. Having said that, Russia's nuclear arsenal is more diverse than the United States' and contains low-yield systems that could find a use if Moscow perceived the stakes high enough. But the main role for Russia's nuclear arsenal will be deterrence and escalation management, which in part depends on there being credible scenarios that would make their use "rational." Russia views nuclear weapons as the top tier of the escalation ladder and would reserve their use until it becomes critical to protect vital Russian interests.

According to section 20 of the 2014 Russian Federation Military Doctrine, "Russia reserves the right to use nuclear weapons in response to a use of nuclear weapons or other weapons of mass destruction against her and (or) her allies, and in a case of aggression against her with conventional weapons that would put in danger the existence of the state."<sup>87</sup> Section 14 of the Russian Federation Military Doctrine provides some insight

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82. Boston et al., *Preparing for Near-Peer Conflict*, xvi.

83. Boston et al., *Preparing for Near-Peer Conflict*, 64–65.

84. Boston and Massicot, *Russian Way of Warfare*, 5.

85. Boston et al., *Preparing for Near-Peer Conflict*, 181.

86. Boston and Massicot, *Russian Way of Warfare*, 11–12.

87. Vladimir Putin, *The Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation* (Moscow, Russia: The Kremlin, 2014).

as to what Russia might perceive as a “danger” to the existence of the state.<sup>88</sup> As this section states, “impeding the operation of systems of state governance and military command and control of the Russian Federation, disruption [of] the functioning of its strategic nuclear forces, missile warning systems, systems of outer space monitoring, nuclear munitions storage facilities, nuclear energy facilities, nuclear, chemical, pharmaceutical and medical industry facilities and other potentially dangerous facilities.”<sup>89</sup>

Three plausible scenarios exist that would lead Russia to employ nuclear weapons. First, and most obvious, is if Moscow believes a nuclear attack is imminent. In this case, Russia would act in self-defense and conduct a preemptive nuclear strike. Second, is the use of nuclear weapons as a tool of escalation management. In this scenario, Russia may opt to use a low-yield nuclear weapon as a symbol of their resolve. Most likely this weapon would be employed in a manner that limits the effect of nuclear weapons such as detonating it in a remote, unpopulated location. More to the point, Russia would avoid employing nuclear capabilities directly against Western forces or population centers, which risks nuclear escalation.

The third and perhaps most plausible scenario would be the use of medium- to low-yield nuclear weapons to prevent defeat in an otherwise conventional clash of forces. As Boston observes, should destruction of the integrated air defense layers arrayed around Russia’s heartland or Kaliningrad coupled with critical losses, “could also be considered an existential threat to the state.”<sup>90</sup> Of course, one cannot know for certain Russia’s tolerance for collateral harm and risk of nuclear escalation; however, given their stated policy, the possibility of the use of nuclear weapons should not be ruled out.<sup>91</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The following are key takeaways from this analysis:

First, Russia is seeking an alternative to a unipolar world order and the ability to have *privileged influence* on its geographical periphery. Competing below the level of armed conflict and within the gray zone provides Russia with the ability to achieve strategic objectives without openly conducting warlike acts.<sup>92</sup> To achieve its strategic objectives during competition below armed conflict and gray-zone operations, Russia will have refined its *whole-of-government* approach.

Second, the Russian Army is more of a border force than an expeditionary one. The Russian Army is designed primarily for defensive operations but possesses limited offensive capability to conduct short-term military operations if required.<sup>93</sup> Military

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88. Boston and Massicot, *Russian Way of Warfare*, 5–6.

89. Putin, *Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation*.

90. Boston and Massicot, *Russian Way of Warfare*, 5–6.

91. David Ochmanek et al., *US Military Capabilities and Forces for a Dangerous World: Rethinking the US Approach to Force Planning* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2017), 34.

92. Freier, “Darker Shade of Gray.”

93. Boston and Massicot, *Russian Way of Warfare*, 5–6.

operations near its borders reduce the logistical requirements for Russia and allow its armed forces to operate under their already established A2/AD canopy.

Third, Russia will attempt to avoid armed conflict with the West or other near-peer competitors. If Russia becomes involved in an armed conflict with a peer or near-peer competitor, the conflict will likely occur in the Russian near abroad, and Russia will seek favorable war termination expeditiously.

Fourth, Kremlin leaders, based on lessons from the 2008 conflict in South Ossetia and the 2014 Ukraine crisis, will emphasize the ability to integrate speed and deception into all characteristics of warfare to prevent a rapid collective military response from the West.

Fifth, Russia will seek to employ capabilities that restrict the military advantages of the West. Sophisticated and abundant air defense capabilities will limit the West's ability to employ our Joint doctrine and fundamentally change the way we fight. Disrupting the West's command and control capabilities will reduce their technological advantages. Information operations will foment dissent and attempt to drive the narrative to break coalitions and alliances and negatively impact political resolve in the West.

Finally, having a nuclear capability is better than employing it. All phases of competition and interactions with Russia will occur under the shadow of Russia's nuclear saber rattling. The ambiguity surrounding Russian nuclear doctrine intentionally leaves open the potential for Russia to use nuclear weapons for nearly any reason in an armed conflict. Although Moscow would not likely be reckless in the application of nuclear weapons, Kremlin leaders may use these weapons if the conflict is progressing unfavorably for them in such a way that could lead to an existential threat.

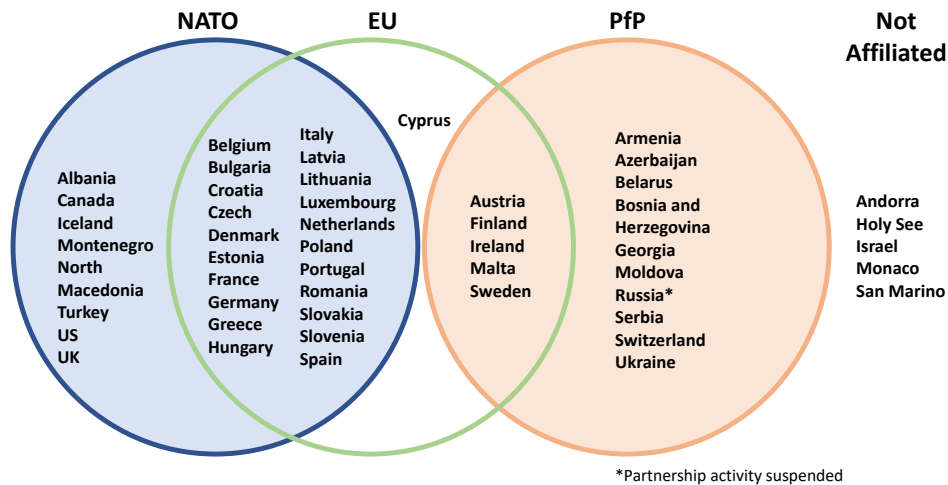
All these key points combined make the Russian military a formidable force when operating near its borders; however, those advantages will reduce quickly during a sustained conflict or when Russian military forces are required to operate in areas far from their borders. In 2028, Russia will continue to prefer to compete below armed conflict and within the gray zone. In these phases, Russia has demonstrated the ability to achieve objectives relating to national interests without creating an existential threat to itself.



## CHAPTER 3. A STRATEGIC AND OPERATIONAL ANALYSIS OF EUROPE IN 2028: DEFINING ALLIES AND PARTNERS

Determining the optimal US Army force posture requires a solid contextual understanding of European partners and Allies and their anticipated future defense requirements. The US Army must consider its Allies and partners' perceived major threats and the forces and capabilities Allies and partners will deploy to confront these threats. The United States has three broad means for cooperating with European states on security matters: NATO, EU partners, and NATO Partnership for Peace (PfP). Of course, the United States is committed to only defending NATO Allies; however, all of these organizations influence US posture and activity on the European continent. The following paragraphs will describe the basic US relationship with each category of European partner states.

United States European Command (EUCOM) counts 51 countries and territories inside its area of responsibility and has structured an exceedingly high level of engagement across the region. Through NATO or PfP, EUCOM engages directly with 45 countries, leaving only Cyprus, Israel, and a handful of territories that fall outside of NATO programs, as displayed in figure 2.



**Figure 2. European engagement<sup>1</sup>**

Generally considered the gold standard of military alliances, NATO has three core tasks: collective defense, crisis management, and cooperative security.<sup>2</sup> Enshrined in article 5 of the founding treaty, collective defense has been considered the most important of

1. "Member Countries," NATO, updated March 24, 2020, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_52044.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_52044.htm);"Partners," NATO, updated March 27, 2020, <https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/51288.htm>; and "Relations with the European Union," NATO, updated March 23, 2020, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_49217.htm?](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_49217.htm?)

2. "Strategic Concepts," NATO, June 12, 2018, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_56626.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_56626.htm).

the three core tasks for most of NATO's history; however, from the end of the Cold War until Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014, the perceived lack of a military threat to the Alliance resulted in a shift away from collective defense and toward crisis management (stability operations) and cooperative security (building partner capacity).

The shift away from collective defense significantly degraded NATO's territorial defense capabilities and the Alliance is now trying to reverse that trend. For more than three decades, NATO's forces adapted to become lighter, more deployable, and trained for security and stabilization tasks as opposed to warfighting. The strategic forecast for Europe predicted occasional terrorism and scattered regional instability, but indicated no chance for major combat operations on the continent. Member states reaped a peace dividend, shedding defense capabilities and the costs associated with maintaining Cold War military readiness. The number of countries under NATO's security blanket increased while their capabilities decreased, leaving the Alliance at risk, and Russia agitated by NATO's expansion; this left the Alliance flat-footed when Russia finally acted in Eastern Europe.

Article 10 of NATO's founding treaty leaves an open door to membership for any invited European state, so the Alliance has not necessarily finished growing. The organization has officially recognized Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, and Ukraine as potential future members.<sup>3</sup> Of course, recognizing that potential does not entail membership is inevitable. Allowing these potential members to join would both provoke Russia and place the Alliance in situations where it has to defend an ally whose interests only marginally overlap with those of other Alliance members. Placing Allies in this situation will increase reluctance to take reasonable, if provocative, steps to curb Russian aggression and weaken the Alliance.<sup>4</sup> As a result, further growth of the Alliance over the coming decade is expected to be minimal.

The EU does not have an alliance with the United States, but formal relations have existed since the founding of the European Coal and Steel Community in 1953.<sup>5</sup> Twenty-one of 27 EU members are NATO Allies and 16 are NATO PfP participants. The Treaty on European Union (article 42) codifies the EU's security relationship with NATO, recognizing the collective security responsibilities of NATO members and requiring the EU's Common Defense and Security Policy to be compatible with NATO's Article 5.<sup>6</sup> As such, one could reasonably expect that EU and NATO security goals will remain mutually supportive, if not perfectly nested. Decisions about European defense and security capabilities made under the auspices of EU governance and leadership can steer the direction

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3. "Enlargement," NATO, updated April 6, 2020, [https://www.nato.int/cps/ie/natohq/topics\\_49212.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/ie/natohq/topics_49212.htm).

4. Matthew Cancian and Mark Cancian, "It Is Long Past Time to Stop Expanding NATO," War on the Rocks, March 1, 2019, <https://warontherocks.com/2019/03/it-is-long-past-time-to-stop-expanding-nato/>.

5. "History of the U.S. and the EU," US Mission to the European Union (EU), n.d., <https://useu.usmission.gov/our-relationship/policy-history/io/>.

6. Treaty on European Union (Consolidated Version), B.G.-E.S.-C.S.-D.A.-D.E.-E.T.-E.L.-E.N.-F.R.-G.A.-I.T.-L.V.-L.T.-H.U.-M.T.-N.L.-P.L.-P.T.-R.O.-S.K.-S.L.-F.I.-S.V., September 5, 2008, Article 42 T.E.U.

of NATO posture and readiness, particularly as European leaders explore the concept of “strategic autonomy.”<sup>7</sup>

Fortunately, the EU and NATO are currently well integrated and growing stronger. The president of the European Council, the president of the European Commission, and the secretary general of NATO signed a joint declaration of cooperation in 2016 targeting development and integration of operational capabilities.<sup>8</sup> This partnership will be valuable to NATO as a formal structure to build interoperability with highly capable EU members like Finland, Sweden, and Austria. Sharing strategic goals between the organizations also means that the United States has opportunities to influence the EU security agenda through the EU’s partnership with NATO.

Countries that participate in NATO’s PfP program can also impact US force posture. The program goals are to “increase stability, diminish threats to peace and build strengthened security relationships between . . . partners and NATO.”<sup>9</sup> The PfP program provides a venue for strategic shaping activities in the region. Many PfP countries are former Soviet states.

Georgia, a key PfP partner, committed significant forces to support NATO-led operations in Kosovo, Iraq, and Afghanistan. In turn, NATO and the US military devote a steady rotation of units to conduct training with Georgian military forces and assisted in opening the NATO-Georgia Joint Training and Evaluation Center. If this relationship continues, NATO could see a significant increase in troop presence in Georgia as a prelude to offering a Membership Action Plan (MAP). At the 2008 Bucharest Summit, NATO leadership stopped short of offering Georgia and Ukraine a MAP, but promised that Georgia and Ukraine would become members one day.<sup>10</sup> Prior to taking this political step, an increased NATO force presence would be required to maintain a security environment that would ensure a successful transition to full membership for Georgia and prevent Russian intervention.

Ukraine faces a more difficult road to membership. Ukraine was removed from NATO’s list of aspiring member states in 2010, before being placed back on the list in 2018.<sup>11</sup> Difficulties abound, not the least of which include an active civil war in its eastern

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7. Daniel Fiott, *Strategic Autonomy: Toward “European Sovereignty” in Defense?* (Paris: European Union Institute for Security Studies, November 30, 2018).

8. NATO, Joint Declaration by the President of the European Council, the President of the European Commission, and the Secretary General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (July 8, 2016), [https://www.nato.int/nato\\_static\\_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf\\_2016\\_07/20160708\\_160708-joint-NATO-EU-declaration.pdf](https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2016_07/20160708_160708-joint-NATO-EU-declaration.pdf).

9. “The Partnership for Peace Programme,” NATO Science and Technology Organization, n.d., <https://www.sto.nato.int/Pages/partnership-for-peace.aspx>.

10. Adrian Croft, “NATO Will Not Offer Georgia Membership Package, Avoiding Russia Clash,” Reuters, June 25, 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-nato-enlargement/nato-will-not-offer-georgia-membership-step-avoiding-russia-clash-idUSKBN0F00IJ20140625>.

11. “NATO Officially Gives Ukraine Aspiring Member Status; Membership Action Plan Is Next Ambition,” Euromaidan Press, March 10, 2018, <http://euromaidanpress.com/2018/03/10/nato-officially-gives-ukraine-aspiring-member-status-membership-action-plan-next-ambition/>.

territories. Jean-Claude Juncker, then-president of the European Commission, ventured an estimate that Ukraine will take 20 to 25 years to join the EU and NATO.<sup>12</sup>

## DIVIDED THREAT PERCEPTIONS

Unlike during the Cold War, Allies and partners do not share a common view of the threat Russia could represent. Although most states see Russia as a *threat*, they differ regarding the degree to which they view Russia as a *partner*. As a result, willingness to invest in their own defense varies considerably. Some will opt for higher-end combat platform modernization, others for border security plus-ups to deal with immigration issues, while others are more concerned with social resilience programs to hedge against Russian gray-zone activities. These options are, of course, not exclusive and any particular partner will likely pursue something in all three, depending on their threat perceptions, which in-turn are driven by geography.<sup>13</sup> In general, however, Eastern European governments are focused on Russia as a military threat to territorial sovereignty, while for Western European governments, especially Germany, France, and Britain, threat perceptions tend to focus on terrorism and Russia's role in actively destabilizing their political and social institutions. The southern flank of Europe, especially Italy, Spain, and Portugal, has been too busy dealing with waves of migrants filtering in from North Africa and the Levant or other concerns to worry much about Russian threats.

This geographical divide in threat perceptions is clearly illustrated by changes in defense spending by NATO and EU states between 2015 and 2017, following the Russian annexation of Crimea. Eastern Europe (Bulgaria, Czechia, Hungary, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia) collectively pushed through a 13 percent increase in defense spending, and Northern Europe (Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, and Sweden) managed a 10 percent increase. On the other hand, Western Europe (Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom (UK)) and southern Europe (Croatia, Italy, Portugal, and Spain) increased defense spending by only 1 percent, suggesting relative ambivalence toward Russia as a military threat.<sup>14</sup>

For the citizens of Eastern European nations with a history of Russian occupation and domination, the Ukrainian crisis and years of massive Russian snap military exercises near their borders have raised the specter of Russian expansionism. In a 2015 poll taken in the aftermath of Russia's annexation of Crimea, 70 percent of Polish citizens described Russia as a major military threat to its neighboring countries, as opposed to only 38 percent of Germans.<sup>15</sup> This east-west divide in threat perceptions is critical because most of the national wealth in NATO resides in Western Europe. If Western European countries

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12. "Juncker Says Ukraine Not Likely to Join EU, NATO FOR 20-25 Years," Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, March 4, 2016, <https://www.rferl.org/a/juncker-says-ukraine-not-likely-join-eu-nato-for-20-25-years/27588682.html>.

13. Stephanie Pezard et al., *European Relations with Russia: Threat Perceptions, Responses, and Strategies in the Wake of the Ukrainian Crisis* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2017).

14. Daniel Fiott and Jakob Bund, *EUISS Yearbook of European Security (YES) 2018* (Paris: EU Institute for Security Studies, June 26, 2018), 130-132.

15. Katie Simmons, Bruce Stokes, and Jacob Poushter, *NATO Public Opinion: Wary of Russia, Leery of Action on Ukraine* (Washington, DC: Pew Research, 2015).

do not perceive Russia as a military threat, they will not invest in building and sustaining the high-end defense capabilities necessary to provide a credible military deterrence.

Germany and France, as the economic powerhouses of continental Europe, have an outsized influence on the arc of NATO-Europe's military capability development.<sup>16</sup> Western Europeans tend to focus on nonkinetic threats, as exhibited in a 2017 speech to the EU Defence and Security Conference from Jean-Yves Le Drian. The French minister for Europe and foreign affairs and former minister of defence outlined the French view of threats to Europe as terrorism, illegal trafficking, lack of resilience in the European security system, and cyber (espionage and crime) threats.<sup>17</sup> Although Minister Le Drian did highlight the need to expand defense capabilities in Europe, he made no direct acknowledgment of a military threat to Europe.

Turkey's relationship bears some mention here. Turkey's recent purchase of Russian S-400 air defense systems has created tensions among other NATO Allies, including the United States, and has impacted Turkey's ability to acquire Western weapon systems like the F-35.<sup>18</sup> Despite these tensions, no experts the research team engaged believed Turkey had any plans to leave NATO. Even if it did, Turkey's departure from NATO would not affect Army force posture requirements in Europe. The country's departure would affect the US posture relative to Russia overall; however, other countries in other areas of responsibility, like Iran and China, also affect the US posture relative to Russia. Turkey's departure would not change the requirements to prevent a *fait accompli* in the Baltic states or increased competition in southeastern Europe.

Perceptions of Russia as a threat are not exclusive to NATO countries. The Finnish threat perspective clearly acknowledges the possibility of Russian invasion. Formed by a history of struggle against Russification, Finnish Defense Forces have always maintained territorial defense as their primary mission.<sup>19</sup> Sweden, also feeling the Russian threat, felt compelled to remilitarize Gotland in the Baltic Sea to defend against potential Russian incursion.<sup>20</sup>

## CURRENT NATO POSTURE AND CAPABILITIES

Despite NATO's decreased force capabilities since the end of the Cold War, the Alliance still possesses a massive military capability in Europe. If required to muster all of

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16. Jim Townsend, *NATO's Force Generation and Deployment*, Policy Brief no. 029 (Washington, DC: The German Marshall Fund of the United States, July 2018).

17. Jean-Yves Le Drian, "Closing speech by M. Jean-Yves Le Drian, Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs, at the European Defence and Security Conference" (speech, European Defence and Security Conference, Prague, CZ, June 9, 2017).

18. Tim Lister, "Turkey Bought Russian S-400 Missiles Designed to Down NATO Planes. For the US, That's a Problem," CNN, July 13, 2019, <https://www.cnn.com/2019/07/13/europe/turkey-russia-missiles-nato-analysis-intl/index.html>.

19. Jussi Niinistö, "Finland's Defense Minister: Continuity and Change in Finnish Defense Policy," *Defense News*, December 9, 2018, <https://www.defensenews.com/outlook/2018/12/10/finlands-defense-minister-continuity-and-change-in-finnish-defense-policy/>.

20. Associated Press, "Sweden to Re-establish Military Unit on Baltic Sea Island," *Defense News*, December 13, 2017, <https://www.defensenews.com/global/europe/2017/12/13/sweden-to-re-establish-military-unit-on-baltic-sea-island/>.

its active ground forces in a conflict with Russia, NATO (even minus the United States and Canada) would quantitatively overmatch Russian active forces in almost every conventional force category. The European NATO Allies boast a collective active duty land force of more than 1.1 million troops, compared to Russia's army of 430,000 active soldiers. NATO's European countries maintain more than 7,500 active main battle tanks and 5,800 artillery pieces, approximately double those of Russia's active land forces.<sup>21</sup>

Also, NATO maintains a robust Land Component Command framework for operationalizing the Alliance's landpower assets with eight standing multinational three-star commands located in the UK, Germany, France, Poland, Turkey, Greece, Italy, and Spain. The joint-use EU and NATO headquarters, Eurocorps, provides a ninth available three-star land force command headquarters.

Each headquarters is maintained as a High Readiness Force, meaning that they are available to assume operational responsibilities in fewer than 90 days; when assigned as the NATO Response Force Headquarters, they are ready to deploy within 30 days.<sup>22</sup> The treaty organization has fielded two division-level commands: Multinational Division Headquarters Northeast (MND-NE) and Multinational Division Headquarters Southeast (MND-SE). These two headquarters currently operate as the land component commands under NATO Joint Force Commands Brunssum and Naples, respectively.

The mere possession of troops, equipment, and headquarters does not tell the whole story, however. Physical proximity, levels of readiness, and interoperability are all key factors to assessing the overall posture of NATO. The preponderance of NATO's combat forces is not located where they would provide an immediate deterrent to Russian military action, as demonstrated in Alliance wargames.<sup>23</sup> The five NATO Allies that share borders with Russia possess only 7 percent of NATO's Europe-based active duty ground forces. Conversely, NATO's five largest European land armies (Turkey, France, Greece, Italy, and Germany), comprising nearly 70 percent of continental land component strength, would require major military movement operations to confront Russia in the land domain. As will be discussed later in this piece, the ability for Allies to move military forces quickly across Europe is hampered by both poor infrastructure and slow administrative approval processes, making Allied ground reinforcement a slow and difficult process.

The readiness of personnel and equipment is also a significant factor. Although details of military readiness are often classified, multiple media outlets have highlighted Germany's poor military readiness over the past several years. The persistent under-funding of the German military has resulted in abysmal equipment readiness rates.<sup>24</sup> France and the

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21. IHS Markit, *Jane's World Armies and Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment Databases*, n.d., <https://my.ihs.com/Janes?th=JANES&callingurl=https://janes.ihs.com>.

22. "The NATO Force Structure," NATO, updated February 13, 2015, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_69718.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_69718.htm).

23. David A Shlapak and Michael W. Johnson, *Reinforcing Deterrence on NATO's Eastern Flank: Wargaming the Defense of the Baltics* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2016); and Bryan Frederick et al., *Assessing Russian Reactions to US and NATO Posture Enhancements* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2017), 6-10.

24. John Vandiver, "As Germany Prepares for NATO Crisis-Response Role, Its Military Readiness Is 'Abysmal,'" *Stars and Stripes*, May 16, 2018.

UK, two of Europe's best-resourced armies, also have difficulties rapidly deploying and sustaining ground combat capabilities. In fact, a 2017 RAND study showed that France and Britain would each require somewhere between a few weeks to more than a month to marshal and sustain a single brigade-sized element for forward employment.<sup>25</sup>

Interoperability of equipment is a key weakness for NATO. The majority of combat power in former Warsaw Pact allies is comprised of Russian-made equipment, armor, infantry fighting vehicles, and aviation assets.<sup>26</sup> The final declaration of the 2018 NATO summit pointed out the ongoing efforts to reduce the dependence on Russian legacy systems, but the procurement and sustainment costs of transitioning to NATO standard equipment is beyond the means of most of the former Warsaw Pact countries; this puts newer NATO members in the dilemma of choosing between supporting NATO's interoperability goals and meeting their minimum capability targets. As modernization decisions are made, it is likely that NATO members will need to sacrifice force structure to pay for increased investments in combat platforms.

## NATO TRENDS

Trends in NATO development have been positive since 2014, as evidenced in spending, interoperability and organizational adaptation efforts. These positive trends include \$40 billion in additional annual defense expenditures from European Allies, increased participation in NATO exercises, and the successful employment of new multinational NATO headquarters elements. The current trajectory will lead to a NATO Alliance with greater qualitative capability, likely offset by decreased force structure.

Defense expenditures among NATO members were revitalized by the shock of the Ukraine crisis and the recommitments of the 2014 Wales Summit. During the four years following the summit, NATO Europe and Canada marked a cumulative increase in spending of \$87 billion and nearly every member has made positive moves toward the 2 percent goal (see figure 3). Moreover, 15 of the 29 members submitted plans to NATO that outline how they intend to achieve the 2 percent benchmark by the year 2024.<sup>27</sup>

Since 2014, NATO Allies have also shifted how they spend their defense resources. The percentage of funding allocated to research and development and the purchase of combat platforms has increased across the board, while the proportion spent on personnel pay and allowances has decreased.<sup>28</sup> These trends have particularly been true of Allies in Eastern Europe, where equipment expenditures have increased between 20 and 50 percent, demonstrating the Allies' commitment to equipment modernization by rebalancing spending to make the modernization possible. These trends should improve future NATO capabilities.

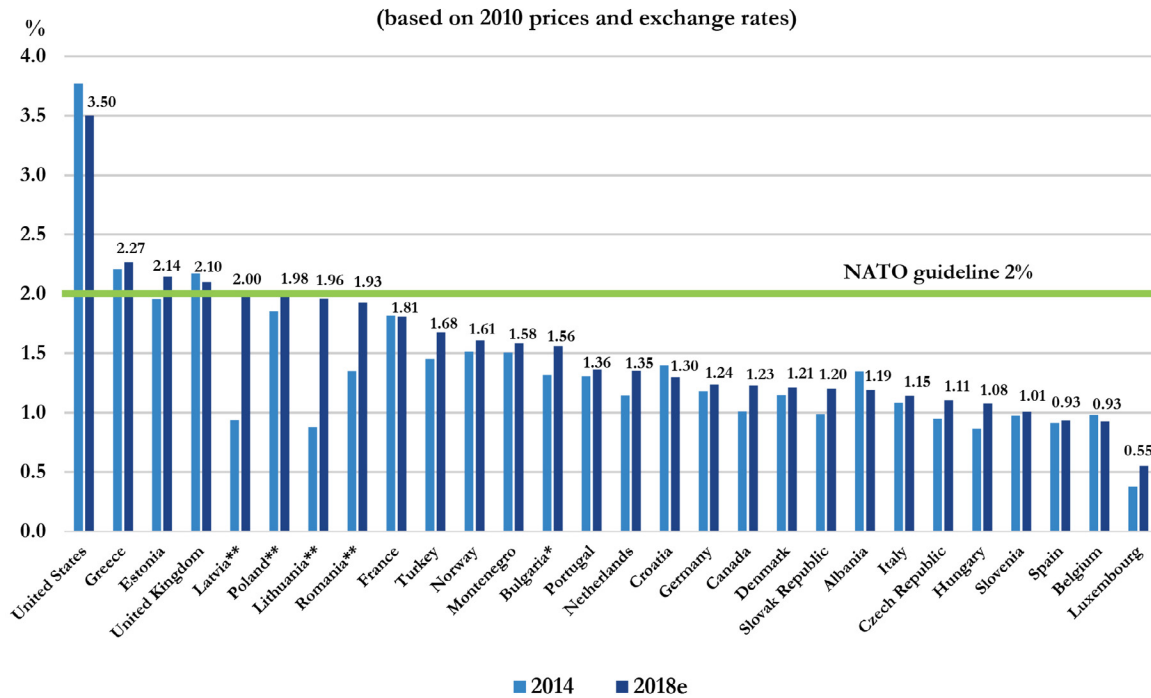
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25. Michael Shurkin, *The Abilities of the British, French, and German Armies to Generate and Sustain Armored Brigades in the Baltics* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2017), 1.

26. Aaron Mehta, "Inside America's Multimillion-Dollar Plan to Get Allies off Russian Equipment," *Defense News*, May 29, 2019, <https://www.defensenews.com/global/europe/2019/05/29/inside-americas-multimillion-dollar-plan-to-get-allies-off-russian-equipment/>.

27. Kathleen Hicks et al., *Counting Dollars or Measuring Value: Assessing NATO and Partner Burden Sharing* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, July 2018), 3.

28. Hicks et al., *Counting Dollars*, fig. 3.



Notes: Figures for 2018 are estimates.  
 \* Defence expenditure does not include pensions.  
 \*\* With regard to 2018, these countries have either national laws or political agreements which call for at least 2% of GDP to be spent on defence annually, consequently these estimates are expected to change accordingly.

**Figure 3. NATO defense expenditure as a share of GDP<sup>29</sup>**  
 (Illustration from NATO)

## INTEROPERABILITY

Another positive trend for the Alliance is the increased commitment to interoperability through participation in NATO exercises. These exercises are crucial to building the connective tissue among Allied forces through joint training. A highlight of this renewed focus was the 2018 Trident Juncture exercise with more than 40,000 troops from every NATO member country and Sweden and Finland,<sup>30</sup> making it the largest NATO exercise in two decades, with NATO planning to conduct more than 100 additional exercises annually.<sup>31</sup> With this high frequency and increased size of exercises, US force posture in Europe has the potential to grow based solely on exercise participation requirements for continental United States (CONUS)-based forces.

29. NATO, "Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries (2011–2018)," press release PR/CP(2018)091, July 10, 2018, [https://www.nato.int/nato\\_static\\_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf\\_2018\\_07/20180709\\_180710-pr2018-91-en.pdf](https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2018_07/20180709_180710-pr2018-91-en.pdf).

30. Edward Lundquist, "Trident Juncture 2018: JWC Creates Artificial Countries, Adversaries to Test NATO and Partner Militaries," *Seapower Magazine*, October 2018.

31. NATO, *Key NATO and Allied Exercises in 2018*, factsheet (Brussels: Press & Media Section, Public Diplomacy Division (PDD), NATO, June 2018), [https://www.nato.int/nato\\_static\\_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf\\_2018\\_04/20180425\\_1804-factsheet\\_exercises\\_en.pdf](https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2018_04/20180425_1804-factsheet_exercises_en.pdf).



## INTEGRATION

In the past four years NATO has also made significant gains in operational capability by establishing a Readiness Action Plan with two lines of effort. The first, Assurance, is intended to increase military presence and activity in the eastern part of the Alliance. The second, Adaptation, is intended to change long-term capabilities and optimize force posture and allow for swifter response to emergencies.<sup>32</sup>

Assurance is accomplished through a comprehensive mix of increased air policing, intensified maritime patrolling, and deployment of ground troops. The Enhanced Forward Presence (eFP) program provides four battalion-sized multinational battlegroups, each embedded with host nation forces in the three Baltic nations and Poland. These rotational forces conduct heel-to-toe deployments to maintain a persistent forward presence and to provide a tripwire guarantee that NATO will defend its territory. As the US Army determines the best way to posture forces in the future, the eFP program provides a baseline for the minimum force strength required to raise Russia's costs if they decide to take military action in the Baltic states.

Although the assurance measures are successful in demonstrating commitment and increasing interoperability, they do not necessarily provide a credible deterrence force. The work of creating increased capability will be accomplished through NATO's adaptation measures. To meet these goals, the NATO Response Force (NRF), which includes more than just NATO Allies, was increased from 13,000 troops to 40,000 troops.<sup>33</sup> The NRF goes through a predeployment training and certification process each year to verify the multinational force is ready to be utilized within 30 days of notification. Possibly more important than the expansion of the NRF was the creation of the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF) in 2016, providing NATO with a more responsive force comprised of approximately 5,000 troops. The first elements of VJTF can deploy in as little as 48 hours, with the rest of the force ready to move in less than seven days to provide immediate response to warnings and indicators of a potential attack.<sup>34</sup>

Adaptation is accomplished through the fielding of eight NATO Force Integration Units (NFIUs). These NFIUs are 40-person elements that work as deployment expediter, acting as links to the host nation to optimize movement of NATO troops and equipment for training, exercises or operational deployments, reducing the need to keep NATO forces permanently postured near Russia's border.<sup>35</sup> These small headquarters units are permanently stationed in eastern and southern NATO member states.

In the same vein, NATO and the EU place great emphasis on improving cross-border military mobility. In September 2019, NATO established the Joint Support and Enabling

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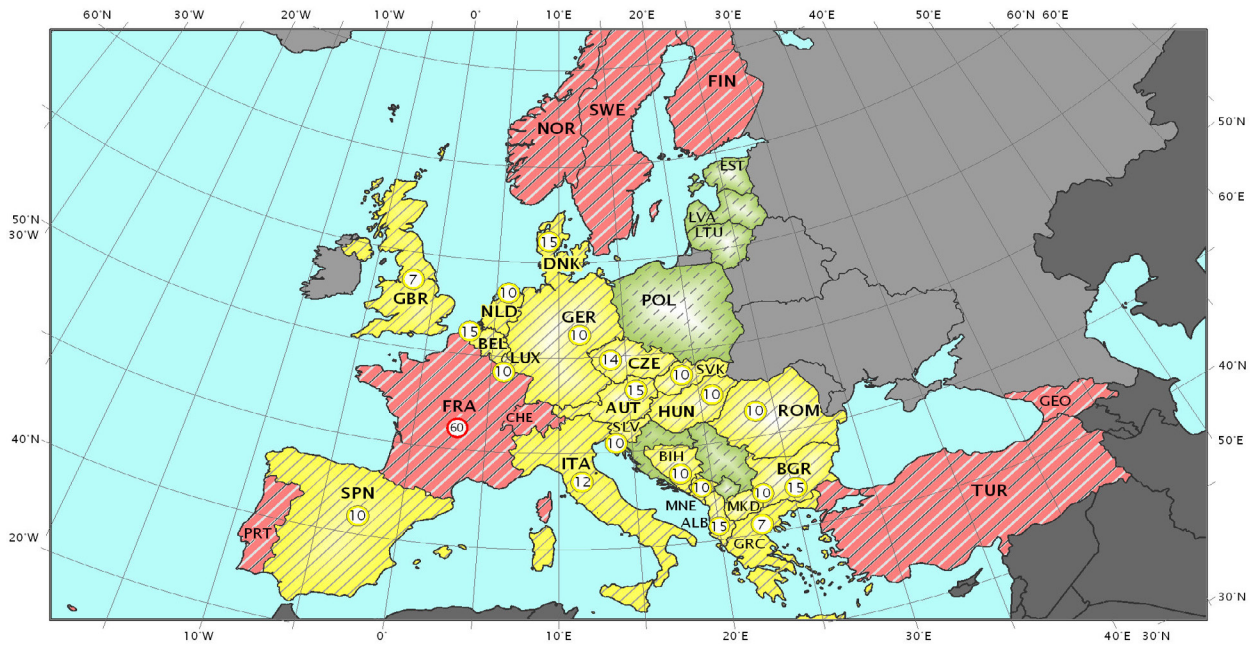
32. NATO, *NATO's Readiness Action Plan*, factsheet (Brussels: Press & Media Section, PDD, NATO, July 2016), [https://www.nato.int/nato\\_static\\_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf\\_2016\\_07/20160627\\_1607-factsheet-rap-en.pdf](https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2016_07/20160627_1607-factsheet-rap-en.pdf).

33. NATO, "NATO Response Force (NRF) 2020," fact sheet (Brunssum: Public Affairs Office, Allied Joint Force Command Headquarters, NATO, January 2020), [https://jfcbs.nato.int/systems/file\\_download.ashx?pg=247&ver=19](https://jfcbs.nato.int/systems/file_download.ashx?pg=247&ver=19).

34. NATO, "NATO Response Force (NRF) 2020."

35. "NATO Force Integration Unit (NFIU) Fact Sheet," NATO, n.d., <https://jfcbs.nato.int/page5725819/nato-force-integration-units/nato-force-integration-units-fact-sheet>.

Command. The purpose of the command is to improve deterrence by speeding up, coordinating, and safeguarding the movement of Allied combat forces across European borders.<sup>36</sup> The establishment of this command is a welcome development. Currently, administrative impediments cause precrisis military movement around the continent of Europe to be overly difficult. Long waits obtaining diplomatic clearances for ground movements preclude responsive troop movements in reaction to warnings and indicators and severely limit application of the US concept of Dynamic Force Employment with ground forces. Figure 4 shows the processing time for diplomatic clearances of military ground movements in each NATO or EU country.



**Figure 4. Ground diplomatic clearance times**

(Map by Pete McPhail)

Air mobility is similarly hampered by unnecessarily long wait periods to get approval for overflight and landing. The EU and NATO have established the action plan on military mobility that will enable a military Schengen protocol that will standardize processes and drastically reduce administrative wait times for movement of military forces precrisis.<sup>37</sup>

European partners and Allies must also make infrastructure investments to optimize the movement of military equipment by improving roads, bridges, and tunnels to support the weight of heavy armored vehicles. The EU is looking to complete these infrastructure upgrades as part of their action plan on military mobility coordinated through

36. "New NATO Command Declared Operational," NATO, updated September 17, 2019, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news\\_168945.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_168945.htm).

37. Franklin D. Kramer and Hans Binnendijk, *Meeting the Russian Conventional Challenge* (Washington, DC: Atlantic Council, February 27, 2018), 9-10.

Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO). Primary targets for upgrade will be along Trans-European Transport Networks (TEN-T) routes. The goal will be to complete dual-use transportation infrastructure projects that will support both military and civilian requirements.<sup>38</sup>

The EU and NATO's joint progress toward enabling efficient movement of forces is an excellent indicator of the future strength and solidarity of Europe. The Action Plan on Military Mobility will further reduce the need to forward posture forces as NATO will be able to respond more rapidly to security threats by reinforcing with troop presence.

## **HYBRID AND CYBER CAPABILITIES**

Russia's use of hybrid warfare has presented NATO and the EU with another fundamental challenge. Most Western liberal democracies go to great pains to separate their militaries from domestic political and civil life. Hybrid warfare attacks the seams between military defense institutions and law enforcement institutions, upending traditional Western conceptions of how to organize and defend society, and thus fomenting doubt about governments' ability to defend their populations. European partners are leading the charge by developing security capabilities to counter hybrid warfare threats, and the US Army has the opportunity to garner valuable knowledge and experience at minimal cost by simply embedding with European partners and Allies.

Finland stepped into a position of leadership by instituting the European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats in Helsinki with participation open to EU member states and NATO Allies. Initiated in 2016, the Hybrid Centre of Excellence aims to develop an analytical framework for the assessment of current and future hybrid warfare situations and their practical implication, resulting in joint and comprehensive action in defense and response.<sup>39</sup> The development of the Hybrid Centre of Excellence is an important step forward for EU and NATO members as it provides an institutional framework to cooperatively address vulnerabilities to hybrid threats.

Building a line of defense in the cyber domain has also kept NATO busy. Since approving its first policy on cyber defense in 2008, NATO has continuously increased its cyber defense capability, capacity, and cooperation with partners and industry. The NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence in Estonia provides education, consultation, lessons learned, and research and development. In addition, NATO has also created cyber defense targets for member states and cooperates with the EU through a technical arrangement on cyber defense signed in 2016 that strengthens ties through information exchange, training, research, and exercises.<sup>40</sup> If NATO and EU leaders are able to keep momentum and resources flowing toward cooperative cyber operations, defensive cyber capabilities will increase by orders of magnitude over the next decade and the need to forward posture US Army Cyber Teams will decrease proportionally.

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38. EU, "Defending Europe: Improving Military Mobility in the European Union," factsheet (Brussels: EU, 2018), [https://ec.europa.eu/transport/sites/transport/files/2018-military\\_mobility\\_factsheet.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/transport/sites/transport/files/2018-military_mobility_factsheet.pdf).

39. "Communities of Interest (COI)," Hybrid CoE, n.d., <https://www.hybridcoe.fi/communities-of-interest>.

40. "Cyber Defence," NATO, updated March 17, 2020, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_78170.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_78170.htm).

While declaring that the Alliance will not conduct offensive cyberspace operations, NATO has taken an aggressive stance on offensive cyber operations by declaring its willingness to integrate the effects of offensive cyber operations conducted by member states in sovereign or multinational capacities.<sup>41</sup> The treaty organization's integration of cyber effects will be conducted through its Cyber Operations Center, which officially stood up in August 2018.

## EUROPEAN UNION (EU) TRENDS AND DEVELOPMENTS

The EU has steadily increased its level of ambition toward building a European security and defense capability that is less dependent on the United States for security. This gradual development of military capability and self-organization toward strategic autonomy is Europe's hedge against a US-dominated NATO, though officials are quick to state that the EU is not trying to replace NATO. Future EU gains in attaining strategic autonomy should be a positive development from a US perspective, as it indicates stronger strategic partners and a reduced need to dedicate US troops to the region.

The EU already sees itself as a global security provider, as it deployed military forces and civilians to 16 missions or operations in 2017.<sup>42</sup> As a block, the EU spent \$244 billion on defense in 2017. This spending level is second only to the United States, outpacing Russian defense spending by a factor of five, and exceeding China's annual defense spending by over \$95 billion.<sup>43</sup> In all, plenty of funds are available to build and maintain a high level of defense capability, but the dispersion of these funds across 27 different nations results in an output of military readiness and capability that does not justify the monetary inputs. Increasing spending levels certainly will not harm military readiness, but the EU leadership believes that the largest gains in military readiness will come from greater efficiency rather than increased spending. Recognizing this, the EU has developed two new initiatives for improving the collective capabilities of member states; the PESCO and the European Defence Fund. These two initiatives are important as they promise to build the efficiency the EU desires as they seek to increase capability and interoperability.

A voluntary framework, PESCO is aimed at increasing cooperation in capability development and operations. If successful, PESCO will assist EU member states in raising their defense spending in a coordinated manner and allocating more military assets for operations.<sup>44</sup> A major goal of PESCO is to revive and sustain Europe's military industrial base, making US policy analysts wary due to concerns over the potential for unfair bias against US weapons manufacturers.

The European Defence Fund, Europe's second initiative for improving the EU's collective military capability, is essentially an EU bank account dedicated to support cooperative research and development of defense capabilities. This account is the first concrete

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41. Sydney J. Freeberg Jr., "NATO to 'Integrate' Offensive Cyber by Members," *Breaking Defense*, November 16, 2018, <https://breakingdefense.com/2018/11/NATO-will-integrate-offensive-cyber-by-member-states/>.

42. Fiott and Bund, *EUISS Yearbook*, 133.

43. Fiott and Bund, *EUISS Yearbook*, 132.

44. Fiott and Bund, *EUISS Yearbook*, 128.

example of European pooling of monetary assets to address defense development shortfalls. The initial funding is modest, with €590 million allocated per year until 2020, later increasing to €1.5 billion annually. Although it is too early to determine whether this program will achieve its desired effects, it is promising to see the EU taking steps to fund collective defense research and technology directly.<sup>45</sup> Critics of the program claim that the EU will prioritize capability development required for EU missions ahead of those needed for NATO missions,<sup>46</sup> but capability is capability, and as long as the goal of building a more secure Europe is being met, the United States should support the initiative.

## HEADWINDS FOR THE EU

Not every trend in the EU is pointing toward a stronger union. The rise of populism and nationalism in politics throughout Europe will subject the EU to increased scrutiny from its constituent populations. The UK's internal political turmoil following the Brexit referendum has been enough to steer European nationalist parties away from staking political platforms on following suit in EU departure, but it has not deterred these nationalists from continuing their steady effort to undermine the EU's institutional reputation.<sup>47</sup> A strong EU is important to future US force posture because solidarity and open borders in Europe are necessary for efficient employment of EUCOM troops. A fractured or weak EU increases the possibility of a member state opting-out of future military operations and potentially withholding critical military transit, overflight or basing rights. Imagine the difficulty of moving forces from southern Europe to the Baltics if Austria and France decided to deny transit rights.

Donald Tusk, then-president of the European Council, gave a November 2018 speech in which he outlined his fear that rising nationalism and anti-Europe sentiment would disrupt the whole European order.<sup>48</sup> The UK's approved 2016 Brexit referendum to separate from the EU is seen by many as the first step in unraveling that European order. The loss of such a wealthy and stable member state will significantly reduce the EU's resource pool and diminish its international political clout. Potentially, the most damaging factor is that the UK will have established a blueprint for other member states to depart the EU when their political sentiments shift toward nationalism.

In addition, demographic trends in Europe are likely to result in decreased troop strength across Allies and partners over the coming decade. In 2030, the European continent is expected to have the highest median population age on the planet at 45 years old, and Europeans will find it more difficult to recruit as the pool of military-age citizens

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45. Quentin Lopinot, "Why the European Defence Fund Is Good News for US Security Interests," Center for Strategic and International Studies, November 26, 2018, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/why-european-defence-fund-good-news-us-security-interests>.

46. Tomáš Valášek, "European Defense vs. NATO: Not the Right Fight," Carnegie Europe, February 16, 2018, <https://carnegieeurope.eu/2018/02/16/european-defense-vs.-nato-not-right-fight-pub-75563>.

47. Vivienne Walt, "How Nationalists Are Joining Together to Tear Europe Apart," *Time*, April 11, 2019, <http://time.com/5568322/nationalism-in-europe/>.

48. Donald Tusk, "November 11, 2018: Poland and Europe. Two Anniversaries, Two Lessons" (speech, Freedom Games Conference, Lodz, Poland, November 10, 2018).

shrinks.<sup>49</sup> The European Defence Agency is already anticipating the requirement to use human enhancement technology to help personnel serve longer, making up for the declining force pool.<sup>50</sup> A tacit acknowledgment of the demographic problem can also be seen in national discussions throughout Europe about the reintroduction of conscription.<sup>51</sup> The obvious downside of smaller European forces will be a reduced capacity to meet rotational demands in Europe and abroad. The upside is that a reduced force structure will lead to a higher percentage of defense funding available for modernization and readiness. As noted in the previous chapter, Russia is facing similar demographic problems, and its pool of available recruits is expected to shrink faster than that of the NATO Allies.<sup>52</sup>

## RESTRAINTS ON US COURSES OF ACTION

A final consideration for how forces will be structured in Europe in the next decade is how partners and Allies will observe treaties, conventions, and arms control restrictions. The United States' force posture and capabilities in Europe are currently constrained by the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) and the Vienna Document on Confidence-Building Measures (Vienna Document). Currently, US allocations negotiated within NATO for CFE "Flanks" holdings limit Black Sea regional force deployment.<sup>53</sup> Future developments concerning the United States' withdrawal from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty and the potential for EU restrictions on Autonomous Weapons Systems will guide future defense posture.<sup>54</sup>

Russia successfully uses arms control treaties as a tool to maintain and advocate additional visibility on NATO and partner military activities on its borders and is masterful at exploiting the fact that European states, and to a lesser degree the United States,

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49. European Commission, "White Paper on the Future of Europe: Reflections and Scenarios for the EU27 by 2025" (white paper, European Commission, Brussels, March 1, 2017), 10.

50. Marta Kepe et al., *Exploring Europe's Capability Requirements for 2035 and Beyond* (Cambridge, UK: RAND Europe, June 2018), 25.

51. Rick Noack, "The Military Draft is Making a Comeback in Europe," *Washington Post*, October 19, 2018.

52. "Europe Population 2020," World Population Review, accessed February 14, 2020, <http://worldpopulationreview.com/continents/europe-population/>; and "Russia Population 2020," World Population Review, accessed February 14, 2020, <https://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/russia-population/>.

53. "Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE)," A.M.,-A.Z.,-B.E.,-B.G.,-B.Y.,-C.A.,-C.Z.,-D.E.,-D.K.,-E.S.,-F.R.,-G.E.,-G.R.,-H.U.,-I.S.,-I.T.,-K.Z.,-L.U.,-M.D.,-N.L.,-N.O.,-P.L.,-P.T.,-R.O.,-R.U.,-S.K.,-T.R.,-U.A.,-U.K.,-U.S., November 9, 1990; and "The Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty and the Adapted CFE Treaty at a Glance," Arms Control Association, last reviewed August 2017, <https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheet/cfe>.

54. European Parliament, Resolution of September 12, 2018, on Autonomous Weapons Systems, 2018/2752(RSP) (September 12, 2018). See also Michael T. Klare, "Autonomous Weapons Systems and the Laws of War," Arms Control Association, March 2019, <https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2019-03/features/autonomous-weapons-systems-laws-war>.

are committed to existing treaties as a foundation to maintain the rules-based order.<sup>55</sup> Although the current US administration seems less willing to accept this state of affairs, most European leaders have not wavered in their continued support of the Vienna Document and CFE. Russian gaming of Vienna Document loopholes and their “suspension of implementing” CFE have placed them in a position of military advantage. Despite European and NATO leader support for US actions and justifications on the INF Treaty, European leaders would likely be more concerned about destabilizing effects of any US move to withdraw from CFE or the Vienna Document. Although withdrawal from conventional arms control mechanisms would free the United States from these operational constraints, European leaders see these mechanisms as important for the mitigation and reciprocal transparency measures they provide.

Another serious consideration for European force posture in 2028 is a probable EU prohibition on Autonomous Weapons Systems.<sup>56</sup> Calls from EU leaders to create a global ban are likely to get traction within European countries and smaller nations in the UN, but unlikely to be heeded by Russia. Given the anticipated development of AI and robotics in the coming decade, Europe’s stance on this developing technology could mean that it will be left with a significant military capabilities gap.

In sum, the EU will be instrumental in organizing and improving European force structure over the next decade, but is unlikely to supplant NATO fully as the primary defense structure. The degree to which European countries are willing to continue to observe treaties and conventions that Russia either ignores or plays to its own advantage will play a significant role in Europe’s comparative military defense capability and US posture on the continent.

## CONCLUSION

The posture and capabilities of European Allies and partners will directly affect how the US Army postures forces in 2028. Trends in NATO and the EU indicate that Europe’s military strength is on the rebound after the decades of downsizing after the Cold War. Increased defense spending, interoperability, and new organizational structures driven by European threat perceptions will provide more effective and efficient defense capabilities among US partners and Allies. Political trends and demographics are likely to be a drag on capability improvements, but are unlikely to negate the positive trends in defense capabilities. US Army leaders should plan a posture that reinforces Allied and partner capabilities and avoid the temptation to build a force structure in Europe that is designed to win military conflicts for them. Strategic communications plans for any national posture decisions should take into account potential international political-military impacts – in arms control and other realms

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55. Gustav Gressel, *Under the Gun: Rearmament for Arms Control in Europe* (London: European Council on Foreign Relations, November 2018), 23.

56. Daphne Psalidakis, “EU Lawmakers Call for Global Ban on ‘Killer Robots,’” Reuters, September 12, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-eu-arms/eu-lawmakers-call-for-global-ban-on-killer-robots-idUSKCN1LS2AS>.





## CHAPTER 4. US MILITARY CAPABILITIES AND OPTIONS

Each element of US Army overseas force posture contributes to at least one of several broad functions. The first and most intuitive function is the core for ground force missions. Army units achieve Army tasks.

Second, the US Army enables the rest of the US Joint Force. In Europe, this has long been the case for general theater support functions such as communications, logistics, and medical support, but with the introduction of MDO and long-range ground fires, US Army units will also have an essential operational role in enabling freedom of maneuver for air forces.<sup>1</sup> Army units enable others to achieve joint tasks.

Finally, Army forces enable allies. As with support to the Joint Force, US Army logistics capabilities performing general theater support functions are critical to NATO warfighting capability. But US Army headquarters also provide a framework for Allied and partner military capabilities (as well as intelligence and law enforcement capabilities in some cases) to connect with as a higher headquarters, a location for coordination, liaison activities, and many other varieties of cooperative relationship. One recent example is the US Army Europe and Seventh Army efforts to prepare and integrate Allied and partner contingents into multinational forces in Iraq and Afghanistan.<sup>2</sup> In large-scale combat operations, this combined enabling function will be even more critical to mission success. The possibility that NATO forces would initially have to fight at a numerical disadvantage makes it necessary to have whatever combat forces would be available as capable as possible. In practical terms, this requires developing mechanisms by which some US-only or Five Eyes technical capabilities might, at least partially, be used to make Allies and partners multidomain capable. Army units enable others to achieve Alliance tasks.

Two factors make force posture even more complex. The first is that these three functions cut across a variety of disparate mission types. A single force posture must be flexible enough to accomplish a wide range of tasks. In Europe, the main purpose of US Army force posture is to enable Army, Joint, and Alliance success in armed conflict and in competition below armed conflict with Russia. Ideally, Army force posture provides policymakers with options to expand the competitive space to counter Russian aggression, overt or covert, against Allies and partners. Finally, if history is any guide, Army forces in Europe will be called upon to achieve a number of other missions: support diplomacy through military activity, project power into other theaters, assist with other missions in theater, and prepare and integrate Allies and partners for out-of-theater operations.

The other complicating factor is that force posture is resistant to change. In part, this problem is due to the expense and permanence of physical infrastructure, like headquarters, warehouses, and motor pools. But even fewer tangible elements, such as legal agreements, interoperability procedures, and other cooperative mechanisms, are difficult to modify or replace once established. This enduring quality of force posture

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1. National Commission on the Future of the Army (NCFA), *The Army for the Future* (Arlington, VA: NCFA, 2016), 7-8.

2. Robert Burnham, "JMTTC Trains NATO, ISAF Partners in Counter Insurgency," June 8, 2011, [https://www.army.mil/article/59161/jmtc\\_trains\\_nato\\_isaf\\_partners\\_in\\_counter\\_insurgency](https://www.army.mil/article/59161/jmtc_trains_nato_isaf_partners_in_counter_insurgency).

means that it must be adaptable because most of it will persist even after present conditions have changed: Russia will have different means, adopt new ways, and might even alter its ends; US military budgets will increase or decrease, perhaps sharply; requirements from other theaters will rise and fall; and the domestic political space of Allies and partners will evolve with implications positive and negative for military cooperation and activity.

The challenge, therefore, is to assemble a single set of the basic building blocks of force posture in the way that best enables service, Joint, and coalition success across the range of possible missions and an even wider array of potential futures. The next chapter will explain how they might all be brought together into overarching strategic approaches and provide a framework for selecting among those options. This chapter will describe the current and future building blocks of force posture and some of the specific considerations associated with each.

## **CURRENT US CAPABILITIES AND FORCE POSTURE**

In 2020, there are approximately 65,000 US military personnel in Europe. The amount of personnel has been reduced by 85 percent since the height of the Cold War.<sup>3</sup> Of course, as described in earlier chapters, Russia is also significantly diminished in capacity when compared to the Soviet Union. The key point to be drawn from these then-and-now figures is that with a greatly reduced posture, relatively small changes in force posture can have an outsized effect.

The top service headquarters in theater is the United States Army Europe (USAREUR) in Wiesbaden, Germany, a three-star command. Due to earlier rounds of reductions among all of the Army Service Component Commands in the early 2010s, USAREUR has limited capacity as an operational headquarters. The current headquarters would, until augmented, have difficulty in managing the complexities of a theater in conflict with an adversary that has the capability to threaten support areas with a mixture of long-range strike, special operations forces, as well as the ability to strike using space, cyberspace, and electromagnetic assets while conducting effective information warfare to undermine the Alliance's political cohesion and will. Furthermore, though USAREUR is clearly the first among equals in terms of all national headquarters, it is not formally within the NATO command structure.

In the worst case of a sudden Russian attack that leaves only days to react, USAREUR would not have the NATO orders issuing authority so that, for instance, adjacent US and Polish divisions could operate together. The current Alliance command structure runs from Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe through one of the Joint Forces Commands (Brunssum or Naples) to a designated corps (for example, Multinational Corps Northeast). These commands will not have access to some of the advanced capabilities that the MDO concepts suggests are necessary for success in large-scale ground combat. More basically, there is widespread doubt throughout the Alliance as to their suitability as operational headquarters in high-tempo operations for reasons of both capacity and capability; they lack the suite of subordinate commands and

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3. Scott Boston et al., *Assessing the Conventional Force Imbalance in Europe: Implications for Countering Russian Local Superiority* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2018), 5.

units that are as necessary for the success of a given echelon as the headquarters itself. Simply put, there is a general realization that in case of war, the Alliance would have to alter its command structure to make more use of American capacity and capability. Unfortunately, the present USAREUR is not resourced to assume that role. Thus, even with several weeks of warning of Russian aggression, there would likely be a costly period of ad hoc adaptation to critical command systems under figurative and, quite possibly, literal fire.<sup>4</sup>

Furthermore, it is important to note that the addition of a division headquarters, as is apparently intended, would not rectify this gap. Both the MDO and echelons above brigade concepts draw clear distinctions between the field army/corps level of command and the division. Even with the welcome addition of a division headquarters, the current command and control structure would fall short of providing full multidomain capability.<sup>5</sup>

As a theater army, USAREUR has an array of subordinate elements assigned or under operational command that provide the bulk of the horsepower that performs the Joint and combined enabling functions described above. The 12th Combat Aviation Brigade in Ansbach, Germany, is a headquarters for a reduced strength brigade made up of both forward stationed and rotational forces. The 66th Military Intelligence, 598th Transportation, and 2nd Signal Brigades provide support not just to Army forces but to Joint and combined forces as well.

The 41st Field Artillery Brigade, which returned to Germany in 2018, provides long-range fires. By 2020, the brigade will have two multiple rocket launch system (MLRS) battalions.<sup>6</sup> Even with current systems, the 41st Field Artillery can make some important contributions to gaining joint freedom of maneuver by attacking high-value targets critical to both the air and ground campaigns. The introduction of future long-range precision fires systems with ranges several times greater than the current MLRS system would significantly expand the geographic area in which the Army can support Joint maneuver, an important consideration as A2/AD system ranges increase. But the problem is not simply weapons ranges. As *The US Army in Multi-Domain Operations, 2028*

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4. NCFR, *Army for the Future*, 54; David Ochmanek et al., *US Military Capabilities and Forces for a Dangerous World: Rethinking the US Approach to Force Planning* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2017), 41; John R. Deni, "Is NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence Fit for Purpose?," in *The Return of Deterrence: Credibility and Capabilities in a New Era*, ed. William G. Braun III, Stéfanie von Hlatky, and Kim Richard Nossal (Kingston, CA: Centre for International Defence Policy; Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, 2019), 41; Polish General Staff officers, interview by the author, January 15-16, 2019; planners at British Permanent Joint Headquarters, interview by the author, April 24, 2019; and US exchange officer serving in a NATO corps headquarters, interview by the author, May 16, 2019.

5. Meghann Myers, "It's Not 'Fort Trump,' But a US Division Headquarters Heading to Poland," *Military Times*, June 12, 2019, <https://www.militarytimes.com/news/your-military/2019/06/12/its-not-fort-trump-but-a-us-division-headquarters-heading-to-poland/>; and US Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC), *The US Army Concept for Multi-Domain Combined Arms Operations at Echelons above Brigade, 2025-2045: Versatile, Agile, Lethal*, TRADOC Pamphlet 525-3-8 (Fort Eustis, VA: TRADOC, 2018), 22-23, 33-34.

6. Lacey Justinger, "41st Field Artillery Brigade Returns to Germany," November 30, 2018, [https://www.army.mil/article/214491/41st\\_field\\_artillery\\_brigade\\_returns\\_to\\_germany](https://www.army.mil/article/214491/41st_field_artillery_brigade_returns_to_germany).

notes, current systems, organizations, and processes do not provide a sensor-analysis-shooter linkage with the sufficient speed and capacity to reliably attack mobile targets.<sup>7</sup>

The 10th Army Air and Missile Defense Command at Kaiserslautern commands theater air and missile defenses in conjunction with NATO Allied Air Command and the Area Air Defense Command in theater. As statements from senior US defense officials make clear, theater air and missile defense is a significant weakness; decades have passed since the United States last faced a potential adversary with large-scale deep-strike capability. Current systems are inadequate to meet the scale of the threat, and they suffer from a ruinous cost curve in which adding more capacity leads to a one-step-forward, two-steps-back dynamic.<sup>8</sup> The only thing worse than an ineffective defense is a bankrupting ineffective defense.

Perhaps the most important element for the Joint and Allied efforts is the often-unheralded 21st Theater Sustainment Command, headquartered in Kaiserslautern, Germany. The peacetime strength of the 21st Theater Sustainment Command is far below what would be required to sustain large-scale combined Joint operations. In addition to a mission support command and military police brigade, at the time of this writing the 21st Theater Sustainment Command assigned or controlled forces consist of a single sustainment brigade, a medical brigade, a contracting support brigade, a field support brigade, several reduced strength combat support units, one movement control battalion, three Army truck companies, a theater movements branch in the Theater Sustainment Command headquarters, a direct support German civil defense truck unit, and the Theater Logistics Support Center – Europe, a civilian-run support organization.<sup>9</sup> In case of war, these forces would need to be augmented by several additional support brigades, truck battalions, and theater movement control agencies, most of which reside within the reserve component.<sup>10</sup> This augmentation would place the units necessary to support early operations in competition for scarce strategic lift with the units they would support.

But even correcting these deficiencies by filling out the forward-stationed logistics and mobility structures would likely not be sufficient to sustain and move forces in a large-scale conflict.<sup>11</sup> The current sustainment force posture is designed to enable the

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7. TRADOC, *The US Army in Multi-Domain Operations, 2028*, TRADOC Pamphlet 525-3-1 (Fort Eustis, VA: TRADOC, 2018), 33–34.

8. Carl Rehberg and Mark Gunzinger, *Air and Missile Defense at a Crossroads: New Concepts and Technologies to Defend America's Overseas Bases* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2018), 2–13, 31–34; and Thomas Karako, “The Missile Defense Review: Insufficient for Complex and Integrated Attack,” *Strategic Studies Quarterly* 13, no. 2 (Summer 2019): 6–13.

9. “Our Units and Partners,” 21st Theater Sustainment Command, n.d., <https://www.21tsc.army.mil/Units/>.

10. Scott Boston et al., *Preparing for Near-Peer Conflict on the Ground: Comparing US and Russian Conventional Ground Combat Capability* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2018), 141; and Davie Burgdorf, *Army Logistics Quick Reference* (Fort Lee, VA: Force Development Directorate, US Army Combined Army Support Command, February 18, 2014), 15.

11. Eric Edelman et al., *Providing for the Common Defense: The Assessment and Recommendations of the National Defense Strategy Commission* (Washington, DC: US Institute of Peace, 2018), 24; Ben Hodges et al., *Securing the Suwalki Corridor: Strategy, Statecraft, Deterrence, and Defense* (Washington, DC: Center for European Policy Analysis, 2018), 6; and James Lacey, “How Does the Next Great Power Conflict Play

existing scheme of support. This posture falls short in three regards: it does not meet the more aggressive timelines envisioned by the MDO concept; it does not account for enemy attacks (physical and virtual) against lines of communications; and it is heavily dependent on support from commercial and civilian sources that might not be able to meet a sudden burst in demand from US and Allied militaries under crisis or wartime conditions. This combination of factors creates a condition in which foreign public sentiment can impact sustainment.

If widespread opposition to a crisis or conflict exists, private companies and Allied governments might opt to minimize at least their visible support and cooperation. Because Allied militaries have adopted similar approaches to logistics, there is already some question as to how much capacity is available at full utilization. The effects of a slowdown as a byproduct of lack of political cohesion would only exacerbate these trends. Depending on the nature of the crisis and which direction European energy takes over the next several years, Russia may have an opportunity to exploit the dependence of Allies and partners on Russian oil and natural gas to impede operations directly through a shutdown and indirectly through manipulation of public opinion.<sup>12</sup>

In terms of combat forces, USAREUR has a mixture of forward-stationed and rotational forces on the ground. The component command has two forward-stationed brigade combat teams (BCTs). The 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment (SCR) is based in Vilseck, Germany, a post adjacent to the Grafenwoehr Training Complex. The 173rd BCT (Airborne) is based in Vicenza, Italy, a post with limited local training areas though it is close to Aviano Air Base. Due to the limited capacity of Vicenza, the 173rd BCT (Airborne) is one of only two BCTs that was not expanded to have a third maneuver battalion during the reorganization in the early 2010s. The other brigade that was not expanded was the 4th BCT (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division, at Fort Richardson, Alaska, a post with capacity issues similar to that of Vicenza.

At present, the most significant rotational force is the enduring presence of ABCTs brought through on heel-to-toe rotations. The bulk of the rotational ABCT is centered at Żagań, Poland, but it has conducted dispersed operations along the entire eastern periphery of NATO from Lithuania to Romania and Bulgaria. These forces, however, are best kept within Poland. The USAREUR speed of assembly exercise in 2016 found that it requires considerable time to bring even small forces back to the main operating area. Perhaps even more critically, doing so requires the use of precious tank transporters and tank-capable railcars that in a crisis would be better employed along the lines of communications from Army prepositioned stocks (APS). Poland, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania each have one battalion-sized multinational eFP battalion. The United States

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Out? Lessons from a Wargame,” War on the Rocks, April 22, 2019, <https://warontherocks.com/2019/04/how-does-the-next-great-power-conflict-play-out-lessons-from-a-wargame/>.

12. *Hearing to Receive Testimony on the United States European Command in Review of the Defense Authorization Request for Fiscal Year 2019 and the Future Years Defense Program, before the United States Senate Committee on Armed Services*, 115th Cong. (March 8, 2018) (statement of General Curtis M. Scaparrotti, USA); NCFR, *Army for the Future*, 55; Boston et al., *Preparing for Near-Peer Conflict*, 141; planners at British Permanent Joint Headquarters, interview by the author, April 24, 2019; and TRADOC, *Multi-Domain Operations*, 2028, 35–37.

leads the unit in Poland. The political value of these units, some with up to seven different nationalities represented, is far greater than their tactical capability.<sup>13</sup>

In a crisis or conflict, there would be two additional waves of ground forces. In the nomenclature of the Global Operating Model, the first is the “blunt” layer, which can arrive within weeks of notification to move. Theoretically, there are many Army units that can be deployed in their entirety by air. But in a great-power conflict scenario, demand for strategic lift across the Joint Force would be immense and lines of communications including airfields would be contested. Under those conditions, only a small number of high-priority units could realistically expect to deploy by air in the first weeks of a conflict. Therefore, the bulk of the blunt layer would consist of units that can fall in on equipment stored in APS already in Europe. US Army Europe (USAREUR) is currently building an entire division’s worth of equipment, including two full ABCT equipment sets, across European APS sites in the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, Italy, Poland, Lithuania, Romania, and Bulgaria.<sup>14</sup> As will be discussed in the next section, however, even this APS equipment would take several months from initiation of movement until fully formed and deployed. In the meantime, Russia would have substantial time-distance advantage in the initial days and weeks of a conventional ground campaign against the Baltic states.<sup>15</sup>

The Army’s surge layer consists of all other forces; in other words, the remainder of the Army subtracting those committed to other theaters or necessary for homeland defense. This force, along with lower readiness Allied units taking considerable time to mobilize, would enjoy a vast superiority over the Russian military that could only be offset with nuclear weapons.<sup>16</sup>

Unfortunately, deploying the ground surge layer would take many months.<sup>17</sup> One of the major concerns of the congressionally appointed commission reviewing the NDS was that DoD’s understandable desire to hold a set of capabilities where they can be used against multiple threats, most particularly both China and Russia, might not be achievable in practice.<sup>18</sup> In a conflict with Russia, the friction of strategic movement would be compounded by active disruption through cyberattacks against military and

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13. Cathy Vandermaarel, “Initial EAS Forward Sites Announced,” US Army, December 1, 2015, [http://www.army.mil/article/159292/Initial\\_EAS\\_foward\\_sites\\_announce/](http://www.army.mil/article/159292/Initial_EAS_foward_sites_announce/); Ulrich Kühn, *Preventing Escalation in the Baltics: A NATO Playbook* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2018), 26–28; Philip M. Breedlove and Alexander Vershbow, *Permanent Deterrence: Enhancements to the US Military Presence in North Central Europe* (Washington, DC: Atlantic Council, 2018), 7–9; and Deni, “NATO’s Enhanced Forward Presence,” 30–44.

14. Jen Judson, “Funding to Deter Russia Reaches \$6.5B in FY19 Defense Budget Request,” *Defense News*, December 2, 2018, <https://www.defensenews.com/land/2018/02/12/funding-to-deter-russia-reaches-65b-in-fy19-defense-budget-request/>.

15. Boston et al., *Assessing the Conventional Force Imbalance*, 11.

16. Bryan Frederick et al., *Assessing Russian Reactions to US and NATO Posture Enhancements* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2017), 6–15.

17. Michael J. Lostumbo et al., *Overseas Basing of US Military Forces: An Assessment of Relative Costs and Strategic Benefits* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2013), 48–54.

18. Edelman et al., *Providing for the Common Defense*, 21–22, 34–35, 41–42; and Lostumbo et al., *Overseas Basing*, 38.

civilian networks; information operations; special operations forces; and a combination of air-, naval-, and ground-based fires for interdiction. The deployment of the surge force would be strategically fraught, as a depleted Russian military trapped in a conflict that it presumably would expect to have already ended due to a collapse of Western political will would be desperate to avoid facing these reinforcements.<sup>19</sup> The situation would be roughly analogous to the German General Staff's decision to employ unrestricted submarine warfare in the spring of 1918, even though it knew this would bring the United States into the war. A desperate power trapped in an unexpectedly long war can make decisions that, from a dispassionate distance, seem illogical and reckless.<sup>20</sup> Accordingly, the chance of the employment of nuclear weapons against large targets, such as seaports, becomes increasingly likely. Even if Russia opted not to employ nuclear weapons, the United States and partners would have to account for the possibility, which would likely lead to movement across multiple lines of communication in smaller, less efficient, and therefore slower packages. The possibility of being a target might also cause some allies to impose additional restrictions on movement, creating tensions within the Alliance.

The extended period to deploy ground surge elements, unfortunately, is out of sync with the surge of air capability which would have occurred, peaked, and been used up long before. This point suggests investments in sea and airlift capabilities, though welcome, would close the surge window enough to bring the Army in line with the other services. But doing so could improve restocking of ammunition whose stockpiles are likely insufficient, especially if conflict with Russia were protracted because of a NATO failure to respond quickly enough.

The United States has had difficulty in maintaining munitions stockpiles when fighting the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, a lightly armed force that never had more than several tens of thousands of fighters and no air defense capability. In a conflict with Russia, the expenditure of munitions would be exponentially greater.<sup>21</sup> How quickly would industry be able to ramp up the production of incredibly sophisticated systems requiring complex and often only partially understood supply chains, with the additional potential factor of Russian cyberattacks against any number of vendors?

By the time the ground surge assembled, the air component would have already reverted to a poorer version of AirLand Battle. Fifth-generation aircraft dropping "dumb bombs" would be both a reversion to the 1980s and a step back because the trade-off toward fewer but more exquisite aircraft was based on the availability of munitions that match the aircraft.

The frontline aircraft are smaller in number than they were in the 1980s, and each aircraft carries a far more limited payload (particularly when operating in a clean, low-observable configuration). The reduction in weight of munitions the aircraft can carry is of little concern if they are precision munitions; however, if they are not precision munitions, then this reduction will significantly impair the aircraft's effectiveness. As a result of this disparity in surge timelines between air and ground forces, coupled with

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19. Kühn, *Preventing Escalation in the Baltics*, 5.

20. Hew Strachan, *The First World War* (New York: Viking Press, 2004), 216–230.

21. Edelman et al., *Providing for the Common Defense*, 41, 46; and TRADOC, *Multi-Domain Operations*, 2028, C-8.

the lack of munitions endurance, the ground surge force would likely not have the air partner to conduct MDO. Indeed, the ground surge force would have, in relative terms, the weakest air support against conventional opponents since World War I.<sup>22</sup>

## CAPABILITIES REQUIRED FOR MULTIDOMAIN OPERATIONS IN 2028

The dangers and excessive cost of even a successful employment of the surge layer are the underlying reason for the emphasis on the ability to quickly – within weeks – defeat aggression in MDO.<sup>23</sup> But achieving this goal with roughly the same amount of forces currently in Europe is exceptionally difficult. Put simply, every aspect of the combined Joint Force must be more effective than today. Or, in the terms identified at the beginning of the chapter, a credible deterrent requires an all-of-the-above approach, in which force posture simultaneously better enables the execution of Army, Joint, and Allied tasks.

The starting point is with the Joint Force. As noted in chapter 2, the Russian military's prime concern in large-scale conventional operations is what they would term as NATO aerospace operations, and with good reason.<sup>24</sup> Air strike has long been a significant asymmetric advantage for the United States. The natural by-product of national strengths – economic wealth, technological innovation, and a global network of supporting bases and infrastructure – is that no competitor comes close to matching. Though air power cannot independently win a conflict, it is such a significant element of the US Joint Force that no war, campaign, or battle against Russia can be won without it.

Being cognizant of the US dependence on air power, Russia has selectively invested in A2/AD capabilities designed to neutralize NATO airpower through multiple means: air defenses to counter fifth-generation fighters and other penetrating aircraft while significantly pushing back the area in which tankers, command and control aircraft, and legacy fighters, bombers, and ISR platforms can operate. These are complemented by a long-range strike and reconnaissance complex capable of attacking bases with munitions, maintenance, mission planning, and other essential support capabilities; and, a multidomain capability to contest the varied communications that bind all elements of air power. Therefore, the question is not whether the F-22 and F-35 will work as advertised against Russian defenses. Fifth-generation aircraft are just the tip of the spear. Russia is also positioned to execute a broad attack against multiple points of the entire air power system. Under the cover of this air defense umbrella, Russia's capable ground forces, which are particularly strong in terms of ground fires, could isolate US Army forces from the remainder of the Joint Force and defeat them in detail.

Though particularly designed to counter the United States, this system is brittle; it lacks depth and Russia lacks the resources for a significant restructuring. The US Army's MDO concept proposes a solution to this problem by operating in ways that the Russian military system is not equipped to handle. The essential first step that unlocks the puzzle is the integration of Army long-range fires into the larger Joint effort against the keystone

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22. Ochmanek et al., *US Military Capabilities and Forces*, 36–39.

23. TRADOC, *Multi-Domain Operations*, 2028, 17, 24.

24. Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), *Russia Military Power: Building a Military to Support Great Power Aspirations* (Washington, DC: DIA, 2017), 32–34.



Russian systems. The US Army Capabilities Integration Center analysis suggests long-range ground fires and a more efficient MDC2 unlock this Russian A2/AD because they have the qualities of persistence and so can fire immediately upon an intelligence cue, can be employed in greater numbers so as to overwhelm Russian point defenses, and enable multiaxial attacks that further spread enemy defensive efforts.

Even with this additional capability, a complete rollback of Russian A2/AD is not possible, but it will allow enough freedom of maneuver for air and ground forces—everything from fourth-generation fighters and ISR aircraft to armored forces and cannon artillery—to engage the enemy as a Joint combined arms team. The next chapter will identify some of the additional investments necessary to support this new way of fighting. Two of the most important are a logistics system capable of withstanding Russian attacks against rear areas and command and control systems resilient to interference with space, cyberspace, and electromagnetic networks. In sum, MDO—if realized—completely alters the operational outlook within the European theater, altering Russian decision calculations regarding potential advantage and escalation dominance. This altered strategic balance, while not completely solving the problem of competition below armed conflict, will have additional beneficial effects in that form of competition as well. Once this fundamental condition is achieved, more capable ground forces and allies can achieve their missions.

As a baseline for the operational capabilities required to defeat Russian aggression against a NATO ally rapidly, this study will adopt an estimate derived from *The US Army in Multi-Domain Operations, 2028* and a draft document prepared by the Joint and Army Concepts Division writing team.<sup>25</sup> This list of capabilities has not been officially sanctioned and requires further analysis through detailed modeling and simulation, but does at least provide a benchmark grounded in extensive experimentation and wargaming.

The ability to degrade Russian A2/AD significantly as part of a combined Joint air campaign from the first day of conflict through (1) a brigade of long-range ground based fires, (2) three weeks of munitions, and (3) a multidomain command and control (MDC2) system that incorporates ground-based fires into the larger Joint planning and execution to include allowing cueing from a variety of sensors in the time required to hit highly mobile high-value enemy systems.

The ability to prevail in ground maneuver through (1) the presence of a complete US division northeast of Warsaw within several weeks of a cold-start invasion to operate in conjunction with several Allied divisions and (2) an MDC2 structure that allows the leveraging of space, cyberspace, and massed Joint fires in support of coalition ground operations. Even with these forces, the relative strength of the two sides would require an aggressive, maneuver-based approach.

The ability to cause Russian forces unexpected delays and to expose high-value systems through an effective defense mounted by Allied conventional and unconventional forces, quick response US and Allied light forces, and special operations forces.

The ability of resilient forces and systems to reduce the effectiveness of enemy attacks of all kinds against command and control systems, headquarters, sustainment nodes,

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25. US Army Capabilities and Integration Center (ARCIC), “MDO in Application” (PowerPoint presentation, ARCIC, Fort Eustis, VA, October 10, 2018).

transportation networks, and prepositioned equipment through a combination of active protection, dispersal, hardening, deception, and redundancy.

## **CALIBRATED FORCE POSTURE LEVERS**

Changes to force posture cannot be viewed in isolation. US Army units in Europe operate as part of a larger Joint combined system; alterations to one aspect often have ripple effects for other elements within the system. For instance, a forward-deployed fires brigade with long-range precision fires ready to target enemy A2/AD on the first day of hostilities would significantly alter the operational dynamic within the theater. The NATO air component would be able to achieve freedom of maneuver much sooner, with less expenditure of munitions and attrition to aircraft. But that outsized benefit is only realized if the deployment of firing units is matched with alterations to command and control structures, the allocation of surveillance and reconnaissance assets to provide targeting information, and investment in munitions and sustainment support. Similarly, the basing of ABCTs in certain locations requires investment in transportation and logistics infrastructure so the units can effectively maneuver.

To maintain clarity without losing sight of the importance of the interrelationships and dependencies, this study presents the options for calibrated force posture in three parts. First, the following section provides a summary of the various discrete levers (grouped into five categories) and the underlying trade-offs that must be considered for each. Second, the following chapter gives a top-down menu of strategic approaches that group the discrete options into coherent packages accounting for the interrelationships and dependencies. Finally, the appendices offer comprehensive, detailed descriptions of each strategic approach.

The various force posture levers fall into the following categories: (1) MDC2, (2) Fires, (3) BCTs, (4) Footprint, and (5) Other Investments. Of these, the first two categories have the potential to yield the greatest strategic benefit to deterrence and crisis stability.

### **Multidomain Command and Control (MDC2)**

To increase operational effectiveness and strategic effect, MDC2 is arguably the single most important lever to pull. This category is also the most complex, uncertain, and contentious. The fundamental problem is that command and control within the context of a European armed conflict has two objectives: create the conditions for maximum contribution by all allies and enhance the operational effectiveness of forces through better multidomain integration.<sup>26</sup> Unfortunately, the dynamics of coalition warfare and the mechanics of MDO create a tension between mass and effectiveness. This problem could be mitigated to a certain extent, but the methods to do so require the US Army make a considerable investment with opportunity costs in terms of force generation for missions elsewhere. (As noted earlier in this chapter, the announced division

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26. *Implementation of the National Defense Strategy: Hearings before the Senate Armed Services Committee*, 116th Cong. (January 29, 2019) (statement of Elbridge A. Colby, Director of the Defense Program, Center for a New American Security). See also Lacey, "Next Great Power Conflict."

headquarters would not provide full multidomain capability and so, if it does come to fruition, the discussion in this section still pertains.)<sup>27</sup>

Mass requires inclusive command structures. Though all NATO members are obligated to come to the defense of a member under attack, each retains the sovereign ability to choose how to respond. The decision of how vigorously to respond to a Russian attack – and, thus, how much political and military risk to accept – would almost certainly be the most important decision the government of every Alliance member would make during its time in office. The natural confusion of a crisis-turned-war situation would be compounded by Russian information warfare targeting Allied political will.<sup>28</sup>

The threat of Russian kinetic and nonkinetic weapons, including nuclear weapons, against the territory of any country responding to the attack might cause allies to retain capabilities for sovereign defense (for example, combat aircraft, air defense units, and even ground maneuver formations for contingency response or internal security) and to restrict or deny access to critical routes, bases, sea, or airports. Many factors would dictate the response of each Allied government in such a crisis, most of which are outside of the control of the US military.<sup>29</sup> But one important element that could mitigate Russian efforts to weaken Alliance political and military cohesion is a unified command structure. Governments are more likely to accept political and military risk when they have the reassurance that there are officers in key coalition positions who are ultimately accountable to them.<sup>30</sup>

Examples of this are Joint Force Command Brunssum, which currently has a German commander, British deputy commander, and French chief of staff; or Multinational Corps–Northeast, which alternates the command and deputy command positions between Germany and Poland.<sup>31</sup> Because any conflict with Russia would entail considerable risk for all of those countries and require them to make exceptional sacrifices, it is necessary they be fully invested in the operational command structures. The consensus within the study team is that Russia would only attempt overt aggression if it believed that Alliance cohesion had deteriorated to the point that NATO would plausibly lack the political will to fulfill its commitments. This likely precondition for war means that an inclusive command structure is not a trivial consideration.

As described by *The US Army in Multi-Domain Operations, 2028*, the three-star (field army or corps) echelon has primary responsibility for several critical missions: the suppression of enemy air defenses (in conjunction with the air component), suppressing long-range ground fires (a danger to both air and ground campaigns), and defeating the large integrated fires complex that supports enemy maneuver forces. The first two missions in particular require the convergence of sensitive capabilities—sensors and analytical and decision-making technologies—that are and will likely be, at best, restricted to Five Eyes and in many cases are (or, once fielded, will be) US-only. Yet, to

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27. Myers, “It’s Not ‘Fort Trump.’”

28. DIA, *Russia Military Power*, 32.

29. Lostumbo et al., *Overseas Basing*, 107–110.

30. Kühn, *Preventing Escalation in the Baltics*, 25–28.

31. “Leadership Staff,” Joint Forces Command Brunssum, NATO, accessed February 14, 2020, <https://jfcbs.nato.int/page582591.aspx>.

employ them effectively at the necessary pace and scale will not permit cumbersome, time-consuming “tear-line” processes to pass critical information on to allies. Integrating a mixture of Allies and partners with different levels of access—Five Eyes, other NATO, and a few others, such as Sweden—by inserting a corps headquarters suddenly in the midst of a crisis would be impossible. The technical and procedural architecture would have to be established, trained, and refined far in advance.

To accommodate the necessity for both command inclusiveness and multidomain effectiveness can be best achieved through the permanent stationing of a multidomain headquarters in Europe that is integrated into the NATO command structure. A model for this already exists: The commander of US Air Forces in Europe (USAFE) is dual-hatted as commander of NATO Air Command. The Air Force is a good analogy, as it has long faced the challenge of integrating sensitive air, space, and cyber capabilities into operations. Though coalition warfare will never be seamless, with time to plan, train, and develop workaround procedures, building a multidomain coalition for land forces is possible. For instance, a high-end US capability could perhaps cue a Polish BM-21 multiple rocket launcher to destroy a high-value target within the exacting time constraints on the first day of a campaign. This objective could be accomplished by mirroring the USAFE/NATO Air Command structure through the creation of a field army with a commander dual-hatted as the commanding general of NATO Land Command.

In a Baltic fait accompli scenario, this arrangement would reduce the dilemma between Alliance mass and multidomain effectiveness. Allies would still have full representation from the flag officer to action officer level at Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe, the Joint Force Command (Brunssum or Naples), NATO Land Command, and Multinational Corps—Northeast. Allies and partners would also be represented within the US field army through exchange and liaison officers. In a crisis, senior European officers would figure prominently in the public face of the Alliance, mitigating likely Russian information warfare attempts to cast the response as a concern of only the Baltic states or the United States. Within the Alliance, having individuals without American accents speaking to Allied governments and ministries to win support in critical matters, like the granting of waivers and priority to military traffic, releasing forces and supplies for Alliance use, and imposing necessary security measures along lines of communications and sensitive sites, would be of considerable value. Conversely, in the midst of a political-military crisis, whether inserting a US-only headquarters into the operational chain of command would be possible or desirable is uncertain. Such an insertion would entail replacing a headquarters led by German and Polish general officers (Multinational Corps—Northeast) with an American general in the midst of a crisis stoked by Russian disinformation and in which political cohesion is the most likely center of gravity and when the full cooperation of those states is critical. The operational gain would probably not offset the strategic loss.

To differentiate between the options of having a multidomain headquarters integrated into NATO as opposed to one that is simply based in Europe, this study will refer to the first as a *field army* and the second as a *corps*. This differentiation assumes the implementation of the idea of a split between theater and field armies, as described in the MDO and echelons above brigade concepts. If not, a far more robust US Army Europe headquarters with an operational MDC2 capability could fulfill the same function.

An additional consideration is that a Europe-based corps would not be entirely free for out-of-theater deployment. In the instance of an extended period of heightened tensions with Russia, deploying the corps to some other region would be a poor political optic, even if doing so were part of a previously announced rotation of headquarters, as in the case of Combined Joint Task Force—Operation Inherent Resolve. Ultimately, the United States might decide to go forward with the deployment, though positioning a globally available force in Europe would create a potential trap.

The operational and strategic benefits of a field army, however, must be weighed against the institutional risk in force generation. Integrating a field army headquarters into NATO means it cannot be employed elsewhere. Three-star headquarters do not require a large amount of force structure, but they do consume a disproportionate amount of critical talent and expertise. Though a Europe-based corps would not be nearly so effective at the beginning of a conflict, it could be used elsewhere. A field army would be fixed.

One final consideration that weighs against the field army is the uncertainty caused by Alliance politics. Whatever proposal is put forward will have to go through a torturous consultation program. Because command and control arrangements are so important, they are also difficult to change. The current structure reflects an equilibrium between many competing interests reached through hard-fought bureaucratic battle. The same would occur with a new field army, so that it is virtually certain that the eventual outcome would be some compromise from the initial proposal.

The creation of NATO Land Command is instructive. Conducted as part of a larger Alliance-wide reorganization, several member states opposed the creation of a capable headquarters; hence, NATO Land Command was limited to just 350 personnel, far too small to serve its putative function as an operational headquarters. Therefore, the US Army could pay the institutional price of creating a field army without any guarantee the realized operational benefit would be equal to the cost. An additional risk is the cost might rise. Allies may or may not accept a three-star field army placed over any of the existing NATO corps. Bear in mind that USAFE is a four-star command. If another four-star billet were not granted, then this would presumably require reduction of US Army Pacific to a three-star command, putting the Army at odds with the direction of travel of the remainder of the DoD.

The MDO concept describes a new *operational fires command* (OFC) headquarters subordinate to either a field army or corps. The OFC plays a role similar to that of the old corps artillery headquarters, in that there is a close relationship between the field army or corps headquarters and the OFC as the planning and executive organizations for the long-range fires fight, respectively. Because MDO assigns the field army or corps responsibility for the suppression of enemy ground fires and assisting the air component with the suppression of enemy air defenses—two fires-centric missions—therefore, the OFC is the chief executor of that echelon's primary assigned mission. In Europe, this mission is even more critical as it makes the OFC organization the Army organization with primary responsibility for executing operations against the two pillars of the Russian military system. The suppression of enemy long-range ground fires and air defenses is the catalyst to both ground maneuver and unleashing the full power of

the air component. In sum, an OFC is an integral part of making a field army or corps a multidomain headquarters.

Therefore, the OFC must match the force posture of its operational headquarters. If it is a Europe-based corps, the OFC should also be available for global use. If it is a Europe-stationed field army, the OFC should also be designed to work within or closely alongside the NATO command structure. Building on the comparison with USAFE/NATO Air Command, the OFC would be like the ground Combined Air Operations Center. In the last several years, concept papers have circulated within NATO to create a ground fires command, an increasingly important function with extended range systems like the High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems recently acquired by Poland.<sup>32</sup> If that concept were to go forward, then the OFC and the new NATO organization could have a relationship similar to USAFE's 603rd Air and Space Operations Center and the NATO Combined Air Operations Center at Uedem. Whether that specific course would be adopted or some other relationship, the objective would be to bring necessary US capabilities into the suppression of Russian A2/AD and fires while also making maximum use of Allied mid- and long-range capabilities. This convergence of capabilities is particularly important because one problem identified within MDO development is that the extension of ground fires systems' ranges has outpaced the growth of sensors. Even within the US Army, ground commanders will increasingly find themselves able to shoot further than they can see, unless connected to the larger Joint intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance architecture. Allies will be even more subject to this limitation. The OFC is the critical link in that chain.

Assuming the framework for headquarters proposed in the MDO and echelons above brigade concepts, the three principal (and mutually exclusive) options for MDC2 in Europe are

- a Europe-based field army and operational fires command built with the intention of full integration into the NATO operational command structure,
- a Europe-based corps and operational fires command primarily focused on Europe but globally available, if necessary, and
- the status quo (no three-star multidomain headquarters or operational fires command).

If the Army decided instead to build corps and division headquarters along the modularity principle, with the capabilities of the two being essentially the same, then a fourth option of forward deploying a division headquarters to provide MDC2 would be worth considering. That option, however, would either limit other options – for example, no additional fires brigade – or create significant span of control problems, as well as undermine unity of command by putting a US division in command of capabilities meant to be used across the area of responsibility of its superior headquarters, Multinational Corps – Northeast, or some other NATO corps.

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32. Former NATO planner, interview by the author, September 13, 2018.

## Long-Range Fires Capability

Ground-based long-range fires open possibilities for the Joint Force to fight in new ways that would unlock Russian A2/AD systems. Thus, ground-based long-range fires are a tactical capability that can transform the operational context in a manner that yields strategic effect.<sup>33</sup> This potential, however, brings challenges. Because this capability can alter the balance of forces within Europe, it has the potential to be strategically destabilizing, fatally escalatory in a crisis, and divisive among allies. As already noted, the Army is in the process of creating the 41st Field Artillery Brigade with two battalions of MLRS. This section assumes that force posture will occur as planned. Within this study, long-range fires capability refers to the projected Precision Strike Missile (PrSM), a part of the long-range precision fires modernization priority. Slated for early operating capacity in 2023, this study assumes that there will be at least two battalions ready for operational deployment by 2028.<sup>34</sup>

Regardless of the final form that PrSM takes and when it is available, the Army faces a significant strategic question in where the first brigade should be positioned. Three options exist: The unit can be placed in the CONUS and deployed as needed, based in the Pacific, or based in Europe. To place this decision within context, this is the Army's top modernization priority and its most important, potentially transformative, contribution to how the Joint Force will fight.

This study adopts no specific position on how these long-range fires should be organized. The basic unit of action could be anywhere from two to four battalions with or without a brigade headquarters. The Army might create a specialized long-range field artillery brigade with a distinct organization. Alternatively, long-range battalions could be incorporated into existing brigades, on a permanent or task-organized basis, and operate alongside existing battalion types. Depending on the course of PrSM program development, this might be particularly easy as the basic launcher for the future PrSM is likely to be the same as the current Army Tactical Missile System (ATACMS). Uncertainty remains regarding the modifications that might differentiate the long-range launchers or the additional equipment or capabilities a long-range-capable battalion would require compared to a typical ATACMS-firing MLRS battalion. Within the context of Europe, this means that it could be very easy to add two battalions of PrSM to the existing 41st Field Artillery Brigade. Therefore, the first long-range brigade might be either a truly new organization or an existing organization augmented with long-range battalions.

From an institutional perspective, CONUS is likely the best choice. Fielding a new capability is a difficult undertaking with inevitable teething pains. A CONUS location

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33. TRADOC, *Multi-Domain Operations, 2028*, 22–25; Kühn, *Preventing Escalation in the Baltics*, 59–60; Ben Hodges et al., *Securing the Suwałki Corridor*, 10; Jacob Cohn et al., *Leveling the Playing Field: Reintroducing US Theater-Range Missiles in a Post-INF World* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Analysis, 2019), 20–22, 24–25.

34. "Precision Strike Missile (PrSM)," Acquisition Support Center, US Army, n.d., <https://asc.army.mil/web/portfolio-item/ms-prsm/>; Allen Cone, "US Army, Raytheon Complete Preliminary Design Review of DeepStrike Missile," UPI, March 26, 2019, <https://www.upi.com/Defense-News/2019/03/26/US-Army-Raytheon-complete-preliminary-design-review-of-DeepStrike-missile/5281553615482/>; and Cohn et al., *Leveling the Playing Field*, 34–35.

would generally make it easier to solve those problems, implement solutions, and disseminate lessons learned. If this institutional learning and development consideration is most important, then the first unit should be based in CONUS.

But if strategic effectiveness is the most important criterion, then the Army should elect to place the first unit in either the Pacific or Europe. Superficially, a CONUS location seems to offer the best of both worlds with the ability to deploy this critical capability against either of the two major competitors. This seeming flexibility, however, is illusory. The critical role for long-range fires as envisioned in the MDO concept comes at the very beginning of the campaign. The capability, which includes not just the launchers, soldiers, and supporting equipment but also munitions, must be in place to be of use. Even with a deployment by air it would take several weeks from notification to move to put a capability sufficient to achieve significant operational effect in place. This timeline still might not be fast enough to meet operational requirements, and it would also consume a tremendous portion of scarce strategic lift. A significant opportunity cost is associated with all of the other capabilities that would otherwise be deployed. As one recent report noted, an effective, sustained use of long-range missiles requires “a well-conceived support infrastructure.”<sup>35</sup> From an operational perspective, therefore, relying on deploying long-range fires units in time of crisis is a dubious proposition.

Yet, the strategic risk of placing the first long-range unit in CONUS is even greater. If long-range fires are the truly transformative capability envisioned in MDO, then relying on moving these forces in time of crisis creates a destabilizing “1914-like” moment. At that time, the requirements of finely tuned plans to move mass armies quickly meant that generals presented their governments with the ultimatum of begin mobilization now or risk defeat. In a narrow sense, the World War I generals were vindicated in that the easiest gains came early in the war. But World War I also demonstrates the larger folly of subordinating diplomatic attempts to avoid great-power conflict to military plans is madness.

For the United States today, the requirement to deploy an essential capability would place policymakers in the position of having to make a pivotal, escalatory decision very early in the crisis—perhaps as much as two months before the expected conflict. Such a scenario would be the opposite of expanding the competitive space; it would be foreclosing policy options rather than opening them. Moreover, one cannot assume allies would acquiesce to such a deployment at a time when they would presumably be seeking to lower tensions. These observations should not be misunderstood as implicit criticisms of “weak-kneed politicians and diplomats” unwilling or unable to make the hard choices required for national security. Both American and Allied governments would have good reason to be reluctant to authorize escalatory actions such as an early deployment of long-range fires systems. If the potential adversary also regarded the long-range fires as a critical capability, then it would be under an immense first-strike pressure to gain the upper hand.<sup>36</sup>

Thus, if the DoD regards quickly improving the capability to fight a great-power conflict as an important asset in shaping the larger great-power competition, then the

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35. Cohn et al., *Leveling the Playing Field*, 14.

36. Frederick et al., *Assessing Russian Reactions*, 42–44.



first long-range capable firing unit should be committed either to the Pacific or Europe. At least for long-range fires, dynamic force employment is not only operationally unrealistic but strategically dangerous.<sup>37</sup> A number of studies have discussed the potential advantages and challenges of ground-based long-range fires in the Pacific.<sup>38</sup> Undoubtedly, that capability would be of use there, but the impression of the study team is that geopolitical factors and the relative magnitude of the threat mean that the same size force would have a greater impact in Europe than in the Pacific, where the biggest obstacle to long-range ground-based fires is the reluctance of partners to allow access due to both domestic political and foreign policy concerns. No one is eager to provoke Chinese ire in peace or invite attack in war, particularly in the two locations where they would do the most good – the Philippines and Okinawa. Moreover, by 2028, the estimated relative disparity between Russian and Chinese capacity means that it is far more likely that the addition of Army long-range fires would be the difference between successful and failed deterrence in Europe. If that rough estimate is correct, then Army leadership will face a difficult decision: place the long-range fires capability in a perceived secondary theater where it can have a transformative effect, or in the region that is the main focus but where long-range fires capability is merely additive.

Though the difficulty of finding suitable basing in a location that actually provides some operational benefit is more challenging in the Pacific, there would still be challenges in Europe. A PrSM with a maximum range greater than 500 kilometers would be associated with the United States' withdrawal from the INF Treaty, which is very popular in Europe. This PrSM would require the expenditure of political capital and willing Allied governments to win acceptance.<sup>39</sup> This task would likely be made more difficult by Russian information and political warfare seeking to prevent deployment or, at least, make the deployment a wedge issue between the host country and the United States. Of all the force posture options, the forward stationing of a long-range fires brigade is the one most likely to elicit the strongest Russian counteraction. This force posture has the potential to exacerbate training and readiness problems; the training environment is already restrictive in Europe and a government under public pressure might impose particularly onerous restrictions on peacetime use. Two firing unit options exist: (1) station the first long-range fires unit in Europe; or (2) station the first long-range fires unit in CONUS or the Pacific and deploy to Europe in case of crisis.

## **Brigade Combat Teams**

As described previously in this chapter, the benchmark derived from MDO development is a full US division ready to conduct operations within several weeks of the beginning of a cold-start invasion. The heart of the combat capability of a division configured for Europe is its ABCTs. Militarily, these units provide the bulk of ground

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37. Edelman et al., *Providing for the Common Defense*, 21–22.

38. Timothy M. Bonds et al., *What Role Can Land-Based, Multi-Domain Anti-Access/Area Denial Forces Play in Deterring or Defeating Aggression?* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2017), xii–xix; and Thomas G. Mahnken et al., *Tightening the Chain: Implementing a Strategy of Maritime Pressure in the Western Pacific* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Analysis, 2019), 28–30.

39. Kühn, *Preventing Escalation in the Baltics*, 59–60; and Cohn et al., *Leveling the Playing Field*, 30–31.

force combat power and are the fulcrum around which the remainder of the ground campaign acts. In the words of RAND Corporation senior analyst David Ochmanek, in a European scenario, “heavy ground forces—ABCTs available from the outset of the conflict—appear to be the sine qua non of a successful defense,” a judgment borne out during the development of the MDO concept.<sup>40</sup> As the most visible element of ground combat power, ABCTs might be even more pivotal in deterring an attack. Experienced Allied military planners who fully understand the importance of enablers and logistics to produce actual combat power still indicated a strong preference for ABCTs, even at the expense of these other necessary capabilities. This position is not irrational. Intelligence services struggle to gauge the degree of sufficiency in adversaries’ sustainment capabilities. Armored brigade combat teams (ABCTs) have an even greater political salience with Allied policymakers and populations due to their easily understood symbolic value. The typical newspaper, magazine, or other media infographic of military strength usually depicts hopelessly simplistic but evocative comparisons of numbers of tanks, artillery pieces, aircraft, and ships. So, for both political and military purposes, the ability to deploy three ABCTs in northeastern Poland within a few weeks of a cold start invasion is important. Significantly, former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Elbridge Colby, one of the chief architects of the NDS, noted that one of the few exceptions to the general trend toward reduction in forward presence should be heavy forces in Europe.<sup>41</sup>

The current force posture of one ABCT through the persistent rotational presence in Poland with eventually two more ABCT equipment sets in APS. This force posture provides the necessary mass, but not in sufficient time. Unclassified estimates suggest that it would take two to three months to bring the division together rather than two to three weeks. This long period of potential vulnerability creates two chief operational and strategic risks.

The first is a risk of destabilization in a crisis, similar to the 1914 syndrome described in the fires section. If the United States requires several weeks to bring forces to bear, then there is a strong incentive for Russia to strike early before its advantage erodes.<sup>42</sup>

The other risk is that a mission risk caused by the mismatch between the assembly of the air and ground blunt layers puts the Joint Force commander into the dilemma of either moderating the air campaign to ensure there are still munitions left for the Joint counteroffensive, thereby allowing the enemy to consolidate gains and greatly increase the cost of the conflict, or to accept even greater risk by going forward before forces are fully formed. Using history as a guide, the latter is more likely; America’s first battles have often been accompanied by intense political pressure to move more quickly than has often been militarily sound.<sup>43</sup> Russian information warfare is unlikely to make this

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40. Ochmanek et al., *US Military Capabilities and Forces*, 39. See also Frederick et al., *Assessing Russian Reactions*, 45–47.

41. *Implementation of the National Defense Strategy*.

42. Kühn, *Preventing Escalation in the Baltics*, 29.

43. John Shy, “First Battles in Retrospect,” in *America’s First Battles, 1776–1965*, ed. Charles E. Heller and William A. Stofft (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1986), 335–339; and Antulio J. Echevarria II, *Reconsidering the American Way of War: US Military Practice from the Revolution to Afghanistan* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2014), 164.

situation better. The Army would take many months to recover from a failed offensive with high equipment losses and casualties.<sup>44</sup>

Several ways to reduce this time gap exist. The most direct method is to forward station ABCTs. Of note, one recommendation of the National Commission on the Future of the Army was to forward station an ABCT in Europe.<sup>45</sup> One assumption of this study (see appendix 3) is that existing German bases could accommodate a second mounted BCT (Stryker or armored) with only modest military construction costs. This assumption is important because, historically, Congress has been skeptical of large expenditures on foreign soil. The present administration's insistence on Allies and partners providing significant sums to support troops based overseas only sets an already difficult bar that much higher.<sup>46</sup> Moreover, even if DoD approved a significant expansion and Congress appropriated the funds, the expenditure would come with a large opportunity cost paid elsewhere.

All these factors suggest the practical limit of forward-stationed mounted troops is one ABCT and one Stryker BCT (SBCT) or two ABCTs. The latter course, which assumes reconfiguring the 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment or swapping it with a CONUS-based ABCT, would increase the warfighting combat power supporting Northeastern Allies (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland), but would be more difficult and costly to project into the area of Eastern Partners (Moldova and Ukraine) and Southeastern Allies (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Greece, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Romania, and Turkey).<sup>47</sup> The consequence would be less US presence, potentially creating doubts in the minds of those countries' political and military elites that Russia could exploit in competition below armed conflict. Other consequences would be significant short-term implementation costs, as well as turmoil for individuals and units.

An additional difficulty is associated with a second ABCT. The study team also assumed that the Army would not create an additional ABCT. One option would be to move an ABCT from CONUS without a backfill. Obviously, the community and its congressional delegation would fiercely resist this course of action. Perhaps this could be overcome by repatriating the 173rd BCT (Airborne) from Italy. This move, however, would not be a straight swap of units, because the garrison at Vicenza cannot support a mounted unit. The ABCT would go to Germany rather than Italy. Thus, solving the domestic political problem with a complex three-way move would create a diplomatic problem. Italy is an important partner with which the United States has a complex web of service, Joint, and national interactions and dependencies.<sup>48</sup> With so many stakeholders, it was impossible for the team to determine the feasibility or desirability of this course of

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44. Lacey, "Next Great Power Conflict."

45. NCFA, *Army for the Future*, 52-53.

46. Aaron Mehta, "Shanahan: Charging Allies to House US troops, Plus 50 Percent Surcharge, Isn't Happening," *Defense News*, March 14, 2019, <https://www.defensenews.com/pentagon/2019/03/14/shanahan-charging-allies-cost-plus-50-percent-for-basing-not-happening/>.

47. John R. Deni, *Rotational Deployments vs. Forward Stationing: How Can the Army Achieve Assurance and Deterrence Efficiently and Effectively?* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, 2017).

48. Former US Army attaché to Italy, interview by the author, April 11, 2019.

action. What was obvious was that it cannot be taken for granted that the Army would be permitted to make the move and, if it did, it would require a considerable amount of senior leader and staff effort.

One much discussed option for forward stationing is to place forces, including ABCTs, in permanent bases in Poland.<sup>49</sup> From a military perspective, the study team viewed this option as a variant with few important factors to distinguish it from the same number of ABCTs based in Germany. As discussed earlier, MDO wargaming suggests that it is necessary to be able to bring three ABCTs into northeastern Poland several weeks into a conflict. If the permanent base is at a location west of the Vistula, such as the current base for rotational forces at Żagań, only a marginal gain would result in terms of the ability to get to tactical assembly area because the main obstacle to military mobility is still between the permanent base and conflict/wartime positions.

Even if the base were east of the Vistula, to achieve the essential mass would still require bringing additional Allied and US forces across Poland; peacetime improvements to and wartime protection of lines of communications across eastern Germany and through Poland would still be necessary. Of course, having some forces essentially already in position would be advantageous, but this would be somewhat lessened by the exposure of bases (and service families) to mass enemy fires. Moreover, that vulnerability would provide some measure of escalation advantage to the adversary. A deployed ABCT is a difficult target; an ABCT in garrison is extremely vulnerable. As a general rule, it would be prudent to have any permanent and critical static infrastructure outside of the range of Russian 300mm MLRS. In short, there are some differences between a German- and Polish-based maneuver force posture, but neither does much to change the larger theater requirements to conduct a successful large-scale ground campaign.

Though the operational differences between forward stationing an ABCT in Germany and doing so in Poland may be slight, significant strategic and policy implications are associated with these options. Permanently stationed forces in Poland would have greater reassurance value for the Poles.<sup>50</sup> The shift might also reassure some other allies by suggesting greater American commitment to the Alliance, if the move were portrayed in that light. If the change was described as purely transactional and a shift in the importance of two bilateral relations, then logically, other allies would feel that it had little bearing on their own interests.

By far the greatest impact of such a shift would come in the sphere of policy. Russia, and even many allies, would see permanent forces in Europe as a violation of both informal agreements and ratified treaties, almost certainly leading to a situation like the withdrawal of the INF Treaty with countering accusations as to whether the agreements during the breakup of the Soviet Union, the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty, and 1997 Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between NATO and

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49. Michael Hunzeker and Alexander Lanoszka, "Fort Trump: A Silly Name Masks a Good Idea," *Defense One*, September 21, 2018; and Michael Kofman, "Permanently Stationing US Forces in Poland Is a Bad Idea, but One Worth Debating," *War on the Rocks*, October 12, 2018, <https://warontherocks.com/2018/10/permanently-stationing-u-s-forces-in-poland-is-a-bad-idea-but-one-worth-debating/>.

50. Deni, *Rotational Deployments*, 31–32; and Grzegorz Kuczyński and Krzysztof Kamiński, *U.S. Permanent Military Base in Poland: Favorable Solution for the NATO Alliance* (Warsaw, Poland: Warsaw Institute, 2019), 20–22.

the Russian Federation have been violated and by which side.<sup>51</sup> Whether such a furor is desirable is a question of policy beyond the scope of this study.

In terms of operational effectiveness, rotational brigades are virtually equivalent to forward stationed brigades; both are ready in-place forces. In strategic effect, however, there are differences due to the lack of permanence of the reversibility of the arrangement. Rotational forces represent less commitment on the part of the United States and so have less reassurance value from the perspective of the ally or partner.<sup>52</sup> Nonetheless, as the preceding discussion suggests, the practical alternative for allies like Poland is not a forward-stationed ABCT, but an APS ABCT, or perhaps none at all. In that context, they would undoubtedly prefer a rotational ABCT.

An open question within the study team is whether the US Army should or can sustain the current model of rotational forces. Two main concerns are associated with this question. The first is the potential impact on overall Army force generation and morale. Limited evidence suggests morale in some of the first units to conduct rotations suffered.<sup>53</sup> Even if morale did suffer, the same effect might not continue in the future. Morale reflects expectations met or unmet, and how soldiers in years past responded to a new process tells us little about how those in the future will react to an established practice. This observation is even more applicable because the Army is undergoing a significant shift in operational patterns. Many captains of 2028 are still cadets, yet some staff sergeants of 2028 are still just entering the service. Why that next generation joined (or will join) and with what expectations, and what their experiences will be between then and now are quite different than those of the study team. Will mid-career leaders, officers and noncommissioned officers in 2028, particularly those in the branches and Military Occupational Specialties that reside primarily within ABCTs tire of an extended treadmill of rotational deployments (currently Europe, Korea, and Kuwait)?

Without foreknowledge of general service operations tempo over the next several years, one cannot say whether an extended rotational posture would cause difficulties or not. The US Marine Corps maintains an aggressive deployment tempo, but it also has a rank structure designed for high turnover in first-term marines, a luxury because of that service's dependence on the Army and Navy for provision of many services and functions that tend to be more rank-heavy. Additionally, the US Marine Corps is smaller and does not have such a large recruiting demand. One cannot be certain the Marine Corps' model can be successfully scaled up to the Army; to an extent, the answer depends on whether future economic conditions are favorable to recruiting.

One mitigating option discussed would be to include reserve component ABCTs in deployments to Europe. Reserve component units are already used in similar fashion in Korea and the Middle East. Perhaps the employer support seen in those other regions

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51. "Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces"; "Adapted CFE Treaty at a Glance"; and "Official Text: Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation signed in Paris, France," NATO, updated October 12, 2009, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official\\_texts\\_25468.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_25468.htm). See also Luke Coffey and Daniel Kochis, *The 1997 NATO–Russia Founding Act Does Not Prohibit Permanent NATO Bases in Eastern Europe* (Washington, DC: Heritage Foundation, 2016).

52. Deni, *Rotational Deployments*, 31–32; Kuczyński and Kamiński, *U.S. Permanent Military Base in Poland*, 20–22.

53. Deni, *Rotational Deployments*, 32–34.

would not carry over to missions to Europe. One scenario given was a small business owner suffering through short-staffing problems who turns to social media to see a picture of his or her National Guard employee sitting in civilian clothes and enjoying a Polish meal and beer.<sup>54</sup> Once again, one cannot predict the cost of sustaining a large rotational presence for several more years—the answer depends on events that have not yet occurred and decisions that have not yet been made—but the possibility that the practice would cause some problems must be considered.

The other potential problem is the significant cost of deploying and redeploying an ABCT's worth of equipment every nine months. Earlier studies found that in absolute terms, forward stationing is generally the less expensive option under most conditions.<sup>55</sup> One of the great advantages of rotational forces, however, is that to this point, the greater cost burden has fallen mainly upon funding from the European Deterrence Initiative (formerly known as the European Reassurance Initiative).<sup>56</sup> As the European Deterrence Initiative transitions from the Overseas Contingency Operations account to the military base budget, rotational presence will be placed in direct competition with other activities paid for with service Operations and Maintenance Funds.<sup>57</sup> Without knowledge of the global demands of 2028, one cannot say whether such an expensive method of providing rotational presence would continue to have a positive cost-benefit calculation. Costs can be reduced by having units rotate through on a permanent set of equipment, but that raises other issues of where an additional set of equipment would come from. Maintaining a rotational ABCT with in-theater equipment essentially requires four sets of equipment: the forward set and the home-station equipment sets of the three ABCTs rotating through deployments. This trade-off of needing additional equipment sets to maintain rotational forces was noted by the National Commission on the Future of the Army, which in its recommendations 14 and 18 argued for either an ABCT forward stationed in Europe or an increase in overall ABCT capacity.<sup>58</sup>

One advantage of using in-place equipment is that with the proper facilities and sustainment contracts, the set in Poland could be employed as either a basis for APS or rotational forces. The set being employed in such a way would provide some institutional flexibility to adjust presence according to the situation. When the threat from Russia was low and budgets were strained, or when operations elsewhere put severe operations tempo strain on the Army, the set could be kept in APS status. When the threat increased or money and units were available, the set could be used with a rotational unit.

The final option for providing ABCTs within weeks is APS. Though plans exist to build up the APS in Europe to two ABCTs, they cannot meet the time requirements of the MDO concept. One current estimate is drawing the first ABCT worth of equipment would take 30 days, and then additional weeks for the unit to move across Europe and

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54. Brad Striegel, "Maintaining the Operational Reserve," *Small Wars Journal*, January 16, 2016, <https://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/maintaining-operational-reserve>; and former National Guard Division G-2, interview by the author, January 10, 2019.

55. Deni, *Rotational Deployments*, 17–26; and Lostumbo et al., *Overseas Basing*, 176–177, 223–224, 233.

56. Breedlove and Vershbow, *Permanent Deterrence*, 2.

57. NCFA, *Army for the Future*, 40.

58. NCFA, *Army for the Future*, 52–54.

deploy into position.<sup>59</sup> This time can be reduced, but doing so will require staff effort and additional resources to address the several interrelated components of APS readiness. Any force posture that depends on APS units concentrated in just a few sites creates both an obvious vulnerability and a destabilizing “first-mover” incentive for Russia to conduct a quick strike if it suspects war is imminent, as well as a dangerously inviting target for low-yield nuclear weapons. These factors will be discussed later in the section titled “Additional Investments.” All three options for providing ABCTs come with some form of institutional cost.

## Activity Footprint

In contrast to the earlier sections, which described the stationing of specific formations, the activity footprint element refers to actions of all sorts (training, advisory visits, deployments) conducted by any Army forces, regardless of whether they are permanently stationed in Europe. The question is: How widely dispersed or how narrowly focused should that activity be?

For the purposes of this study, activity is divided into four geographic regions: Northeastern Allies (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland), Southeastern Allies (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Greece, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Romania, and Turkey), Eastern Partners (Moldova and Ukraine), and Southeastern Partners (Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia).

As this study is focused on 2028, these divisions do not entirely correlate with the current status of these countries with respect to NATO. Bosnia and Herzegovina and North Macedonia are currently aspiring members, but are included with the Southeastern Allies due to both their potential to become Allies by 2028 and because US forces can operate with them without the same level of political sensitivity as is the case with Georgia and Ukraine, which are also considered aspiring members of NATO. Likewise, this study considers Moldova and Ukraine as potential partners: at present, one political question in both countries is to what extent they should be aligned with Europe and the United States or with Russia. The US Army must consider the possibility that it will be called upon to work with either or both in 2028 – whether that is actually the case remains to be seen. Similarly, this study accounts for the possibility that the US Army would be called upon to partner with any or all of the Southeastern Partners in 2028 without making any prediction as to the likelihood of that possibility.

Footprint also includes the subcategory of the National Guard State Partnership Program (SPP), which currently covers all but two countries (Greece and Turkey) within the four activity regions.<sup>60</sup> The program is decentralized and enduring, which are both weaknesses and strengths. The program’s activities cannot be easily scaled up in response to rapid changes in theater priorities, but neither do they fall prey to the tyranny of the present fight at the expense of long-term priorities. Even the two strategic

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59. Kühn, *Preventing Escalation in the Baltics*, 29.

60. “State Partnership Program Map,” State Partnership Program, National Guard, accessed February 18, 2020, <https://www.nationalguard.mil/Portals/31/Documents/J-5/InternationalAffairs/StatePartnershipProgram/SPP-Map-78.png?ver=2019-12-12-102145-720>.

approaches that adopt a purposefully narrow regional focus (see chapter 5) envisioned that SPP in the nonpriority areas would continue.

The study team divided the regions among Allies and partners to note the important policy and legal distinctions between the two groups. Though the relative importance of any individual country to the United States is the product of many factors, some of which change over time, in general terms, Allies are more important than partners. In both armed conflict and competition below armed conflict, the United States is more likely to expend resources and accept political and operational risk on behalf of an ally than a partner. In the case of NATO Allies, the Joint Force operates with Allies more easily due to high levels of interoperability and standing agreements and authorities for combined action.

These political and military factors also influence Russian actions. From the Kremlin's perspective, a greater risk is associated with operating against US Allies—whether competition below armed conflict or armed conflict—than operating against partners. This risk does not mean Russia will not conduct aggression against Allies; rather, it means a higher bar is set for those whom the United States and NATO have pointedly not offered the same level of assurance. The corollary of this dynamic, however, is when Russia does act against Allies, it will have factored in this increased level of risk. The most extreme case would be overt armed aggression against an ally, which would signal either a supremely confident or desperate regime willing to dare the nuclear umbrella of extended deterrence. In this most dangerous scenario, deterrence by punishment or through horizontal escalation is unlikely to succeed, because the Kremlin would have already either discounted the possibility due to perceived weakness in Western political resolve or already “priced in” the cost of these measures to the decision.

A different geopolitical dynamic is at work in the partner countries. Though as chapter 2 demonstrates, Russia believes it has the right to exert influence in all four regions, it does not accord all of them equal weight. The two partner regions are more important to the Kremlin, and so US actions there are far more likely to provoke a response. A policy asymmetry exists between the United States and Russia in the partner countries, which are the most important to the Kremlin and, as indicated by their non-ally status, less important to the United States. Russia has demonstrated significant resolve to operate in both regions, particularly when it seems they are drawing closer to the United States, the EU, and NATO.

### **Additional Investments**

This miscellaneous category includes an array of additional resource-intensive options required either to enable other options in the other categories (for example, munitions stockpiles, improved lines of communications) or to mitigate weaknesses (for example, hardening for facilities, increased air defenses). All the options are self-evidently desirable and would, in an unconstrained environment, be implemented. In reality, calibrated force posture must reflect a balance of three different types of demand that they place upon the Army: (1) *implementation cost* (one-time costs to establish the capability or activity), (2) *sustaining cost* (enduring costs to maintain the capability or



activity), and (3) *global availability cost* (strategic and operational risk or opportunity costs associated with not being able to employ the capability elsewhere).<sup>61</sup>

To provide a rough approximation of affordability and the necessity for difficult trade-offs, the study team assumed that only one option from each category could be selected. Though a simplification of both the bureaucratic and political considerations of resource allocation, the exercise highlights some of the difficult trade-offs. Readers who are optimistic about future defense appropriations can assume instead that two from each category can be selected, but they will quickly see that even in that rosy scenario, there are still hard choices.

These three investments would have a high implementation cost:

- Long-range munitions: The DoD, Congress, and national security observers acknowledge that current stockpiles of preferred munitions fall well short of the requirements of even a limited great-power conflict.<sup>62</sup> The complexity of modern supply chains, the lack of excess capacity borne of modern corporate efficiency practices, the requirement for cutting-edge production expertise and equipment, and vulnerability to cyber disruption or sabotage, ensure that in a war it would take many months to significantly increase production. Therefore, for the period described in *The US Army in Multi-Domain Operations, 2028*, former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld's controversial observation "You go to war with the Army you have" is true. Stationing a long-range fires brigade in Europe makes little sense if that move is not matched with the investment in enough on-hand munitions for it to fulfill its critical role in suppressing Russian A2/AD systems.
- Lines of communications improvements: The United States faces a potential enemy with multiple means to interdict and slow operations in the support areas. To mitigate this threat, *The US Army in Multi-Domain Operations, 2028* notes the importance of having multiple lines of communication to provide redundancy and complicate enemy reconnaissance and targeting. Yet, traces of the Cold War remain in the differential between Western European infrastructure and that of former members of the Warsaw Pact. Projecting and sustaining forces across eastern Germany, Poland, and into the Baltics and other eastern European countries within a large-scale combat operation would be so difficult as to seriously constrain operational choice even without enemy action. The limited number of crossing points across the Vistula poses another problem.<sup>63</sup> Improving lines of communications across Europe, but particularly in eastern Germany and Poland, is necessary to provide the kind of capacity and redundancy envisioned by the concept. This need – along with the importance of more heavy forces and adequate stockpiles of munitions – was highlighted by Colby in recent Senate testimony.<sup>64</sup>

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61. Lostumbo et al., *Overseas Basing*, 168–169.

62. Todd South, "What Army Leaders Say Will Make Precision Fires, Missile Defense Ready for Looming Threats in the Pacific," *Army Times*, May 29, 2019, <https://www.armytimes.com/news/your-army/2019/05/29/what-army-leaders-say-will-make-precision-fires-missile-defense-ready-for-looming-threats-in-the-pacific/>; and *Implementation of the National Defense Strategy*.

63. Center for Strategic and Budgetary Analysis wargame in Washington, DC on January 15–16, 2019.

64. *Implementation of the National Defense Strategy*.

- Dispersal and Hardening: If the United States is going to station military forces within range of large numbers of adversary weapon systems, it may need to employ a diverse strategy of active defenses, passive defenses, and either hardening or dispersal to reduce the effectiveness of such weapons against key sustainment and command and control nodes. Allied vulnerability to a strike—particularly when using an approach that relies on APS equipment sets—is destabilizing in a crisis because it offers Russia an opportunity for a quick win.<sup>65</sup>

These three investments would have a high sustaining cost:

- Deployment exercises: During his testimony, Colby specifically noted the importance of deployment exercises designed to build real readiness for a high-end conflict with Russia as a necessary step envisioned by the NDS.<sup>66</sup> The 2020 Defender exercise will certainly meet that goal; it will be the largest, most focused such exercise since the Cold War.<sup>67</sup> Yet, one question is whether the immense cost of continuing such exercises as planned can be sustained. In 2016, the Government Accounting Office warned that the far less ambitious Pacific Pathways exercises, although undoubtedly useful in building multinational readiness, might be unsustainable.<sup>68</sup> Defender will likely suffer from the same tensions; it will build readiness, provide visible evidence of US and NATO readiness, and reassure Allies of American commitment. This progress, however, will come at a high cost and, in the zero-sum realm of budgets, at the expense of other actions, such as other investments in this section. These costs raise the question of whether the Defender exercises can and should be sustained into the future as currently planned. The gains must be weighed against the opportunity costs.
- Enhanced APS status: Rapid APS draw is possible. In the 1990s, the APS in Kuwait was paired with a Defense Ready Brigade, the lead battalion headquarters and several companies of which were ready to fly within 72 hours of notification. Achieving this responsiveness, however, requires more costly maintenance arrangements to keep equipment in a *hot* (ready to draw) status. Achieving this responsiveness also requires improvement to local transportation infrastructure to accommodate combat-loaded equipment moving out at faster rates. Finally, all the benefits of increased readiness for the equipment are lost if units in the United States are not held at a corresponding state of readiness. The Defense Ready Brigade status of the 1990s was highly restrictive, impacting both morale and readiness. Units can only remain at enhanced readiness for limited durations, requiring frequent rotation which has secondary effects on overall force generation. Without some reduction in the number of existing rotational deployments, the pool of ABCTs

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65. *Implementation of the National Defense Strategy*; Kühn, *Preventing Escalation in the Baltics*, 5; and Lostumbo et al., *Overseas Basing*, 115.

66. *Implementation of the National Defense Strategy*.

67. “Defender-Europe 20,” US Army Europe, n.d., <https://www.eur.army.mil/DefenderEurope/>.

68. Government Accountability Office, *Army Pacific Pathways: Comprehensive Assessment and Planning Needed to Capture Benefits Relative to Costs and Enhance Value for Participating Units* (Washington, DC: Government Accountability Office, 2016), 14–15.

(even including the reserve component) would most likely not be able to sustain heightened readiness status in addition to three rotational commitments.

- Regional expertise: Regional expertise is a broad category that can take many forms: language proficiency; cultural familiarity; tactics, techniques, procedures, and fieldcraft applicable to the specific environment; and detailed knowledge of the capabilities and patterns of operations of Allies, partners, and adversaries. US Army Special Forces and the French Army's expeditionary troops demonstrate not only the operational value of true regional expertise but also the significant investment required to build it throughout conventional forces.<sup>69</sup>

These three investments would involve the use of capabilities that have a high global demand:

- Logistics and mobility capability: As noted at the beginning of the chapter, the current force posture is insufficient to sustain large-scale combat operations as described in the MDO concept. Table 1 suggests the scale of the difficulty required to move an ABCT from a site in Germany to Poland or the Baltic region. The shortage of heavy equipment transporters is a particularly significant limitation but by far the only shortfall.<sup>70</sup> Yet, many of the capabilities required to move and sustain forces at such scale are currently largely or solely resident within the reserve components. Therefore, increasing capacity in Europe would be doubly challenging in that it would require balancing force structure not only across mission sets and geography but components as well. Nonetheless, particularly for strategic approaches that place a premium on dynamic force employment and APS, such changes are necessary for success.
- Theater air and missile defense: At present, US Army theater air and missile defense rests upon the twin pillars of the Patriot and Terminal High Altitude Air Defense systems. In Europe, these systems operate in conjunction with the air defense systems of Allies and partners; 15 nations have or are in the process of acquiring Patriot.<sup>71</sup> These systems also operate in conjunction with Joint systems, such as Aegis (both ashore and on ship) and air-launched interceptors. Yet, even with this impressive array of systems, there is a far greater demand for protection of political, economic, and military assets than can possibly be met by Patriot and Terminal High Altitude Air Defense. The cost of those systems per intercept is simply too high to allow significant expansion. Currently, the Army is investigating a number of technologies such as high-energy lasers, microwave weapons,

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69. Michael Shurkin, "What It Means to Be Expeditionary: A Look at the French Army in Africa," *Joint Forces Quarterly* 82 (3rd Quarter 2016), 76–85.

70. Ochmanek et al., *US Military Capabilities and Forces*, 40. See also, Jen Judson, "US Army Europe Chief: NATO Allies Should Bolster Infrastructure," *Defense News*, June 20, 2017, <https://www.defensenews.com/land/2017/06/20/us-army-europe-chief-nato-allies-should-bolster-infrastructure/>; and Ben Hodges and Alexander Schaltuper, "In Defence of Logistics," *New Europe*, updated February 15, 2019, <https://www.neweurope.eu/article/in-defence-of-logistics/>.

71. Lidia Kelly, "Poland Signs \$4.75 Billion Deal for U.S. Patriot Missile System Facing Russia," Reuters, March 28, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-raytheon-poland-patriot/poland-signs-4-75-billion-deal-for-u-s-patriot-missile-system-facing-russia-idUSKBN1H417S>.

and hypervelocity rounds that might provide protection against at least cruise missile attack at cost that would permit widespread deployment.<sup>72</sup> Until those systems are fielded, however, even though Russian ballistic and cruise missiles pose a significant threat, the team does not recommend increased theater air and missile defense posture in Europe.

- Special forces: Special forces can provide a wide range of valuable contributions in both competition below armed conflict and armed conflict.<sup>73</sup> Special forces also are some of the most in-demand units with a high operations tempo.<sup>74</sup>

**Table 1. Lift assets required for unit types required in a Baltic scenario<sup>75</sup>**

Movement Type	Asset	Heavy Brigade Combat Team	Styker Brigade Combat Team	Sustainment Brigade	Combat Aviation Brigade
Road Transport	48ft Flatbed	381	216	440	301
	HET	216	6	70	0
Air Transport	C17 sorties	575	397	752	412
	C-130 sorties	823	801	1323	630
Maritime Transport	LMSR (Large-Med Speed)/ Roll-on-Roll-off (0.75 stow factor)	1.12	0.93	2.16	1.08
Rail Transport	KS Railcar	597	350	429	406
	RS Railcar	93	4	184	18
	Samms	122	0	28	0

72. Rehberg and Gunzinger, *Air and Missile Defense*, 10–13.

73. G5, Strategic Planning Division, US Army Special Operations Command (USASOC), *Army Special Operations Forces Strategy* (Fort Bragg, NC: USASOC, 2019), [https://www.soc.mil/AssortedPages/ARSOF\\_Strategy.pdf](https://www.soc.mil/AssortedPages/ARSOF_Strategy.pdf); and TRADOC, *Multi-Domain Operations, 2028*, 29–30, 34, 38–39, D-4.

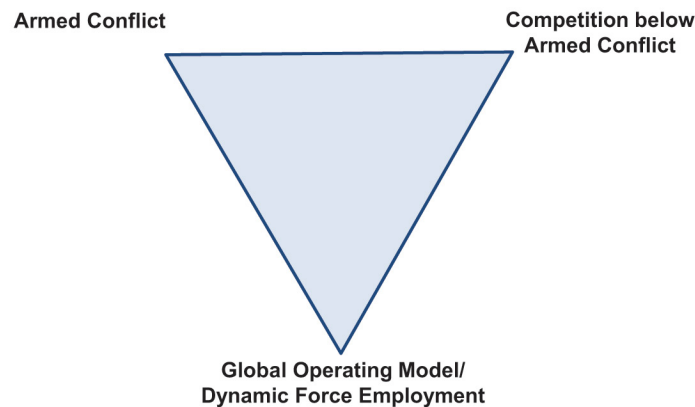
74. *United States Special Operations Command and United States Cyber Command*, 116th Cong. (February 14, 2019) (statement of General Raymond A. Thomas III, USA).

75. US Army Military Surface Deployment and Distribution Command (MSDDC), *Deployment Planning Guide: Transportation Assets Required for Deployment*, MSDDC, Transportation Engineering Agency (SDDCTEA) Pamphlet 700-5 (Scott Air Force Base, IL: MSDDC, 2012), 16.

## CHAPTER 5. A STRATEGIC DESIGN FOR CALIBRATED FORCE POSTURE

The introduction and first three chapters outlined the essential elements of the problem. The US Army, as part of a Joint and multinational force, must deter or defeat aggression across the competition continuum in a manner consistent with the dynamic employment of forces worldwide. Though this statement is derived from the current NDS, it is entirely consistent with the historic employment of the US Army, characterized by the pragmatic application of force within a broad range of settings, responsive to political direction, and also conscious of the need to husband resources.<sup>1</sup> Regardless of the specific points of emphasis contained within the NDS, which is undoubtedly a reorientation of the DoD, the NDS nevertheless falls within the broad outlines of traditional American military policy. This continuity makes it as sound a policy basis on which to base this study as any.

The NDS is unusual in the specificity with which it prioritizes missions and regions. Previous comparable documents have not been so decisive.<sup>2</sup> Nonetheless, the NDS is not so prescriptive or exact that it does not pass on some hard decisions to the services. Within the context of Europe, the US Army must develop a force posture that best navigates the tensions between three priorities identified by the NDS and represented in figure 5. Any acceptable solution must fall within the bounds of all three—none can simply be disregarded as unimportant—but that does leave scope for hard decisions as to which elements should be privileged over the others.



**Figure 5. Conceptual diagram of strategic trade-offs**

Arguably, the bottom apex represents what is the driving constraint: the need to maintain maximum flexibility in a world where potential threats vastly outweigh available resources. In practical terms, this entails keeping as large a pool of capabilities

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1. Antulio J. Echevarria II, *Reconsidering the American Way of War: US Military Practice from the Revolution to Afghanistan* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2014), 1–58.

2. *Implementation of the National Defense Strategy: Hearings before the Senate Armed Services Committee, 116th Cong. (January 29, 2019)* (statement of Elbridge A. Colby, Director of the Defense Program, Center for a New American Security).

as possible in readiness to deploy against a number of possible threats. This potential for employment allows any given force element to shape competition below armed conflict and deter armed conflict against multiple adversaries simultaneously. Though the idea has gained new currency within DoD because of the emphasis on great-power competition, which makes competition for resources particularly acute, the Army's preference has long been for service retained forces. Generally speaking, uncommitted forces provide greater institutional flexibility.<sup>3</sup> This imperative creates a downward pressure on overseas force structure.

The benefits of retaining geographic flexibility with dynamic force employment, or in maintaining a minimal *contact layer* in the terminology of the NDS' global operating model, is in tension with the requirement of great-power competition. The scale and nature of the Russian threat, particularly the ability to mass quickly with interior lines behind an A2/AD shield, means that forces husbanded in the United States might be rendered irrelevant because they cannot get to the point of need in time to alter the strategic balance. Both the authors of the NDS and the congressional commission created to review the document share this concern.<sup>4</sup> This concern is particularly acute for the Army because it faces greater physical constraints in deployment that force a choice between being ready for great-power conflict and maintaining flexibility. Some ways to mitigate this dilemma exist—by employing rotational forces, prepositioned equipment and supplies, for example—but, as discussed in the previous chapter, these have their own drawbacks and ultimately can only go so far. The relevance of large-scale, sustained ground forces is dependent on forward force posture to a greater extent than the other services.

As noted in Joint Doctrine Note 1-19, *Competition Continuum*, one should not regard competition below armed conflict and armed conflict as distinct and unrelated entities. Success in great-power competition depends on competence to do both. The potential for armed conflict shapes the conditions for competition below armed conflict, strengthening or weakening positions depending on the circumstances. Similarly, competition below armed conflict can both set the conditions for success in war and obviate the need for it by achieving some policy objectives without fighting.<sup>5</sup>

Despite this tight theoretical relationship between armed conflict and competition below armed conflict, in the context of ground forces in Europe, no tension exists between the two. This lack of tension is a consequence of specific geopolitical and military factors. The most important is that Russia only has the capability to conduct large-scale operations against US Allies with a reasonable hope of success in Northeastern Europe due to the combination of local military superiority and geography. The problem of

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3. Michael J. Lostumbo et al., *Overseas Basing of US Military Forces: An Assessment of Relative Costs and Strategic Benefits* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2013), 81.

4. *Implementation of the National Defense Strategy*; and Eric Edelman et al., *Providing for the Common Defense: The Assessment and Recommendations of the National Defense Strategy Commission* (Washington, DC: US Institute of Peace, 2018), 21–22, 34–35, 41–42.

5. Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), *The Competition Continuum*, Joint Doctrine Note 1-19 (Washington, DC: JCS, 2018). See also J. P. Clark, "Military Operations and the Defense Department," in *Oxford Handbook of US National Security*, ed. Derek S. Reviron, Nikolas K. Gvosdev, and John A. Cloud (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 292–294.

detering and defeating armed conflict is, therefore, relatively straightforward: place adequate combat power in position to eliminate the force ratios that would make a fait accompli attack a viable means for Russia to achieve its desired strategic objectives. For example, Russia has far more opportunities to conduct large-scale ground operations against partners such as Ukraine and Georgia.<sup>6</sup> This threat requires a force posture with emphasis on MDC2, fires, and heavy maneuver forces concentrated in the area of risk.

In contrast, Russia can conduct competition below armed conflict throughout Europe and through an array of means—covert and overt—ranging from simple propaganda from attributed and unattributed sources to the employment of Russian troops and proxies in intense, if localized, combat. Indeed, this competition below armed conflict is occurring throughout Europe and the United States. Because competition of that sort is largely informational and strikes at the political cohesion of NATO, military power can best support the larger effort by spreading visible presence among many partners.

The interconnection among the elements of the competition continuum means a buildup of heavy forces in northeastern Europe would have a beneficial effect in the competition below armed conflict there. With no fear of a Russian escalation to armed conflict, US Allies in the specific area would be more confident in taking aggressive actions to push back against Russian activities of all kinds. But in an environment of limited resources, a greater concentration in the area of Northeastern Allies would presumably mean less activity elsewhere, which could cause the political and military elites in those areas to doubt American commitment; therefore, Northeastern Allies would be vulnerable to Russian political warfare. The consensus among Russian experts interviewed for this study was the Balkans and Black Sea region are more likely to be the focus of Russian competition in the upcoming years than the Baltic region.

Therefore, the best force posture to counter competition below armed conflict is to spread across as wide a geographic area as possible a mixture of mobile maneuver forces, regionally aligned troops like the security force assistance brigade (SFAB) and SPP, special operations forces, and a mixture of enablers, particularly intelligence. If the global operating model and service requirements elsewhere did not exert downward pressure, both armed conflict and competition below armed conflict could easily be accommodated in Europe. But to the extent that there is a cap on overseas end strength, the two elements are in tension. In sum, the question is whether heavy forces should be focused in support of Northeastern Allies to counter Russian local military superiority or more mobile forces and enablers should be spread more broadly across Europe.

## POTENTIAL STRATEGIC APPROACHES

Chapter 4 provided an overview of the advantages, disadvantages, and considerations for the most important force posture options. In a world of limitless resources or only one overarching geostrategic threat, the US Army would want to select some or all these

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6. Ben Hodges et al., *Securing the Suwałki Corridor: Strategy, Statecraft, Deterrence, and Defense* (Washington, DC: Center for European Policy Analysis, 2018), 3–4; David Ochmanek et al., *US Military Capabilities and Forces for a Dangerous World: Rethinking the US Approach to Force Planning* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2017), 36–38; Ulrich Kühn, *Preventing Escalation in the Baltics: A NATO Playbook* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2018), 25; and *Implementation of the National Defense Strategy*.

options: MDC2 as well as significant maneuver forces, robust activity with Northeastern Allies and with Southeastern Partners, money spent on large deployment exercises and on dispersal and hardening, more logistics and mobility capacity as well as special forces. Unfortunately, choices must be made among all of these desirable options. Making these selections individually as isolated, discrete decisions may lead to an occasionally conflicting series of choices calculated to achieve short-term gain (or avoid short-term costs) but that are more costly in the long run and, more importantly, fail to deliver strategic effect. The better course is to assemble packages of complementary options reflecting a coherent top-down strategic approach. Some of these levers go together naturally as part of a large strategic approach that tends toward one aspect of the triangle depicted above.

To create these strategic approaches, the study team created three initial force postures based on a unifying principle. The team selected those levers that were most important for that approach and took risk in areas that were not. Within the area of additional investments, the study team assumed that it could choose only one option from each of the three categories (high implementation cost, high sustaining cost, and high demand capabilities). The other major constraint was the assumption that Congress would allow only two forward stationed BCTs (or equivalent). The first three strategic approaches were *privilege dynamic force employment*, *privilege global competition*, and *privilege armed conflict*. The choice of the verb *privilege* was an acknowledgment that while one element can be considered more important, an acceptable force posture must strike an appropriate balance among all three.

As part of the analysis, the study team gauged cost to implement, cost to sustain, and any other challenges requiring institutional effort to overcome. *Privilege armed conflict* was a close approximation of one of the more successful postures used during the development of the MDO concept. Due to the NDS' emphasis on great-power competition, the study team regarded it as an informal baseline in the initial stages of analysis. But as work progressed, the significant trade-offs, costs, and challenges that would be required with a full implementation of this strategic approach became clear. An effort that was too ambitious might cause the Army to fail in implementation. Based on this realization, the team created two additional strategic approaches—*invest in a multidomain alliance* and *build visible presence*—by breaking *privilege armed conflict* into two constituent parts, what we refer to as the “multidomain package” and the “presence package.” Either of these strategic approaches offers the option of implementing the other package at some later time, thereby creating the *privilege armed conflict* posture, only over a longer period. Creating this posture over a longer period increases the probability of success by focusing effort and allows adjustments to account for the inevitable changes in the strategic, political, and fiscal environment.

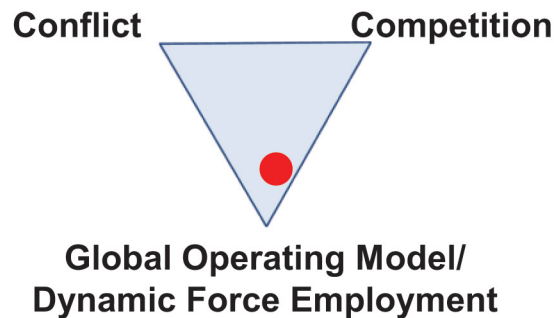
This chapter will provide brief overviews of each of the strategic approaches, but appendix 1 contains a comprehensive description of each.

## **Privilege Dynamic Force Employment**

The NDS places an emphasis on an active but relatively thin contact layer to resource robust blunt and surge forces. This approach (see figure 6) hinges upon the ability to



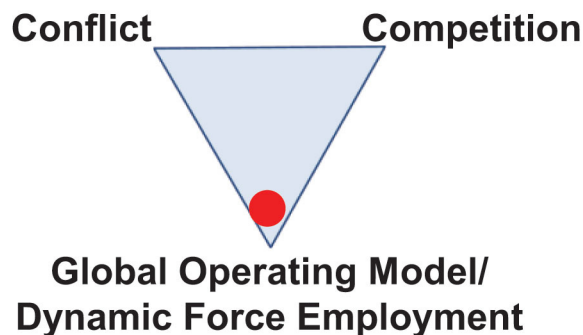
project, quickly and reliably, these blunt and surge forces despite an adversary's ability to contest strategic lines of communication.



**Figure 6. Privilege dynamic force employment**

### **Privilege Global Competition**

Then-Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Joseph Dunford's force development division was for a future Joint Force poised in something similar to a boxer's stance that "conserves energy while keeping the fighter balanced, protected, and ready to throw quick, powerful punches."<sup>7</sup> This strategic approach (see figure 7) offers visible reassurance to Allies, reflecting the insight that political will more than military capability is the center of gravity for NATO. This approach also accounts for continued competition below armed conflict—a far more likely scenario than armed conflict—while also providing the Army institutional maneuver space to respond in case of crises elsewhere or to adjust to changes in budget. Yet, in contrast to the "strict NDS" approach, it recognizes that the meaning of dynamic force employment is quite different for large-scale, sustained ground operations than for air or naval forces.



**Figure 7. Privilege global competition**

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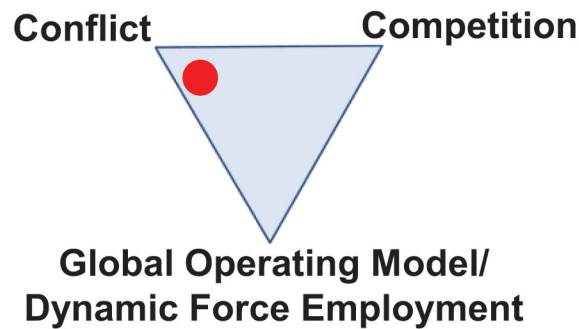
7. Joseph E. Dunford Jr., "From the Chairman: Maintaining a Boxer's Stance," *Joint Force Quarterly* 86 (3rd Quarter, 2017): 2.

Major features of this force posture are as follows.

- The Army positions a corps and OFC in Europe but keeps the corps outside of NATO command structures so that they are available for global use.
- Long-range fires units and munitions are deployed from the United States in time of crisis.
- The current maneuver force posture of 2nd SCR in Germany and 173rd BCT (Airborne) in Italy is maintained.
- The rotational ABCT location in Poland is transitioned to APS site in addition to the two ABCTs in APS in Western Europe. The need to draw and deploy up to three ABCTs quickly in a crisis requires investment in lines of communications, enhanced APS status, and an increase in logistics and mobility capability. This requirement accepts risk to the APS sites themselves because the Army does not invest in dispersal and hardening or air and missile defenses for those locations.
- Army forces conduct activity in aggressive support of policy. Both USAREUR-based forces (for example, 2nd SCR, 173rd BCT [Airborne]) and CONUS-based forces (SFAB, rotational units) conduct activities in areas either to counter Russian competition below armed conflict or, when dictated by policy aims, to preemptively increase influence and undermine Russian influence. The geographic focus of this aggressive competition will be dictated by circumstances and policy, but would possibly include activities in the area of Eastern and Southeastern Partners, such as Ukraine and Georgia. An increase in special forces in Europe would be desirable, but one feature of this strategic approach is an emphasis on *global* competition, so it assumes the high demand for these forces elsewhere precludes such a buildup. Furthermore, the need to draw APS quickly in a crisis requires this approach to invest resources in building logistics and mobility capability at the expense of war-fighting capabilities.
- The buildup of logistics and mobility capability in Europe might require reallocation of capabilities among the components.

### **Privilege Armed Conflict**

The threat of a *fait accompli* attack stems not from an overwhelming Russian superiority but the unique combination of geography and force ratios in the Baltic region. This approach (see figure 8) narrowly focuses force posture to reduce that specific area of Russian superiority. It most closely matches the requirements identified during MDO concept development.



**Figure 8. Privilege armed conflict**

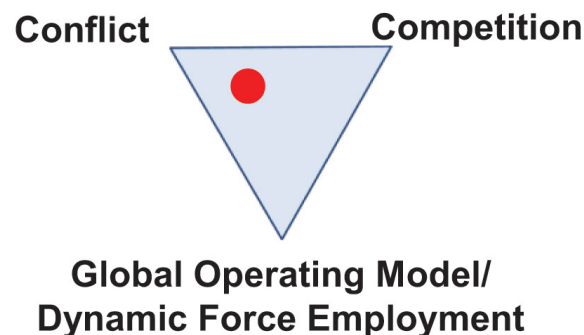
Major features of this force posture are as follows.

- The Army commits a field army and OFC to Europe with the intention of integrating them into NATO command structures.
- The Army places the first tranche of long-range fires units in Europe and invests in sufficient on-hand stockpile to allow these units to enable air and ground maneuver for several weeks of operations. A significant challenge of this option is that it accepts risk in the Pacific until the second tranche of units and munitions are ready for deployment. The other major challenge is that stationing a non-INF compliant system in Europe, particularly in Germany, would require significant effort.
- The 2nd SCR is replaced with an ABCT (or repurposed into a similar armored cavalry regiment). The 173rd BCT (Airborne) is returned to a CONUS location to bring an ABCT to Germany. This option brings additional political challenges, both in bilateral relations with Italy as well as with the need to secure significant Outside CONUS military construction funds.
- Rotational presence in Poland is maintained and one ABCT set is kept in APS in Western Europe. Because the latter would be a fourth ABCT and is therefore in excess of the stated requirement, keeping it in an enhanced APS status is not necessary. Lines of communications improvements are necessary, but because of the significant costs in other areas required by this strategic approach, Allies must be relied on to fund these improvements.
- Activity is focused narrowly on that portion of Europe where Russia could succeed in a brief armed conflict against allies. The loss of the Stryker capability in Europe makes activities with Southeastern Allies and Eastern Partners physically more difficult. In the case of the former, they are currently accustomed to a certain level of activity that would by design and necessity decrease. This drop-off in activity could create the perception of less American involvement among political and military elites, thereby creating favorable conditions for Russian competition below armed conflict. Activity among Southeastern Allies, Eastern Partners, and Southeastern Partners would largely be carried out by existing SPP relations and the Europe-focused SFAB.

- One advantage of the large forward posture is that there is less need to invest in deployment exercises and enhanced APS status, allowing additional investment in regional expertise. When paired with a field army committed to Europe, the Army capability to compete below armed conflict would be enhanced by greater understanding and command/staff bandwidth.
- An investment in special forces capability would be required, with the activity focused on preparations for armed conflict.

### Invest in a Multidomain Alliance

This strategic approach implements only the multidomain package of *privilege armed conflict* to increase the chance of successful implementation (see figure 9). The package consists of MDC2 and long-range fires units and munitions. This package best enables the Joint Force by setting the conditions for gaining air freedom of maneuver and allies by creating a framework by which they can leverage some of the specific multidomain capabilities that only the United States can provide. The package accepts the risk that there will not be sufficient maneuver combat power to deter or defeat a Russian fait accompli.



**Figure 9. Invest in a multidomain alliance**

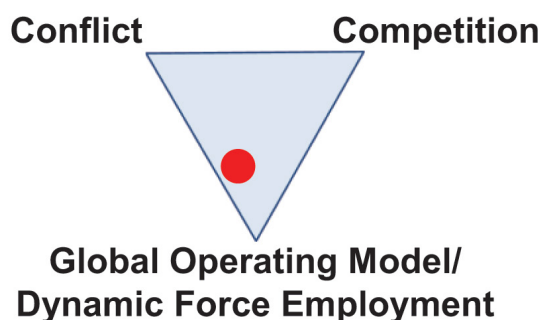
Major features of this force posture are as follows.

- The Army commits a field army and OFC to Europe with the intention of integrating them into NATO command structures.
- The Army places the first tranche of long-range fires units in Europe and invests in sufficient on-hand stockpiles to allow these units to enable air and ground maneuver for several weeks of operations. A significant challenge of this option is that it accepts risk in the Pacific until the second tranche of units and munitions is ready for deployment. The other major challenge is that stationing a non-INF compliant system in Europe, particularly in Germany, would require significant effort.
- The 2nd SCR is replaced with an ABCT (or repurposed into a similar armored cavalry regiment). The 173rd BCT (Airborne) remains in Italy.

- The rotational ABCT in Poland is transitioned to an equipment set that remains in place with a sustainment package that allows it to be either by rotational forces or go into an APS-like unmanned status. One ABCT is maintained in APS in Western Europe. Lines of communications improvements are necessary, but because of the significant costs in other areas required by this strategic approach it is necessary to rely on allies to fund these improvements.
- Like *privilege armed conflict* (and *build visible presence*), activity is focused narrowly on that portion of Europe where Russia could succeed in a brief armed conflict against allies. As with that option, the loss of the Stryker capability would reduce activity, but the retention of the 173rd BCT (Airborne) would be used to create slightly more presence in addition to the SPP relations and the Europe-focused SFAB. Nonetheless, a reduction in activity would lead to a similar opening of space for Russian competition below armed conflict.
- The buildup of logistics and mobility capability in Europe might require reallocation of capabilities among the components.

### Build Visible Presence

This strategic approach (see figure 10) implements only the “maneuver presence package” of *privilege armed conflict* to increase the chance of successful implementation. The package consists of three ABCTs ready for instant employment and a narrow geographic focus on Northeastern Allies. As opposed to the multidomain package, which enables Joint and Allied forces, this package improves the Army’s ability to conduct large-scale ground operations. This package accepts the risk that Russian A2/AD will be able to isolate ground forces.



**Figure 10. Build visible presence**

Major features of this force posture are as follows.

- The Army positions a corps and OFC in Europe but keeps them outside of NATO command structures so that they are available for global use.
- Long-range fires units and munitions are deployed from the United States in time of crisis.
- The 2nd SCR is replaced with an ABCT (or repurposed into a similar armored cavalry regiment). The 173rd BCT (Airborne) is returned to a CONUS location to

bring an ABCT to Germany. This option brings additional political challenges, both in bilateral relations with Italy as well as with the need to secure significant Outside CONUS military construction funds.

- Rotational presence in Poland is maintained and one ABCT set is kept in APS in Western Europe. Because the latter would be a fourth ABCT and is therefore in excess of the stated requirement, keeping it in an enhanced APS status is not necessary. Lines of communications improvements are necessary.
- Activity is focused narrowly on that portion of Europe where Russia could succeed in a brief armed conflict against allies. The loss of the Stryker capability in Europe makes activities with Southeastern Allies and Eastern Partners physically more difficult. In the case of the former, they are currently accustomed to a certain level of activity that would by design and necessity decrease. This drop-off in activity could create the perception of less American involvement among political and military elites, thereby creating favorable conditions for Russian competition below armed conflict. Activity among Southeastern Allies, Eastern Partners, and Southeastern Partners would largely be carried out by existing SPP relations and the Europe-focused SFAB.
- One advantage of the large forward posture is that there is less need to invest in deployment exercises and enhanced APS status, allowing additional investment in regional expertise. When paired with a field army committed to Europe, the Army capability to compete below armed conflict would be enhanced by greater understanding and command/staff bandwidth.
- An investment in special forces capability would be required, with the activity focused on preparations for armed conflict.

## **CRITERIA FOR ASSESSMENT**

To evaluate these different strategic approaches, the study team analyzed each against a range of criteria and risk factors. The study developed three categories of criteria and risk factors.

- Strategic and operational factors relate to the impact of the various strategic approaches on the ability of the Joint Force to achieve military and strategic objectives.
- Institutional factors assess the impact of the various strategic approaches on the Army across the entire force, not just in Europe.
- Environmental factors assess the sensitivity of the various strategic approaches to possible changes in the operational, strategic, and political environment.

Within these categories, the study team developed 17 criteria and risk factors intended to provide a comprehensive assessment that includes the strategic (S), operational (O), institutional (I), and environmental (E) factors of any given force posture. We believe this is one of the most important aspects of the study. One of the study team's observations is that too much of the current literature looks solely at one of these areas and ignores the rest. Developing the perfect strategic force posture for Europe while ignoring the

long-term effects of that force posture on the Army, its ability to sustain that force posture, or the impacts of the force posture on other regions is strategic malpractice.

Similarly, a force posture that can be infinitely sustained by the service but fails to achieve policy objectives is an instance of the institutional tail wagging the policy dog. Finally, this approach acknowledges the foolhardiness and arrogance of projecting a single future and then staking everything on the prescience of any group of analysts. The environmental factors are an attempt to account for the inevitable operational, strategic, and political shocks ahead. Though, by definition, it is impossible to predict the unpredictable; if one strategic approach consistently suffers from possible changes in the environment, then it should be regarded with additional scrutiny before being adopted.

Though the study team sought to develop a comprehensive list of criteria and risk factors to ensure the full implications of a strategic approach were understood, not all these implications should be accorded equal weight. The criteria and risk factors were divided into two categories of importance. The first are those important enough to influence force posture decisions. The second are those whose impacts should be understood so opportunities can be leveraged and weaknesses mitigated when possible, but are not important enough to influence force posture decisions one way or the other. For instance, one of the criteria was the ability to project forces out of Europe into the US Africa Command or US Central Command (CENTCOM) areas. Though the team did not think that criterion should be factored into an eventual decision, knowing whether a strategic approach would allow Europe-based forces to assist with a noncombatant evacuation operation in North Africa or the eastern Mediterranean would be important. That sort of knowledge of the many implications of a force posture can then be used to mitigate some of the disadvantages of the eventual force posture. In short, focusing on what is important to drive decisions should not cause us to limit a full accounting of the many second- and third-order implications.

Appendix 2 provides a full description of each factor, the rationale for its weighting, and how each strategic approach was evaluated according to that factor. The following discussion provides a list of the factors and a brief discussion of the most important aspects of their weighting.

## **STRATEGIC AND OPERATIONAL CRITERIA AND RISK FACTORS**

*The study team recommends the following factors should influence decisions.*

- S1. The ability to defeat, and thereby credibly deter, Russian armed conflict directed against a NATO ally at acceptable cost. This achieves policy aim while avoiding Pyrrhic victory.
- S2. The ability to compete effectively below armed conflict with Russia.
- S3. The extent to which force posture provides escalation advantage and stability in a crisis by allowing decisionmakers (on both sides) opportunity and time for restraint but does not force them into making escalatory decisions early in a crisis and avoids the 1914 syndrome.
- S4. The extent to which force posture provokes Russian political and military reactions without the ability for policymakers to adjust subsequently as necessary.

- S5. The extent to which the force posture enhances the overall political cohesion of NATO and leads to increased political will and military capabilities of individual Allies.

*The study team recommends the following factors **do not** influence force posture decisions.*

- S6. The ability to offer a range of options to respond to Russian aggression against a European partner (for example, Ukraine, Georgia).
- S7. The ability to respond directly or indirectly in case of a crisis or limited conflict with Russia outside of Europe (for example, mishap in Syria).
- S8. The ability of Europe-based forces to project power into the areas of responsibility of CENTCOM and US Africa Command.
- S9. The extent to which the force posture facilitates the ability of partners to contribute to operations outside of Europe.

The NDS reorients the Joint Force to great-power competition; yet, that is a broad category that still requires prioritization. Competition with Russia can include armed conflict under a wide array of conditions (general, limited in Europe or elsewhere, and involving Allies or just partners), competition below armed conflict (occurs worldwide and at varying levels of intensity), and cooperation with Allies and partners to advance US interests vis-à-vis Russia.<sup>8</sup> Not all these areas of competition deserve equal weight. Moreover, national priorities do not necessarily translate to a single service's force posture in a specific region. Some elements of competition are best carried out by other services or governmental departments in some other location. So, what strategic and operational effects should be the focus of US Army force posture in Europe?

The study team opted for a relatively tight focus on those priority strategic effects where Army forces are essential to enabling Joint or Allied success. Therefore, deterring or defeating armed Russian aggression against NATO Allies (S1) was prioritized but the defense of partners (S6) was not. Competition below armed conflict (S2) is already occurring on a daily basis and Russia can achieve some strategic objectives without resorting to fighting, so it was prioritized. Whether in armed conflict or competition below armed conflict, the political cohesion and military capabilities of allies are essential. Therefore, the likelihood that a force posture would bolster those factors, while avoiding free riding (S4) was clearly critical. As noted in chapter 4, some capabilities – particularly long-range fires – have the potential to create catastrophic instability in a crisis. The inclusion of crisis stability (S3) in the prioritized criteria reflects the acknowledgment that military capabilities cannot be viewed in isolation of the real-world dilemmas they would pose for decisionmakers.

## **INSTITUTIONAL CRITERIA AND RISK FACTORS**

*The study team recommends the following factors should influence decisions.*

- I1. The degree to which the force posture impacts Army global readiness and force generation.

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8. JCS, *Competition Continuum*.



- I2. The likely response from the various components, other services, DoD, Congress, or allies and the degree to which negative responses can prevent successful implementation.

*The study team recommends the following factor **should not** influence force posture decisions.*

- I3. The degree to which the force posture entails threat to the force in the form of decreased morale, retention, and human capital due to high operational strain on segments of or the entire Army.

The Army should not adopt a force posture that cannot be successfully implemented or sustained, or that causes unacceptable risks in other geographic regions. Therefore, the criteria gauging the impact on global readiness and force generation (I1) and assessing the difficulty of implementing the force posture (which requires input from the White House, Congress, interagency, DoD, and other services) were obvious decision-influencing criteria. Determining whether the extent to which a force posture might cause damage to the health of the force through operational tempo strain (I3) should be a decision-influencing factor was more difficult. Ultimately, the study team decided not to include this in the prioritized criteria, though that should not be misunderstood. Some study team members doubt the ability of the Army to maintain the current global demand of the three simultaneous ABCT rotational deployments. This factor, however, was not rated as decision-influencing because there are a number of alternative methods to reduce the strain—altering force structure, changing the force generation model, reallocating tasks among the components, or modifying the other rotational commitments—so that force posture should be determined more on the strategic and operational benefits than on operations tempo considerations.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL CRITERIA AND RISK FACTORS**

*The study team recommends the following factor should influence decisions.*

- E1. The extent to which the force posture is vulnerable to a significant reduction in future defense budgets, forcing a future Secretary of the Army to choose between *breaking the strategy* and *breaking the army*.<sup>9</sup>

*The study team recommends the following factors **should not** influence force posture decisions.*

- E2. The degree to which the force posture is dependent on the decisions of any single foreign government (can be rendered invalid by the results of a single election in a foreign country).
- E3. The degree to which the force posture remains operable in case of significant deterioration of NATO political cohesion.
- E4. The extent of strategic and operational risk within Europe in case of a significant crisis or conflict with China.

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9. Edelman et al., *Providing for the Common Defense*, 22.

E5. The extent to which the force posture could become a liability or a barrier to adaptation in case of a significant change in US policy.

This category features a collection of political and strategic shocks that would significantly alter the operational environment (and likely also invalidate much of the current NDS). Certainly, the study team could have developed a more extensive list. The finding, however, was that most of these large events are so important that there was actually little real difference in advantage among the strategic approaches. The small gradations of difference among the force posture options paled in comparison to the much larger implications of the environmental change. The obvious lesson to be drawn is that Army force posture should be viewed with proper perspective; it cannot singlehandedly overcome the adverse consequences of a momentous event like, for instance, a fundamental change in the European security architecture.

Therefore, only one environmental risk factor was included among those that should influence force posture decisions: the extent to which a strategic approach was vulnerable to future reductions in defense budgets (E1). This risk is such an obvious and likely risk that not including it among the determining factors would seem to indicate excessive and unwarranted optimism. Any strategic approach that is dependent on roughly the current or greater level of resources creates the risk of presenting some future secretary of the Army with the choice between *breaking the strategy* and *breaking the Army* in an effort to maintain unsupportable burden.

## RECOMMENDED STRATEGIC APPROACH

Table 2 illustrates that there are no obvious choices. The ultimate choice depends on a finely balanced weighing of competing valid and important considerations. Throughout the year, the study team often debated the relative value that should be assigned to each and, ultimately, never came to a consensus. The following recommendation should be attributed solely to the principal investigators, though we encourage the readers to make their own assessments. The study's framework for developing and assessing strategic approaches is more important than the authors' conclusion.

To this point, the study has identified the basic building-block levers of force posture, assembled them into several strategic approaches, offered a list of criteria and risk factors to assess those approaches, and winnowed that list down to eight critical factors that should influence force posture decisions. Resorting to simple quantitative measures by assigning weights and values to determine the best force posture would be a mistake. More complex strategic judgment is required.

Our first step was to examine the decision criteria for any strategic approaches that posed unacceptable risks. This eliminated two. The first was *privilege armed conflict* on the basis of its significant implementation risk (I2). Despite its best-in-class ranking in three categories, we deemed the numerous challenges associated with trying to accomplish all of these changes at once as too great. The better option would be to focus on the most important aspects and address the other elements later, rather than trying to do everything and doing nothing well.

**Table 2. Criteria for assessment**

Options	Privilege Dynamic Force Employment	Privilege Global Competition	Privilege Armed Conflict	Invest in Multi-Domain Alliance	Build Visible Presence
<b>FACTORS THAT SHOULD INFLUENCE FORCE POSTURE DECISIONS</b>					
S1) Defeat/deter Russian armed conflict directed against ally	●	○	●	●	●
S2) Effectively compete below armed conflict with Russia	●	●	○	○	●
S3) Provides escalation advantage and stability in a crisis	●	●	●	●	○
S4) Provokes Russian reaction without ability to subsequently alter	●	●	●	●	●
S5) Improves political cohesion and allied will & military capability	○	●	●	●	●
I1) Impacts on Army global readiness and force generation	○	●	○	●	○
I2) Response from stakeholders and implementation Accept Risk	●	●	●	○	○
E1) Vulnerability to significant reduction in future defense budgets	●	○	●	●	●
<b>FACTORS THAT SHOULD NOT INFLUENCE FORCE POSTURE DECISIONS</b>					
S6) Defeat/deter Russian armed conflict directed against partner	○	○	●	●	●
S7) Ability to respond to crisis or limited conflict w/Russia elsewhere	○	●	●	○	○
S8) Ability to project power into USAFRICOM or USCENTCOM AORs	●	●	●	●	○
S9) Facilitates ability of allies & partners to contribute elsewhere	●	●	○	○	○
I3) Threat to force due to operations tempo stress	●	●	○	●	●
E2) Vulnerable to disruption from a single country	○	●	●	●	○
E3) Vulnerable to significant deterioration of NATO cohesion	○	○	●	●	●
E4) Accept Risk in case of a crisis or conflict with China	●	●	●	●	○
E5) Is a liability in case of significant change to US policy	●	●	●	○	●

**Legend**

- Highly Advantageous
- Advantageous
- Neutral or Mixed
- Disadvantageous
- Highly Disadvantageous

The second discarded strategic approach was *privilege dynamic force employment* due to its high future budget risk (E1). The high cost of maintaining exercises like the planned Defender series could prove unsustainable in case of a resource downturn. Such activities have great strategic and institutional value, but they are ephemeral. A force posture based largely on dynamic force employment can leave the Joint Force, and particularly the Army, stranded in the United States with little to show for it within a very short span.

This reduced the field to three options that could be decided on their strategic and operational merits. Of the five criteria, we gave greater weight to deterring or defeating armed conflict against allies (S1), competition below armed conflict (S2), and escalation advantage and crisis stability (S3). The first two were straightforward selections but the latter requires justification. The rationale was that the strong preference is for deterring rather than defeating, as even a victory in armed conflict against Russia is likely to be Pyrrhic with decades of US and Allied military investments literally going up in smoke, extensive damage to the cyber—and, perhaps, physical—infrastructure of the United States, and the possibility of wrecking space infrastructure with long-term consequences and nuclear exchange if escalation escapes rational policy control. Therefore, determining how a given force posture might limit friendly policymakers as they are trying desperately to deter conflict is essential.

An examination of the remaining strategic approaches through the lens of those criteria eliminates *build visible presence*. As shown in table 3, *build visible presence* had the worst assessments of options against two of the three focus criteria and its performance against the rest was only average.

**Table 3. Criteria for assessment after eliminating privilege armed conflict and privilege dynamic force employment**

Options	Privilege Dynamic Force Employment	Privilege Global Competition	Privilege Armed Conflict	Invest in Multi-Domain Alliance	Build Visible Presence
S1) Defeat/deter Russian armed conflict directed against ally	Grey circle	Light pink circle	Grey circle	Green circle	Green circle
S2) Effectively compete below armed conflict with Russia	Grey circle	Dark green circle	Grey circle	Light pink circle	Red circle
S3) Provides escalation advantage and stability in a crisis	Grey circle	Red circle	Grey circle	Green circle	Light pink circle
S4) Provokes Russian reaction without ability to subsequently alter	Grey circle	Dark green circle	Light pink circle	Red circle	Yellow circle
S5) Improves political cohesion and allied will & military capability	Grey circle	Yellow circle	Light pink circle	Dark green circle	Yellow circle
I1) Impacts on Army global readiness and force generation	Grey circle	Dark green circle	Light pink circle	Yellow circle	Light pink circle
I2) Response from stakeholders and implementation Accept Risk	Grey circle	Dark green circle	Light pink circle	Light pink circle	Light pink circle
E1) Vulnerability to significant reduction in future defense budgets	Grey circle	Light pink circle	Grey circle	Green circle	Green circle

The choice between *privilege global competition* and *invest in a multidomain alliance* is not an easy one. In terms of the three focus strategic and operational criteria, these options are the most likely and the most dangerous courses of action. Competition is already

occurring on a daily basis, but the risks of armed conflict extend into the existential. Proceeding to the rest of the criteria, the introduction of long-range fires would be considered as provocative by Russia. But not coincidentally, the same action along with the creation of a MDC2 structure reassures allies and creates a framework for them to build their capabilities within. The institutional impacts also have a two-sides-of-the-coin dynamic, as the greater proportion of forces in the United States is sustainable and creates flexibility but at the same time creates vulnerability to decreasing budgets.

Of these two closely matched strategic approaches, the principal investigators recommend *invest in a multidomain alliance*. As the name suggests, this strategic approach enables the Joint Force and multinational partners to get the most of their capabilities. This approach makes the best use of the Army's top modernization priority (long-range fires) in a way that alters the strategic balance of a theater to avert a potentially catastrophic, albeit low probability, scenario of armed conflict. More importantly, this strategic approach is far more stable in a crisis, as it does not place policymakers in having to rush this critical, escalatory capability into theater at a moment of high tension. As opposed to *build visible presence*, this approach also incentivizes allies to invest more by showing US resolve, but in a manner that does not replicate capabilities that they can provide. Moreover, *invest in a multidomain alliance* has the flexibility to allow a later buildup of heavy forces if conditions still warrant. The main drawbacks to this approach are it commits a precious three-star headquarters to Europe, as well as the first few years of production of both PrSM launchers and munitions. These allocations would be significant against a single strategic competitor, though hardly excessive if the NDS emphasis on prioritization is to be believed.

As already noted, however, the selection among the proposed strategic approaches comes down to a fine balancing of many competing demands. A slight reweighting of factors would lead to a different conclusion. Three alternative conditions worth noting would lead to the adoption of the other strategic approaches.

- **If the combination of the other 1+3 threats (China, North Korea, Iran, violent extremist organizations far outweigh that of Russia.** In this instance, *privilege global competition* provides maximum flexibility to respond to those other threats. That strategic approach competed so well because it is the closest to the current force posture, which is the product of an array of pressures, most of which still exist. This "status quo plus" option places a higher emphasis on institutional sustainability and satisfying multiple demands.
- **If there is a high likelihood that defense budgets will significantly decline in the next several years.** *Privilege armed conflict* was eliminated as an option because it was deemed too difficult to implement so much in a short time. But that bug becomes a feature if there is only a short window to accomplish (or at least initiate) significant change. In that case, then the Army loses nothing by trying to accomplish as much as possible. Moreover, as the option with the lowest sustaining cost, it would continue to provide the greatest strategic and operational effect over time.
- **If there is a high likelihood of war with China.** *Invest in a multidomain alliance* is a multidomain solution that seeks to enable the remainder of the Joint Force. But little air and naval capability could be enabled in the case of a war with China. In

that scenario, having the strongest possible presence of ground maneuver forces to maintain a credible deterrent against Russian opportunism would be best.

## **ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS**

In the course of the investigation, the study team noted two other elements that fall outside of any specific strategic approach but that deserve mention.

**No nuclear capability for long-range ground-based fires:** The withdrawal from the INF Treaty opens the possibility of extending the range of PrSM beyond 500 kilometers, which would have significant operational benefits. But this eventuality would come at the cost of being politically difficult for European partners, where the treaty was popular. Though no open discussion of making any of the long-range precision fires systems nuclear-capable is currently occurring, the United States should explicitly state as much. Whatever theoretical advantages low-yield nuclear weapons from ground-based systems might have, stationing these weapons anywhere they might be useful would be exceptionally difficult politically.

**Candid dialogue among the services and with DoD about the global operating model against the demands of great-power conflict:** The timelines for “blunt” and “surge” layers as they pertain to air and ground forces are either radically different (measured, respectively, in weeks or months) or else the majority of the CONUS-based Army falls into some other category that would be used only in a long, potentially catastrophic war that the rest of the department’s efforts are meant to avoid. Most likely only one segment of the Army would actually be able to participate within a multidomain campaign lasting several weeks before the munitions that are essential for its execution would be severely depleted. During the long second phase, the Army surge force would be activated, though the role the Joint Force would play is unclear. This discrepancy must be addressed because it has profound implications not only for force posture, but also force structure and generation, readiness models, strategic lift and munitions stockpile requirements, operational concepts and doctrine, and the allocation of capabilities among the components. In short, the Joint Force needs an honest appraisal of how it would fight both a short and a long war. Once some understanding of these two quite different scenarios has been reached, the Army can then review its force generation model and Total Army framework in light of those potential requirements and the daily demands of a world of continual competition.

## CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSION

The preceding chapters and the following appendices provide a wide-ranging examination of future Army forces posture from various vantages: a survey of various options, a discussion of organizing principles to guide selection from those options, and a review of the most important outcomes and risks for consideration when choosing among those options. That material is offered as a framework for further work and analysis. Undoubtedly, staffs in the Pentagon and elsewhere can improve upon the details offered by a small team producing an unclassified report.

Nonetheless, the team believes its overall intellectual approach would benefit the Army and the DoD more broadly. We sensed a divide between two camps split along lines evoking historian Isaiah Berlin's famous illustration of the hedgehog and the fox.<sup>1</sup>

The defense hedgehogs are eager to focus the military on just one thing: great-power competition. The NDS is the clearest expression of this view, and the generally high marks it has received indicate the widespread agreement that a corrective shift in emphasis is necessary. But in regaining balance, we must not overcorrect, particularly in long-lead aspects of the defense enterprise like force posture. Taking a maximalist approach in short-lead activities like training and doctrine is useful in redirecting the force and, if conditions warrant, can be readily easily reversed by an equally hard approach in some different direction. But this description does not apply to force posture. Decisions taken now can foreclose strategic and operational options decades from now. Therefore, one should include as many different criteria and risk factors as possible. The things that concerned us in the past might well concern us again in the future and should not be breezily dismissed.

The defense foxes know many things, perhaps too many things. One can easily get "lost in the finite," the mass of details—both actions and constraints—associated with the present force posture and fall prey to radical oversimplification. The Army is already stretched taut. The Army has no extraneous units or useless actions; everything serves some purpose. Moreover, stakeholders such as local communities, commercial interests, the other services, and multinational partners are accustomed to and have molded themselves to the status quo. No change can be made that does not have some negative consequences. But these challenges and drawbacks must be assessed with perspective. The decline in some activities and the costs imposed on some stakeholders are less important than others.

The conceptual framework of this study is meant to bridge this divide, representing the views of both hedgehogs and foxes by providing a full accounting of both the positive and negative aspects of any single option. As a rule, the team found that any force posture choice that does not seem hard is not accounting for all of the relevant factors. Any easy decision to change is looking only at the positive aspects and not acknowledging what will be lost. Any easy decision to remain the same is not factoring in the opportunity cost of a foregone improvement.

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1. Isaiah Berlin, *The Hedgehog and the Fox: An Essay on Tolstoy's View of History* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1967).





# APPENDIX 1. COMPREHENSIVE DESCRIPTION OF STRATEGIC APPROACHES

Options	Privilege Dynamic Force Employment	Privilege Global Competition	Privilege Armed Conflict	Invest in Multi-Domain Alliance	Build Visible Presence
Multidomain Command and Control	No change (deploy corps + OFC in crisis)	Corps + OFC available for global use	Field Army + OFC integrated into NATO	Field Army + OFC integrated into NATO	Corps + OFC available for global use
Long-Range Fires	Deploy from CONUS	Deploy from CONUS	In Europe	In Europe	Deploy from CONUS
Forward Stationed (Germany/Italy)	• SCR (Ger) • SFAB (Italy)	• SCR (Ger) • BCT(A) (Italy)	• 2 x ABCTs (Ger)	• ABCT (Ger) • BCT(A) (Italy)	• 2 x ABCTs (Ger)
Rotational/APS ABCTs	• Rotational/APS (Pol) • 2 x APS (W Eur)	• APS (Pol) • 2 x APS (W Eur)	• Rotational (Pol) • APS (W Eur)	• Rotational/APS (Pol) • APS (W Eur)	• Rotational (Pol) • APS (W Eur)
Activity: Northeastern Allies	Moderate (C2 & GP)	Reduced (C2; some GP)	Priority (GP & SF)	Priority (GP; most SF)	Priority (GP & SF)
Activity: Southeastern Allies	Moderate (C2, GP, SF)	Moderate (C2, GP, SF)	Limited (SPP & SFAB only)	Reduced (SPP, SFAB, SF; some GP)	Limited (SPP & SFAB only)
Activity: East and Southeastern Partners	Moderate (SPP, SFAB, SF; regular GP)	Priority when allowed by policy	Limited (SPP & SFAB only)	Reduced (SPP, SFAB, SF; some GP)	Limited (SPP & SFAB only)
Munitions	Accept Risk	Accept Risk	Invest	Invest	Accept Risk
LOC Improvements	Invest	Invest	Rely on allies	Rely on allies	Invest
Dispersal & Hardening	Accept Risk	Accept Risk	Accept Risk	Accept Risk	Accept Risk
Deployment Exercises	Invest	Accept Risk	Accept Risk	Accept Risk	Accept Risk
Enhanced APS Status	Accept Risk	Invest	Accept Risk	Invest	Accept Risk
Regional Expertise	Accept Risk	Accept Risk	Invest	Accept Risk	Invest
Logistics & Mobility	Increase	Increase		Increase	
Theater Air Missile Defense					
Special Forces		Increase	Increase	Increase	Increase
Initial Cost	Low	Moderate	High	High	High
Sustaining Cost	High	Moderate	Low	Low-Moderate	Low-Moderate
Implementation Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reallocation of additional ABCT equipment set</li> <li>• Reallocation of force structure among compos to build-up logistics &amp; mobility capability</li> <li>• Possible objections from Italy to substitution of SFAB for BCT(A)</li> <li>• Investment in foreign infrastructure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reallocation of additional ABCT equipment set</li> <li>• Reallocation of force structure among compos to build-up logistics &amp; mobility capability</li> <li>• Investment in foreign infrastructure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changing NATO command structure</li> <li>• Basing non-INF system</li> <li>• Removing Italy IBCT</li> <li>• Isolation of southeast allies</li> <li>• Accept Risk to INDOPACOM</li> <li>• Foreign MILCON</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changing NATO command structure</li> <li>• Basing non-INF system</li> <li>• Perceived isolation of southeast allies</li> <li>• Accept Risk to INDOPACOM</li> <li>• Reallocation of force structure among compos to build-up logistics &amp; mobility capability</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Removing Italy IBCT</li> <li>• Isolation of southeast allies</li> <li>• Foreign MILCON</li> <li>• Investment in foreign infrastructure</li> </ul>

ABCT: armored brigade combat team  
 APS: Army prepositioned stocks  
 BCT(A): brigade combat team (Airborne)  
 BCT: brigade combat team  
 C2: command post exercises  
 CONUS: continental United States  
 Ger: Germany  
 GP: general purpose force  
 IBCT: infantry brigade combat team  
 INDOPACOM: US Indo-Pacific Command  
 INF: intermediate-range nuclear forces  
 LOC: line of communication  
 MILCON: military construction  
 NATO: North Atlantic Treaty Organization  
 OFC: operational fires command  
 Poli: Poland  
 SCR: Stryker cavalry regiment  
 SF: Special Forces  
 SFAB: security force assistance brigade  
 SPP: State Partnership Program  
 W Eur: Western Europe (Germany, Netherlands, Belgium)



## APPENDIX 2. COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS OF PROPOSED STRATEGIC APPROACHES BY EVALUATION CRITERIA

To evaluate the different courses of action, the study team analyzed each of the strategic approaches against a range of criteria to measure the advantages and risks associated with each option. This appendix provides the full results of that analysis. The study team used 19 evaluation criteria arranged into 3 categories: strategic and operational, institutional, and environmental. Under each criterion, the strategic approaches are listed from most favorable to least favorable with a brief explanation of the rationale.

To ensure comprehensive treatment, this appendix lists all the pertinent risks identified by the study team. Not all risks, however, should be accorded equal weight. Only eight evaluation criteria were identified as sufficiently important to influence decision making. One should note, and when possible, mitigate, the other risks, but they are not important enough to influence the determination of the eventual force posture.

The ratings are subjective assessments produced by a small team on a wide range of complex topics. The ratings are given with a full rationale to allow readers to draw their own conclusions and to serve as a start point for further analysis to refine ratings.

### STRATEGIC AND OPERATIONAL CRITERIA AND RISK FACTORS

*The study team recommends the following factors should influence decisions.*

**S1.** The ability to defeat, and thereby credibly deter, Russian armed conflict directed against a NATO ally at acceptable cost. This achieves policy aim while avoiding Pyrrhic victory.

**Description:** This factor assesses the extent to which each of the strategic approaches provides the operational conditions for success as defined in wargaming for multidomain operations (MDO). The focus of that wargaming was to defeat Russian objectives within weeks of a “cold-start,” fait accompli seizure of anything from a portion of a single ally to a wholesale seizure of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. The requirement for responsiveness within a matter of weeks is a key element of this criterion, as it effectively excludes any forces or materiel coming by sea. If the acceptable time period is defined as several months instead of several weeks, the divide between the various options is significantly reduced. The study team believes the requirement for weeks is valid due to the enormous cost and risk involved in anything longer. This requirement is also necessary if the Army is to have a significant presence within the larger combined/Joint blunt and surge layers as described by the Global Operating Model. If not, then the Army blunt layer would not arrive until after the Joint/combined surge is attrited and has expended its munitions. Of course, requirements for deterrence are not the same as defeat, though the two are closely linked and for the purposes of this study and are considered roughly equivalent. Deterrence requires an adversary perceive that an attack will either be defeated or too costly given the objective. As noted in chapter 2, the study found that the Russians will likely only attempt to seize territory in the event it perceives an existential threat, suggesting in this context Russia will be willing to pay a high price, narrowing the distinction between deter and defeat.

**Rationale for designation as key criterion:** Defeating a Russian attack against a NATO ally is arguably the US Army’s most important mission. This scenario, though highly unlikely, is also easily the most dangerous: Accepting a fait accompli would seriously weaken the United States’

standing in the world, while even a successful campaign against Russia would be enormously costly in every sense, risk catastrophic nuclear or cyber warfare against military and civilian targets, and create an unparalleled opportunity for other strategic competitors to achieve gains elsewhere. Aside from these obvious points, the study team was surprised by the near unanimity among Allies that this criterion should be the focus, despite the acknowledgment of its low probability. In part, the rationale for planning against this scenario is that despite its remote probability, if the Russians perceive NATO is unprepared, it becomes more likely. The concern about such an attack was a recurring theme, not only among Estonian and Polish interlocutors, but also in the UK, where there has long been a focus on competition below armed conflict, an aspect made particularly real by the Salisbury chemical weapons attack. In short—at least for Allies across the depth of the northern tier of NATO—American leadership is judged by the ability to defeat overt armed aggression. Therefore, this ability has some secondary effects upon competition below armed conflict, in which the perception of will and strength sets the broader context.

### **Ranking of strategic approaches:**

1. Privilege armed conflict (Low Risk): The combination of on-hand multidomain capability and maneuver presence provide a credible deterrent. The low residual risk reflects some shortfalls in enablers and support forces.
2. Invest in multidomain alliance (Moderate Risk): The multidomain capability enables the air component, which is critical to friendly operations and what Russia perceives as the primary threat. The lack of maneuver forces, however, does create an opportunity for Russia, particularly if they have decisive political decision making and good operations security.
3. Build visible presence (Moderate Risk): The presence force package adds considerable capability and is equal to invest in multidomain alliance in its deterrent effect. This package is less effective in defeating Russian aggression within armed conflict, however, because there is greater overall gain to be had by enabling the Joint Force and Allies with the multidomain package. Also, the likely necessity of accepting risk with enablers and sustainment to field more armored brigade combat teams (ABCTs) would create a brittle force that would be at risk in sustained combat.
4. Privilege global competition (High Risk): The forward-based multidomain command and control (MDC2) ability provides the appearance of ability to counter anti-access/area-denial (A2/AD), and therefore has some deterrent value. But in realistic capability, this approach would likely not yield full multidomain capability until several weeks into the war. By this time, attrition and munitions shortfalls would have weakened the rest of the Joint Force.
5. Privilege dynamic force employment (Very High Risk): The lack of forward presence makes this approach extremely sensitive to any delays in political decision making, intelligence failures, or Russian political warfare, as well as physical and virtual attacks against vulnerable transportation, supply, and communications nodes.

**Primary variable that could alter assessment:** Will Russia continue to have significant forces in or on the border of Ukraine? Put differently, does Ukraine become a quagmire that restricts Russian operational freedom of maneuver? If so, then this factor becomes much less urgent.

## **S2. The ability to compete effectively below armed conflict with Russia.**

**Description:** This factor assesses the extent to which each of the strategic approaches enables competition below armed conflict with Russia both in Europe and across the globe directly, and also through the dual effects on enabling direct military activities and indirectly by enhancing the political cohesion and will of US alliances and partners. Due to the nature of the threat for most allies, the latter element is far more important. The majority of US Army capabilities are simply not relevant to countering the majority of Russian competitive activities, and those that are relevant are already fully engaged.

The US Army's main contribution is to add to a general climate of reassurance and security within the ally, in which Russian political warfare, disinformation, and coercion are ineffective. For a number of reasons, partners are far more vulnerable to more assertive, violent competition below armed conflict, such as the use of proxies or direct involvement by Russian military "volunteers." For those countries, the US Army's role in competition below armed conflict can also be direct military action.

**Rationale for designation as key criterion:** Competition below armed conflict with Russia occurs on a daily basis now and will continue as long as the Kremlin regards the United States as a hostile power and an obstacle to its ambitions. Without resorting to armed conflict, Russia can achieve some of its strategic objectives and put US interests at risk. Moreover, to the extent that Russian actions weaken the political cohesion of NATO and destabilize US Allies and partners, they can create conditions that make armed conflict more likely.

**Ranking of strategic approaches:**

1. Privilege global competition (Moderate Risk): The combination of a visible higher headquarters stationed in Europe, a light- and medium-weight force posture that can more easily operate across Europe, and an expansive activity footprint across the breadth of Europe would contribute significantly to the perception of US resolve and commitment.
2. Privilege dynamic force employment (Moderate Risk): Similar to the previous strategic approach, but with a slight degradation because of the lack of an operational headquarters and the potential dip in activity due to the loss of the 173rd Brigade Combat Team (BCT) (Airborne). This approach assumes that a US-based security force assistance brigade (SFAB) that is still aggressively conducting activities in Europe is under privilege global competition. If no SFAB were operating full-time in Europe, then the two strategic approaches would be tied in terms of the amount of risk.
3. Privilege armed conflict (High Risk): Within the Northeast Allies, the strength of the US commitment would make Russian competition below armed conflict much less effective. The cost of this narrow geographic focus, however, would be to cause other Allies and partners to feel somewhat abandoned because they would see a reduction in the level of activity to which they are accustomed. This perceived reduction would be particularly acute in Romania, where the withdrawal of the US Marine Corps presence was mitigated by assurances of continued US Army activity. Because the consensus among experts on Russia consulted for this study was that the Black Sea region and Balkans are far more likely targets for future Russian competition below armed conflict, the increase in the Baltic Sea region does not compensate for the increased risk to southern Europe.
4. Build visible presence (High Risk): Within the area of the Northeast Allies, the greater visible American commitment would allow for generally more effective competition below armed conflict. In all the other regions, however, the decline in activity creates space for Russian aggression below armed conflict.
5. Invest in multidomain alliance (Very High Risk): Similar to the previous strategic approach, with the difference that build visible presence better provides maneuver forces, which due to their visibility are more potent symbolic manifestations of American commitment. The field army does offer some capability.

**S3.** The extent to which force posture provides escalation advantage and stability in a crisis by allowing decisionmakers on both sides the opportunity and time for restraint. This advantage and stability disincentivizes making escalatory decisions early in a crisis, avoiding the 1914 syndrome.

**Description:** This factor assesses the extent to which each of the strategic approaches requires senior civilian and military decisionmakers to make escalatory decisions within the heightened

tensions of a crisis. This factor also accounts for the vulnerability to a strike from Russia during the early stages of a crisis, which applies because the greater the vulnerability to such a strike, the more pressure on friendly decisionmakers to make quick decisions on actions that significantly alter the military balance in the theater at a time when the political balance is likely strained.

**Rationale for designation as key criterion:** In thinking about a great-power war for nearly a year, two things were apparent to the study group. First, the group identified the need to avoid it altogether because of the terrible risks associated with a war on even relatively favorable terms to the United States. Second, due to the immense risks involved, the road to such a conflict would begin with an opportunity magnified by a series of miscalculations. This factor assesses the extent to which those conditions are in place. Arguably, this factor is even more important than the actual ability to fight a great-power conflict because the general consensus of the study team was that perceived lack of friendly political will, rather than any hard weighing of military correlation of forces, would lead to armed conflict.

#### **Ranking of strategic approaches:**

1. Privilege armed conflict (Low Risk): With both the multidomain capability and maneuver force presence necessary to deter (as forecasted in MDO development already in theater), a large movement of ground forces from the earliest indications of trouble is not needed.
2. Invest in multidomain alliance (Moderate Risk): This strategic approach would require the early decision to deploy one and possibly two ABCTs (if a rotation force is not in place at the time), causing some additional risk in comparison to privilege armed conflict, but as similar capabilities are already in place this is not regarded as being as difficult a decision for US policymakers as it is for Allies, and provocative for Russia. The key unique capabilities provided by the United States—MDC2 and long-range fires—are already in place, offering a greater margin of error.
3. Build visible presence (High Risk): This approach is accompanied by a significant increase in risk compared to invest in a multidomain alliance because this option requires a very early decision to deploy an offensive system—long-range fires with a large munitions stockpile—designed to undermine Russia’s A2/AD system.
4. Privilege global competition (Very High Risk): This strategic approach requires the deployment of long-range fires units with a large munitions stockpile and three ABCTs falling in on prepositioned equipment. This option requires policymakers to begin this process months in advance of the beginning of a war and provides an extensive period of vulnerability within which Russia could attack at significant advantage.
5. Privilege dynamic force employment (Very High Risk): Similar to privilege global competition, but with the requirement also to deploy a corps headquarters, adding more risk.

**S4. The extent to which force posture provokes Russian political and military reactions without the ability for policymakers to adjust subsequently as necessary.**

**Description:** This factor has two components. The first is the degree to which it would be viewed as provocative by Russia. The second, and more important, element is the degree to which that initial degree of provocation can then be modified.

The analysis in chapter 2 suggests that the most provocative lever is aggressive military activity in the regions of Eastern and Southeastern Partners. The next most provocative action is the deployment of long-range fires units; the reaction to the deployment of Aegis Ashore provides a rough idea of how Russia might respond.

**Rationale for designation as key criterion:** Whether to provoke Russia is a policy decision outside of a service purview. But adopting a force posture that is particularly difficult for policymakers to

adjust subsequently (whether to apply more or less pressure) is contrary to the flexibility desired in the *National Defense Strategy* (NDS).

**Ranking of strategic approaches:**

1. Privilege global competition (Highly Provocative but Responsive): Operating aggressively with partners like Ukraine and Georgia is probably the most provocative action that the US Army can undertake, but this force posture allows those actions to be easily scaled as desired.
2. Privilege dynamic force employment (Somewhat Provocative but Responsive): Similar to “privilege global competition” but with a slightly more balanced footprint, this strategic approach is slightly less provocative.
3. Build visible presence (Not Provocative but Not Responsive): Though this force posture provides more ready ground maneuver forces than others, it must be viewed in historical and strategic context. Armies do not invade Russia with three-plus heavy brigades. In terms of ready offensive capability, this force posture does little to change the correlation of forces, and by focusing activity in areas that are of less sensitivity, it is the least provocative. This strategic approach also makes it difficult to increase pressure by operating in the area of Eastern and Southeastern Partners, because the best forces for these missions – 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment (SCR) and 173rd BCT (Airborne) – have been withdrawn.
4. Invest in multidomain alliance (Provocative and Not Responsive): The introduction of long-range fires units is provocative and cannot be easily modified to lessen pressure, as increasing maneuver forces allows more pressure. The 173rd BCT (Airborne) does offer some European-based troops that can be readily deployed into the area of any ally or partner, if desired.
5. Privilege armed conflict (Provocative and Not Responsive): This strategic approach combines the provocative aspects of invest in a multidomain alliance with the inflexibility of build visible presence.

**S5.** The extent to which the force posture enhances the overall political cohesion of NATO and leads to increased political will and military capabilities of individual Allies.

**Description:** This factor has two components. The first is the degree to which the factor fosters political cohesion within NATO by offering credible and meaningful reassurance. The second is the factor’s effect on Allies’ military capability, which could be to enhance by enabling their capabilities or to detract by encouraging free riding.

**Rationale for designation as key criterion:** The political cohesion of the Alliance is, arguably, the most important factor of all, though it is necessary to keep the importance of US Army force posture by shaping the degree of political cohesion in context. But much deeper factors influence that aspect.

**Ranking of strategic approaches:**

1. Invest in multidomain alliance (Net Gain): This force posture provides capabilities that only the United States can provide within a command framework (field army) that encourages Allies to do more. The one drawback is a decrease in activity in the area of Southeastern Allies.
2. Privilege global competition (Slight Net Gain): This strategic approach offers a slight improvement in capability that would be broadly shared among Allies.
3. Privilege armed conflict (Slight Net Gain): This strategic approach offers strong reassurance but risks free riding by Northeastern Allies while also doing little to reassure Southeastern Allies.
4. Build visible presence (Mixed Result): This strategic approach mainly benefits Northeastern Allies but does so in a way that replicates capabilities that they can produce for themselves.

5. Privilege dynamic force employment (Slight Net Loss): This strategic approach spreads activity broadly across Europe but mainly with forces that come for only short periods, so there is little framework for Allies to build upon.

*The study team recommends the following factors **should not** influence force posture decisions.*

**S6.** The ability to offer a range of options to respond to Russian aggression against a European partner (for example, Ukraine, Georgia).

**Description:** This criterion assesses the extent to which each of the strategic approaches enables a range of options to friendly policy makers for operationally and strategically effective military actions to counter Russian overt aggression against an Eastern (Ukraine or Moldova) or Southeastern Partner (Armenia, Azerbaijan, or Georgia) *within* the territorial area of that partner. In addition to enabling intervention in a conflict, this capability also indirectly expands friendly decision space in competition below armed conflict and provides the United States with better escalation parity in a crisis.

**Rationale for designation as non-key criterion:** The US Joint Force's difficulty in generating a range of acceptable, meaningful options for policymakers during the Russian seizure of Crimea and later intervention in eastern Ukraine are often cited as the prime examples of why the US military should, as described in the NDS, expand the competitive space. Whether a policymaker would choose to exercise those options, the US military should certainly seek to provide the ability to take action. Merely the ability to do so would influence Russian decision making and so have a beneficial effect on competition below armed conflict.

In reviewing the options for US Army participation, however, the team concluded that none of the force posture options provided an advantage sufficient to merit this factor influencing force posture decisions. A wide range of possible scenarios exists, but the United States would have greater scope to pursue horizontal escalation and asymmetric responses, particularly in the case of incremental destabilization activities like those currently being conducted against both Ukraine and Georgia. This greater strategic scope and the great disparity in the relative ease with which US and Russian ground forces can project into and sustain operations in these areas, means that a direct response from US Army forces would be, at best, a supporting effort. This role is not important enough for the ability to act in defense of non-Allies to influence the choice of strategic approach.

**Ranking of strategic approaches:**

1. Privilege dynamic force employment (High Risk): The Stryker BCT (SBCT) offers some options for Eastern Partners, and the proposed focus of the Italy-based SFAB on Southeastern Partners would increase the ability to integrate select US Army enablers there rapidly.
2. Privilege global competition (High Risk): The same as the previous option with a slight degradation due to the possible lack of engagement without an in-theater SFAB. For example, a US-based but Europe-focused SFAB could, depending on many variables, be as effective as one based in Europe.
3. Invest in multidomain alliance (Very High Risk): The concentration of ABCTs and activity for Northeast Allies provides few options for action on behalf of partners.
4. Privilege armed conflict (Very High Risk): Similar to the previous but with slightly greater risk due to the even more tailored focus on Northeast Allies.
5. Build visible presence (Very High Risk): By design, the force optimized to armed conflict in support of Northeast Allies offers few options.



**Primary variable that could alter assessment:** Future US and NATO relations with Turkey could alter this assessment. If Turkey were to shift decisively toward Russia in its relations, then all US forces (not just ground forces) would be unable to intervene effectively on behalf of Southeastern Partners, rendering all the strategic approaches equally irrelevant.

**S7. The ability to respond directly or indirectly in case of a crisis or limited conflict with Russia outside of Europe (for example, mishap in Syria).**

**Description:** This factor assesses the extent to which each of the strategic approaches provides the ability for forces in Europe to contribute directly to a reaction or indirectly through the threat or employment of horizontal escalation.

**Rationale for designation as non-key criterion:** The US Army force posture should provide these options, but none of the capabilities that could do so (a deployable corps, long-range fires units, the 173rd BCT [Airborne]) could not potentially be replicated by Joint capabilities or the same capabilities coming from the United States. Depending on the amount of warning, Europe-based forces might be more responsive in terms of time, but this advantage is potentially outweighed by the political difficulties of conducting nonalliance operations from within Europe.

**Ranking of strategic approaches:**

1. Privilege global competition (Acceptable): A deployable corps and airborne BCT can be deployed elsewhere. An SBCT offers limited ability to conduct increased activity throughout Europe, though in comparison to Joint capabilities that could be brought to play against Russia by threat or actual employment this would only offer a marginal improvement.
2. Privilege dynamic force employment (Reduced): An SBCT and SFAB offer some capability to increase pressure through actions in partner areas that are sensitive to Russia.
3. Invest in multidomain alliance (Reduced): Long-range fires units can strike directly at important Russian capabilities, but doing so in reaction to a limited conflict elsewhere would be politically difficult for Allies. The BCT (Airborne) offers additional direct response capability.
4. Privilege armed conflict (Significantly Reduced): As noted above, long-range fires units offer significant capability to strike at valuable Russian capabilities but whether Allies would allow firing from their territory would depend on the situation.
5. Build visible presence (Significantly Reduced): This strategic approach only offers a corps headquarters for deployment.

**S8. The ability of Europe-based forces to project power into the areas of responsibility of US Central Command (CENTCOM) and US Africa Command.**

**Description:** This factor assesses the extent to which each of the strategic approaches provides the ability for forces in Europe to project into CENTCOM and US Africa Command.

**Rationale for designation as non-key criterion:** The premise of dynamic force employment is that forces should primarily be deployed from continental United States (CONUS) with only the minimal contact layer forward; therefore, there should be little need for forces from Europe to deploy elsewhere. Additionally, as Russia is the primary threat driving force posture in Europe, deploying forces from there in a contingency involving some other threat without creating some degree of opportunity for Russian aggression would be difficult. Long-range fires being deployed from Europe to anywhere but the Pacific would be an unlikely scenario.

**Ranking of strategic approaches:**

1. Privilege global competition (Some Capability): The corps headquarters and 173rd BCT (Airborne) could both be readily deployed.
2. Invest in multidomain alliance (Some Capability): The 173rd BCT (Airborne) could be readily deployed.
3. Build visible presence (Limited Capability): The corps headquarters could be readily deployed.
4. Privilege armed conflict (No Capability): No readily deployable units exist.
5. Privilege dynamic force employment (No Capability): By design, there are only the minimal contact forces in theater.

**S9.** The extent to which the force posture facilitates the ability of Allies and partners to contribute to operations outside of Europe.

**Description:** This factor assesses the extent to which each of the strategic approaches provides the ability to integrate Allies and partners into US-led operations outside of Europe.

**Rationale for designation as non-key criterion:** Though this was a major task of United States Army Europe (USAREUR) during the 2000s, the threat from Russia makes it unlikely that Allies or partners would be able to contribute enough forces to out-of-area operations to make a significant difference. Furthermore, the most important force posture asset in the integration of Allies and partners was the Joint Multinational Readiness Center at Hohenfels. That capability is common to all approaches. Therefore, the primary distinguishing variable is the extent of activity across Europe, which influences the extent to which Allies and partners are accustomed to operating with US forces.

**Ranking of strategic approaches:**

1. (tie) Privilege global competition (Acceptable): Activity is spread across all partners and Allies.
1. (tie) Privilege dynamic force employment (Acceptable): Activity is spread across all partners and Allies.
3. (tie) Invest in multidomain alliance (Significantly Reduced): Activity is largely confined to Northeastern Allies.
3. (tie) Privilege armed conflict (Significantly Reduced): Activity is largely confined to Northeastern Allies.
3. (tie) Build visible presence (Significantly Reduced): Activity is largely confined to Northeastern Allies.

## INSTITUTIONAL CRITERIA AND RISK FACTORS

**I1.** The degree to which the force posture impacts Army global readiness and force generation.

**Description:** This factor assesses the extent to which each of the strategic approaches reduces overall global readiness and force generation by imposing a high demand to maintain force posture in Europe. The three principal measures are the size of the costs to sustain the force posture, the necessity for rotational forces, and the requirement for high-demand assets to be committed solely to Europe.

**Rationale for designation as key criterion:** The Army cannot adopt a force posture that is ideal from the strategic and operational standpoint but that it cannot sustain, not only against current demand but also over the inevitable peaks and ebbs of global demand in the decades ahead.

### Ranking of strategic approaches:

1. Privilege global competition (Limited Impact): This force posture requires only moderate annual sustaining costs, requires no rotational units, employs logistics and mobility units that with a reallocation among the components would not cause shortfalls elsewhere, and allows the Europe-based corps and operational fires command to deploy elsewhere as necessary.
2. Invest in multidomain alliance (Some Impact): This force posture requires only low-to-moderate annual sustaining costs, has the option of a rotational unit when circumstances dictate, employs logistics and mobility units that with a reallocation among the components would not cause shortfalls elsewhere, and commits a field army with operational fires command to Europe.
3. Build visible presence. (Increased Impact): This force posture requires only low-to-moderate annual sustaining costs, requires one rotational ABCT as well as an increase in special operations forces, and allows the Europe-based corps and operational fires command to deploy elsewhere as necessary.
4. Privilege dynamic force employment (Increased Impact): This force posture has a high annual sustaining cost, provides the option of a rotational unit when circumstances dictate, employs logistics and mobility units that with a reallocation among the components would not cause shortfalls elsewhere, and requires no Europe-based MDC2.
5. Privilege armed conflict (Increased Impact): This force posture requires only low annual sustaining costs, requires one rotational ABCT as well as an increase in special operations forces, and commits a field army with operational fires command to Europe.

12. The likely response from the various components, other services, the DoD, Congress, or allies and the degree to which negative responses can prevent successful implementation.

**Description:** This factor assesses the degree of implementation risk associated with each strategic approach in the form of opposition from within the Army or from other services, the DoD, other governmental agencies, the administration, Congress, or multinational Allies and partners. The other principal driver of implementation risk is a high implementation cost, which by displacing funding from other activities and programs can cause internal and external opposition.

**Rationale for designation as key criterion:** The Army does not have full control over Army force posture; there are many stakeholders who can withhold cooperation to weaken, modify, or block force posture initiatives. Even if the Army is successful fully implementing a desired change, doing so might still require an inordinate amount of senior leader and staff effort to overcome stakeholder resistance.

### Ranking of strategic approaches:

1. Privilege global competition (Low Risk): The creation of an Army pre-positioned stocks (APS) ABCT in Poland requires the diversion of that equipment from some other theater (for example, CENTCOM) or unit (for example, repurpose National Guard ABCT to IBCT). The creation of more on-hand logistics and mobility capability could require a reallocation of units among the components. The need to improve lines of communications to facilitate rapid deployment requires a politically difficult investment in foreign infrastructure. The moderate implementation cost might cause some conflict over diverted resources.
2. Privilege dynamic force employment (Low-Moderate Risk): The creation of a hybrid rotational or APS ABCT in Poland requires the diversion of that equipment from some other theater (for example, CENTCOM) or unit (for example, repurpose National Guard ABCT to IBCT). The

creation of more on-hand logistics and mobility capability could require a reallocation of units among the components. Italy might object to the substitution of an SFAB for the existing 173rd BCT (Airborne), which the Italian government continues to host under the original NATO Southeastern Task Force agreement. The need to improve lines of communications to facilitate rapid deployment requires a politically difficult investment in foreign infrastructure.

3. Invest in multidomain alliance (High Risk): Changing NATO command structures to integrate the field army and operational fires command will require significant effort and entails some risk that the proposal will be modified in a way that impairs effectiveness. Basing nonintermediate-range nuclear force (INF) compliant long-range fires units in Europe will be politically sensitive for Allies and likely be opposed with Russian misinformation and manipulation; within DoD, there will be pressure to place these units in the Pacific instead. The reduction in activity with Southeastern Allies could lead to some multinational difficulties, such as reduced support for US initiatives like the restructuring of command arrangements or efforts to improve access throughout the area. This force posture also requires Allies to invest in improving lines of communications; this will require senior leader effort. The creation of more on-hand logistics and mobility capability could require a reallocation of units among the components. The high implementation cost will cause some conflict over diverted resources.
4. Build visible presence (High Risk): The removal of the BCT from Italy and reduction in activity with Southeastern Allies could lead to some multinational difficulties, such as reduced support for US initiatives like the restructuring of command arrangements or efforts to improve access throughout the area. The return to two ABCTs in Germany would require some appropriations for foreign military construction, which requires congressional engagement. The return to two ABCTs in Germany would also require a politically difficult investment in foreign infrastructure to improve lines of communications. This investment would be even harder in light of the high implementation cost, which would require the diversion of resources from existing programs and activities.
5. Privilege armed conflict (Very High Risk): Changing NATO command structures to integrate the field army and operational fires command will require significant effort and entails some risk that the proposal will be modified in a way that impairs effectiveness. Basing non-INF compliant long-range fires units in Europe will be politically sensitive for Allies and likely be opposed with Russian misinformation and manipulation; within DoD, there will be pressure to place these units in the Pacific instead. The removal of the BCT from Italy and the reduction in activity with Southeastern Allies could lead to some multinational difficulties, such as reduced support for US initiatives like the restructuring of command arrangements or efforts to improve access throughout the area. This force posture also requires Allies to invest in improving lines of communications; this would require senior leader effort. The return to two ABCTs in Germany would require some appropriations for foreign military construction, which requires congressional engagement. This would be even harder in light of the high implementation cost, which would require the diversion of resources from existing programs and activities.

*The study team recommends the following factor **should not** influence force posture decisions.*

13. The degree to which the force posture entails threat to the force in the form of decreased morale, retention, and human capital due to high operational strain on segments of or the entire Army.

**Description:** This factor measures the degree to which Europe force posture leads to a high operations tempo that adversely impacts the health of the force. The main contributing element is the need for rotational forces, which entails extended deployments (currently nine months) and a reduced pool of forces for other contingencies as for each rotational unit there are several preparing for or recovering from their own rotations. Lesser drivers of operational tempo strain are extensive

activity in areas distant from unit home stations and the commitment of high-demand units like special forces, theater air and missile defense, and high-level headquarters.

**Rationale for designation as non-key criterion:** The study team regarded this as a critical element for the Army, but ultimately decided not to make it a decision-influencing criterion because there are a number of better alternative methods to reduce the strain—altering force structure, changing the force generation model, reallocating tasks among the components, or modifying the other rotational commitments—so that force posture should be determined more on the strategic and operational benefits than on operations tempo considerations.

**Ranking of strategic approaches:**

1. Privilege Global Competition (Very Low Risk): This force posture would require units from Europe or CONUS to conduct regular activity in areas (Southeastern Allies, Eastern Partners, and Southeastern Partners) away from their home stations.
2. Privilege dynamic force employment (Low Risk): This force posture would require units from Europe or CONUS to conduct regular deployment exercises and activity in areas (Southeastern Allies, Eastern Partners, and Southeastern Partners) away from their home stations. The ability to place the ABCT set in Poland in either rotational or APS status provides some ability to adjust activity in accord with global demand.
3. Invest in multidomain alliance (Moderate Risk): The ability to place the ABCT set in Poland in either rotational or APS status provides some ability to adjust activity in accord with global demand. The commitment of a field army to Europe places strain on other three-star headquarters.
4. Build visible presence (Moderate Risk): Maintaining a persistent ABCT rotational presence in Poland is a significant commitment. The increased special forces presence causes some additional strain elsewhere.
5. Privilege armed conflict (High Risk): Maintaining a persistent ABCT rotational presence in Poland is a significant commitment. The increased special forces presence causes some additional strain elsewhere. The commitment of a field army to Europe places strain on other three-star headquarters.

**Primary variable that could alter assessment:** How busy will the Army be in 2023, in 2028, or in 2033? A significant increase or decrease from current demand and/or in the size of the force will have a significant impact on operational tempo.

## ENVIRONMENTAL CRITERIA AND RISK FACTORS

E1. The extent to which the force posture is vulnerable to a significant reduction in future defense budgets, forcing a future Secretary to choose between breaking the strategy or breaking the army.

**Description:** This factor assesses the extent to which each of the strategic approaches would become unsustainable if there were a significant decline in resources. The key determinant is the sustaining cost, as this would be most directly affected by such a change.

**Rationale for designation as key criterion:** Budget uncertainty has been one of the Army's greatest problems in past years and the basic political and other environmental factors underlying this trend have not changed. Over the course of the study, senior leaders have repeatedly emphasized the need to account for this possibility in any strategic approach.

### Ranking of strategic approaches:

1. Privilege armed conflict (Low Risk): By placing the forces required to defeat and deter armed conflict in Europe and narrowly focusing activity in areas close to unit bases, this force posture has low sustaining costs.
2. Invest in multidomain alliance (Moderate Risk): With a robust forward presence, a focus on activity close to unit home stations, and the ability to adjust the status of the ABCT in Poland between rotational and APS according to circumstances, this force posture is relatively resilient to changes in funding.
3. Build visible presence (Moderate Risk): With a robust forward presence and a focus on activity close to unit home stations, this force posture is relatively resilient to changes in funding.
4. Privilege global competition (High Risk): This force posture entails moderate costs to sustain a high level of activity (though, generally, of a small footprint) across a wide geographic area, which makes it vulnerable to decreases in funding.
5. Privilege dynamic force employment (Very High Risk): This force posture entails high sustaining costs to maintain a high level of deployment exercises and activity, including large and expensive exercises like Defender. This force posture is highly vulnerable to resource disruptions.

*The study team recommends the following factors **should not** influence force posture decisions.*

E2. The degree to which the force posture is dependent on the decisions of any single foreign government (can be rendered invalid by the results of a single election in a foreign country).

**Description:** The problems for Pacific posture caused by the election of Rodrigo Duterte in the Philippines illustrate the extent to which force posture is not dependent on any single government; in a time of upheaval, forecasting the trajectory of politics in any country is difficult. In a crisis or conflict, a foreign government could significantly impede military deployment and operations with reluctant, half-hearted cooperation in logistics, movement, and intelligence or by placing caveats on operations within its territory. This factor assesses the extent to which each of the strategic approaches can be disrupted by a single foreign election.

**Rationale for designation as non-key criterion:** Even many of the smaller NATO Allies have some significant capability located in their territory or are part of critical logistics and transportation networks. Theoretically, creating diversity and redundancy in locations and movement routes so that no single points of failure exist is desirable. Yet, the current military infrastructure reflects decades of US and Allied investment—most of it at times of much higher defense spending—shaped by powerful domestic and Alliance political considerations. Germany is essential for any significant military activity and no feasible amount of spending or political capital will be able to avert that dependency. Depending on the scenario—armed conflict or competition below armed conflict and location—other countries could be essential. In many instances, full cooperation from Poland would be necessary. Nonetheless, the inevitable dependence on Germany and the wide range of possible contingencies with such varied demands means that it is not worthwhile to account for this factor in deciding force posture. All of the strategic options are highly vulnerable to this risk.

### Ranking of strategic approaches:

1. Privilege global competition (High Risk): The focus on competition below armed conflict means many of the envisioned activities are light footprint options that are not dependent on significant cooperation from a range of countries. But because of the context, the envisioned activities are also somewhat vulnerable to Russian information operations and political warfare.

2. Build visible presence (High Risk): Because of the narrow geographic focus, this force posture is highly dependent on the cooperation of Germany and Northeastern Allies. This dependence is somewhat mitigated by the historical relations between these Allies and Russia and their vulnerability to Russian aggression.
3. Privilege dynamic force employment (Very High Risk): Rapid, large-scale deployments depend on full utilization of logistics and transportation network capacity. The reluctance of Allies to make these networks available to military traffic at the expense of civilian and commercial needs could impair dynamic force employment.
4. Privilege armed conflict (Very High Risk): Because of the narrow geographic focus, this force posture is highly dependent on the cooperation of Germany and Northeastern Allies. This dependence is somewhat mitigated by the historical relations between these Allies and Russia and their vulnerability to Russian aggression. The integration of the MDC2 headquarters into NATO creates additional risk.
5. Invest in multidomain alliance (Very High Risk): Because of the narrow geographic focus, this force posture is highly dependent on the cooperation of Germany and Northeastern Allies. This dependence is somewhat mitigated by the historical relations between these Allies and Russia and their vulnerability to Russian aggression. The integration of the MDC2 headquarters into NATO creates additional risk. Finally, because this force posture is built to enable Joint operations, disruption to US Air Force access to airfields would also have a significant impact on overall operational effectiveness.

E3. The degree to which the force posture remains operable in case of significant deterioration of NATO political cohesion.

**Description:** This factor assesses the extent to which each of the strategic approaches provides an ability to act with a small “coalition of the willing” in case of a significant decline in NATO political cohesion.

**Rationale for designation as non-key criterion:** Due to the persistence of force posture for years and decades, one must acknowledge the possibility of this kind of fundamental strategic shift. Though some force postures would be better than others under those conditions, the study team concludes this change would make the US position in Europe so untenable that it should not be factored into a force posture decision.

**Ranking of strategic approaches:**

1. Privilege global competition (High Risk): The emphasis on competition below armed conflict and a relatively light footprint already tailors this force posture to those conditions when partners are likely to be receptive to support and does not require large movements of forces.
2. Build visible presence (Very High Risk): This force posture places large ground maneuver forces in the territory of Allies that would be most threatened by Russia, and so this force posture is less vulnerable to degradation in the overall Alliance. Nonetheless, supporting these forces for very long would be difficult.
3. Privilege armed conflict (Very High Risk): This force posture places large ground maneuver forces in the territory of Allies that would be most threatened by Russia, and so this force posture is less vulnerable to degradation in the overall Alliance. Nonetheless, supporting these forces for very long would be difficult. Furthermore, while this posture provides more US multidomain support in position to assist these forces, the integration of the MDC2 leaves it vulnerable to disruption by putative Allies with pro-Russian policies.
4. Privilege dynamic force employment (Very High Risk): The rapid deployment of large-scale forces to Europe requires an effective alliance to have any chance of success.

5. Invest in multidomain alliance (Very High Risk): This force posture is predicated on enabling Joint and multinational capabilities. The deterioration of NATO would have a significant negative effect on both.

**E4. The extent of strategic and operational risk within Europe in case of a significant crisis or conflict with China.**

**Description:** This factor assesses the extent to which each of the strategic approaches would be invalidated by a crisis or conflict with China.

**Rationale for designation as non-key criterion:** A significant crisis or conflict with China would create a window for Russian opportunism. Yet, none of the feasible Army force postures are likely to address this problem satisfactorily the demands on the remainder of the Joint Force would be so significant that Army forces on their own are unlikely to alter the operational balance significantly. Therefore, the relative superiority of force posture options in this extreme case should not be determinative.

**Ranking of strategic approaches:**

1. Privilege armed conflict (Moderate-High Risk): The most robust force posture offers the best possibility of success. Nonetheless, a significant commitment of the other services' capabilities, munitions, and intelligence to the Pacific would still create a highly unfavorable correlation of forces for armed conflict. Russia would also have significant scope for competition below armed conflict due to the focus of US military, diplomatic, and intelligence resources on China.
2. Build visible presence (High Risk): Though without the benefit of long-range fires as with privilege armed conflict, the emphasis on ground maneuver forces would provide some residual deterrence capability.
3. Invest in multidomain alliance (Very High Risk): The emphasis on enabling the Joint Force in this strategic approach would be largely invalidated if there were very little Joint Force left to enable.
4. Privilege global competition (Very High Risk): The demands of moving forces to the Indo-Pacific would leave no spare strategic lift capacity to respond to developments in Europe, even if, as would be likely, there were available ground forces in the United States.
5. Privilege dynamic force employment (Very High Risk): The demands of moving forces to the Indo-Pacific would leave no spare strategic lift capacity to respond to developments in Europe, even if, as would be likely, there were available ground forces in the United States.

**E5. The extent to which the force posture could become a liability or a barrier to adaptation in case of a significant change in US policy.**

**Description:** This factor assesses the extent to which each of the strategic approaches would be difficult to alter in case of future changes in US policy.

**Rationale for designation as non-key criterion:** This factor was not recommended for consideration in decision for pragmatic rather than conceptual reasons. A central premise of the NDS is current policymakers must make hard choices among threats and missions with which they agree. Put differently, the NDS is a document that stresses decisiveness in setting priorities. This factor ranks the relative ability to recover in case those present decisions prove wrong. History will judge the wisdom of the present course, but recommending a factor to influence decision that is so antithetical to existing strategy would be pointless.



### **Ranking of strategic approaches:**

1. Privilege dynamic force employment (Flexible): This strategic approach is expressly built to maximize flexibility by minimizing commitments; this feature also makes it flexible in case of policy change.
2. Build visible presence (Somewhat Limiting): The addition of a Europe-based corps and operational fires command creates additional structure that would be difficult to reduce or alter in the future. The change from an SBCT and an IBCT in two different countries to two ABCTs in just one country is a slight improvement in terms of flexibility, as Europe is the most likely theater for employing ABCTs. Allowing the other types to employ elsewhere creates some measure of flexibility.
3. Privilege Global Competition (Somewhat Limiting): Similar to build visible presence, but with the need to deal with two different countries in case of a desire to alter BCT distribution in the future.
4. Invest in multidomain alliance (Limiting): The integration of the MDC2 makes it very difficult to alter in the future. The placement of a high-value system like long-range fires also is difficult to alter once implemented.
5. Privilege armed conflict (Highly Limiting): The integration of the MDC2 makes it very difficult to alter in the future. The placement of a high-value system like long-range fires also is difficult to alter once implemented.



### APPENDIX 3. ASSUMPTIONS

The study employed the following assumptions in determining its findings. To qualify for inclusion, the assumptions here needed to be (1) necessary to complete the planning task at hand; (2) valid (likely to be true); (3) but not likely to be verified in the course of planning.

- The Army will create the force structures (for example, field armies) as described in the multidomain operations (MDO) and echelons above brigade concepts.
- The Army modernization priorities will be fielded.
- The Army will not create additional ground combat vehicles to create another brigade combat team (BCT) set; all equipment must come from within the existing Total Force fleet within units, equipment activity sets, and prepositioned stocks.
- The current bases in Germany could accept a second mounted BCT with only a modest (and therefore politically feasible) amount of military construction.
- The risk involved in any US-Russian conflict is so great that Russia would never conduct a sudden surprise attack based solely on the conditions of US/NATO military vulnerability. Therefore, any conflict would be preceded by a crisis period of days, weeks, or months of heightened political tensions that would buy some time for focused intelligence gathering and military preparations.
- Prepositioning equipment for long-range capable fires brigades is not an option because all of the initial production will be allocated to building the training base and creating deployable units; there will be no overage to devote to creating additional equipment sets that would not be in constant use.
- The Army National Guard will provide a baseline of engagement with all Allies and partners, and a continental United States (CONUS)-based but Europe-focused security force assistance brigade (SFAB) will conduct activities across Europe, unless otherwise stated in the strategic approach.



## APPENDIX 4. RUSSIA'S LONG HISTORY AND THE DRIVERS OF CONFLICT

### THE FORMATIVE YEARS

Understanding Russia's geopolitical perspective begins with an acknowledgment of its historical exposure to foreign invasion and resulting deep-rooted security paranoia.<sup>1</sup> The history of Russia's Slavic population begins with the eastern migration of Vikings, the Varangian Rus, who consolidated into quasi-independent city-states throughout Eurasia between the seventh and ninth centuries. Russia, Ukraine, and the larger Slavic Eurasia's shared historical identity begins when Prince Vladimir of Kiev (notably the present-day Ukrainian capital), who married Princess Anna of the Byzantine Empire (present-day Greece and Turkey) was baptized into Christendom at the ancient Crimean city of Sevastopol, and consolidated the Slavs into a single monarchy in the late tenth century. In the thirteenth century, Genghis Khan's Mongols conquered present day Russia, occupying the Slavic people's homeland for approximately 200 years.

Recognizing the indefensibility of the central Eurasian plain, the political and religious seat of the Slavic people moved from Kiev to Moscow in the mid-fourteenth century and the Grand Duchy of Moscow liberated the Slavic people from the Mongols in the fifteenth century. But to their south, the Russian Slavs foresaw a new threat. The Islamic Ottoman Empire sacked Constantinople (modern-day Istanbul and then the head of the Christian church) in 1453 and conquered most of the Balkans. In the process they converted Hagia Sophia, at that time the greatest cathedral in the Orthodox Christian world, into a mosque. Although Ivan III the Great now envisioned Moscow as the third Rome and the center of the Christian world, for the next 150 years the Russian Empire was largely stagnant.

From the seventeenth to the nineteenth century, Russia would experience multiple waves of territorial collapse and subsequent expansion as it battled neighboring powers, beginning with the Poles, who occupied Moscow from 1610 to 1612. Domestically, Russia struggled to consolidate power among a feuding aristocracy, raiding borderland tribes, and peasant revolts. Numerous monarchs found themselves torn between attempts to modernize Russia into the cultural and educational norms of an enlightened Europe, but found their attempts rebuffed from both outside and within. The first of these would-be reformers and the creator of modern Russia, Peter I the Great (1682–725), who launched a dual approach of territorial expansion in all directions and internal Westernization, intended to transform his dynasty into a European power. Peter I repelled another attack on Moscow, this time by the Swedes of Charles XII. To the west he secured central and eastern Ukraine following the Battle of Poltava, he attacked the Ottomans to the south, and Asian tribes in Siberia to the east.

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1. R. Craig Nation, *Black Earth, Red Star: A History of Soviet Security Policy, 1917-1991* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993); John M. Qualls, "Current US Policy of Provoking Russia is Fundamentally Flawed," *Military Review* 89, no. 1 (January–February 2009); Peter Conradi, *Who Lost Russia?: How the World Entered a New Cold War* (London: Oneworld, 2017); R. Craig Nation, *The History of Russia* (lecture series, US Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA, January 2019); and "A Brief History of Russia," University of California San Francisco, n.d., [https://web.archive.org/web/20190404222049/missinglink.ucsf.edu/lm/russia\\_guide/historyofrussia.htm](https://web.archive.org/web/20190404222049/missinglink.ucsf.edu/lm/russia_guide/historyofrussia.htm).

Catherine II the Great continued Peter's imperial work and attempts at joining Europe's burgeoning enlightenment movement. She secured the northern Caucasus and Black Sea region, but after observing the chaos of the French Revolution and Russia's own peasant uprisings, Catherine quickly abandoned egalitarian reforms in favor of the stability that increased authoritarianism brought.

Following a brief truce with France and an alliance against the Prussians and British, Alexander I (1801–25) fought against Napoleon's ill-fated campaign of 1812 where both nations incurred heavy casualties at the Battle of Borodino before Russian forces withdrew from Moscow. Following a brief occupation, Napoleon retreated to Poland, harassed the entire way. Russia arose from the Napoleonic Wars as an unquestionable continental military power and, throughout the nineteenth century, sought to absorb non-Slavic borderland tribes from the Muslim periphery of the Ottoman Empire and Central Asia.

During the Crimean War (1854–56), Russia faced a combined alliance of Ottomans, French, and British attacking throughout the Balkans and into the Black Sea region. The war—which proved both economically and politically costly for Russia—culminated with a yearlong siege, and Russia's subsequent loss of the critical Crimean port of Sevastopol. Fifty years later, Russia retreated from Japan after losing two fleets in the Russo-Japanese War, leading to increased popular disenchantment with the czar. Less than a decade later, Russia's mobilization plans in support of Serbia, following the assassination of Austro-Hungarian Archduke Franz Ferdinand, triggered Germany's Schlieffen Plan. World War I was an unintended and devastating war; a 2001 study by the Russian military historian G. F. Krivosheev estimated Russia suffered a total of 9.2 million casualties and prisoners of war, with war deaths reaching 2,254,369.<sup>2</sup>

Political fallout from "the Great War" exacerbated an ongoing social crisis. Both rural peasantry and urban industrial labor felt disaffected from Russia's monarchy, the last of whom, Tsar Nicholas II, abdicated the throne during the February Revolution—leading to Lenin's accession and the October Revolution. Russia's civil war, the lingering effects of WWI, and a global depression destroyed Russian society. Before Russia could recover, it faced another European invasion, this time from Nazi Germany. Americans tend to focus on the US contributions to WWII—North Africa, Italy, the Normandy invasion, and Western Front battles that resulted in more than 250,000 Americans killed—but often lose sight of the vital Russian efforts on the Eastern Front. Repelling German invasions and enduring bombardments of its homeland, Russia suffered more than 26 million killed (approximately 9 million service members and 17 million civilians). More than a footnote in Russia's history books, "The Great Patriotic War" was one of a long line of bloody fights for its very existence.

Following WWII, the United States emerged from its geographic isolation relatively unscathed. The United States' military manufacturing base transitioned to a commercial export engine servicing Europe and Asia; the dollar became the world's currency, giving the United States unprecedented monetary leverage for the remainder of the twentieth

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2. Nadege Mougel, *REPERES Module 1-1-1 Explanatory Notes: World War I Casualties*, trans. Julie Gratz (Scy-Chazelles, FR: Robert Schuman European Centre, 2011), <http://www.centre-robert-schuman.org/educationnal-tools/teaching-europe/reperes-explanatory-notes-for-teachers?langue=en>.

century. But Russia was socially and financially devastated; the Communist Party under Stalin sought to pool the nation's resources in a highly controlled state economy. Maintaining the Soviet territorial gains of WWII was seen as an absolute necessity to provide the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) strategic depth, a buffer to protect its homeland from further incursions. Even in the twenty-first century, the significance of this insecurity should not be minimized, and it is a central lens through which Russians collectively view the world.

## NATO EXPANSION

Given this early history, Russian opposition to NATO expansionism should be unsurprising. As Soviet client states began a process of secession in 1989 and President Mikhail Gorbachev made a deliberate, but difficult, decision to allow the Warsaw Pact to dissolve, Russia looked for reassurances from its Cold War rival. On May 17, 1990, then-Secretary General of NATO Manfred Wörner stated, "the fact that we are ready not to place a NATO army outside of German territory gives the Soviet Union a firm security guarantee."<sup>3</sup> Taking this assurance, Russia turned its focus from security concerns to the monumental task of unwinding 74 years of totalitarian control in favor of what Gorbachev hoped would be the benefits of free-market reforms.

Seven years later, NATO backpedaled from its 1990 position to a more ambiguous declaration that it would not permanently station additional "substantial combat forces" on the territories of former Soviet states, given the "current and foreseeable security environment."<sup>4</sup> That environment changed drastically in the subsequent decade and the West moved the proverbial goal posts again. With Russia facing economic and social collapse, its already-weakened military engulfed in fighting Chechen separatists, and in the wake of Russia's embarrassing inability to protect its longtime ally Serbia from NATO bombing, the United States encouraged expanding NATO membership. In 1999 the central Eurasian countries of Hungary, Poland, and Czechia gained membership over Russia's disapproval.

In 2003, the United States and the UK invaded Iraq without UN approval (and against the desires of UN Security Council permanent members France, Germany, China, and Russia), citing a new policy of preemptive self-defense.<sup>5</sup> The following year, the United States added further insult to injury by further expanding NATO membership to Slovakia; the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania; central Eurasian countries of Bulgaria and Romania; and the former Yugoslavian province of Slovenia.

In 2007, Putin protested NATO expansion as a "serious provocation," and asked to "whom is this expansion intended?"<sup>6</sup> A rhetorical question, Putin assumed the premise

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3. Vladimir Putin, "Speech at the Munich Conference on Security Policy" (speech, Munich Security Conference, Munich, February 10, 2007).

4. "Official Text: Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation signed in Paris, France," NATO, updated October 12, 2009, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official\\_texts\\_25468.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_25468.htm).

5. Poorvi Chitalkar and David M. Malone, "The UN Security Council and Iraq" (UN University Working Papers Series no. 01, UN University, New York, November 2013).

6. Putin, "Speech at the Munich Conference."

behind NATO to be that asserted by the Alliance's first secretary general, British General Hastings Ismay: "to keep the Russians out, the Americans in, and the Germans down," a stance shared by no few pundits in the West.<sup>7</sup> Despite Putin's protestation, Croatia and Albania were admitted into NATO in 2008.

At the Bucharest NATO summit the same year, the United States and Britain advocated for a pathway to admit Georgia and Ukraine, a step Germany and France argued against as being too provocative toward a resurgent and increasingly incensed Russia. Both are border nations with significant Russian security interests. Georgia is strategically located in the Caucasus region between the Caspian and Black Seas in a vital energy corridor that is also pressured by Iran and potentially under the influential path of China's Belt and Road Initiative.<sup>8</sup> Ukraine has historical, religious, and economic ties with Russia dating back to its inception. Crimea has a population that is more than 50 percent ethnic Russian and is home to Russia's Black Sea Fleet at Sevastopol, Russia's only warm-weather deepwater port. NATO continued tightening the noose on Russia.

Putin declared in absolute terms that NATO would not gain access to the Russian heartland. Even Gorbachev – who established an unprecedented partnership with President Ronald Reagan, bravely, albeit unintentionally, dismantled the Soviet Union, and put Russia on a trajectory for Western integration – proclaimed in 2008:

Russia has long been told to simply accept the facts. Here's the independence of Kosovo for you. Here's the abrogation of the Antiballistic Missile Treaty, and the American decision to place missile defences in neighboring countries. Here's the unending expansion of NATO. All of these moves have been set against the backdrop of sweet talk about partnership. Why would anyone put up with such a charade?<sup>9</sup>

The threat of NATO expansion is not simply a matter of Russian misperceptions or Putin seeking to deflect blame for internal trials toward external threats. As far back as 1947, George F. Kennan explained Soviet tactics by writing, "it became necessary to justify the retention of the dictatorship by stressing the menace of capitalism abroad," and many skeptics still discount Russian security concerns as domestic concern deflections.<sup>10</sup> As an impassioned Putin declared to the UN General Assembly in March 2018, the United States and its Allies "are still dominated by their Cold War-era bloc mentality and the ambition to conquer new geopolitical areas."<sup>11</sup> He asked why NATO still exists, let alone expanded, "considering that the Warsaw Pact had ceased to exist, and the Soviet Union

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7. Victor Davis Hanson, "Lord Ismay, NATO, and the Old-New World Order," *National Review*, July 5, 2017, <https://www.nationalreview.com/2017/07/nato-russians-out-americans-germans-down-updated-reversed/>; and Kori Schake, "NATO Without America," *American Interest*, May 25, 2017.

8. "What is China's Belt and Road Initiative?," *Economist*, May 15, 2017, <https://www.economist.com/the-economist-explains/2017/05/14/what-is-chinas-belt-and-road-initiative>.

9. Mikhail Gorbachev, "Russia Never Wanted a War," *New York Times*, August 19, 2008, <https://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/20/opinion/20gorbachev.html>.

10. Mr. X [George Frost Kennan], "The Sources of Soviet Conduct," *Foreign Affairs* 25, no. 4 (July 1947).

11. Vladimir Putin, "Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly" (speech, Manezh Central Exhibition Hall, Moscow, Russia, March 1, 2018).



had disintegrated.”<sup>12</sup> Putin and other conservative voices in Russia have undoubtedly drawn a line in the sand and will use their recently reestablished military might to stop further encroachments on what little remains of their strategic buffer. Russia feels that NATO and the United States have been continually dishonest regarding any past notions of cooperative intentions. Instead of allowing Russia to integrate with the west, the United States has enacted a foreign policy explicitly intended to keep them out. Putin criticizes the United States, the EU, and NATO for creating a “false choice” of West versus East instead of allowing common space for economic and security cooperation, an accusation the United States rebuts.<sup>13</sup>

Following NATO’s expansion to Russia’s borders, encircling the Russian enclave of Kaliningrad with the admission of Latvia and Lithuania to the Alliance, the fear of a limited Russian invasion into the Baltic states has arisen. In theory, Russia could be incentivized to secure its access to Kaliningrad militarily under the guise of protecting ethnic Russians residing in the Baltic states, a justification Putin used in reference to Ukraine. Although Russians do account for approximately 25 percent of Estonia and Latvia’s populations, it is a false comparison with Ukraine. Ethnic Russians in the Baltic states proudly practice their language, culture, and maintain cross-border economic and familial ties. In these countries, ethnic Russians are urban dwellers, consolidated primarily to Riga, Latvia (about 40 percent of the city’s population); Daugavpils, Latvia (about 80 percent); and Narva, Estonia (about 80 percent).

Russians have genuine political grievances with limited or no citizenship, especially when that manifests as no formal voting or political representation; however, an important distinction is that they are advocating for greater inclusion in their nations of residence, not exclusion and subsequent annexation by Russia. Observing the conditions in Crimea and the Donets Basin likely gives Baltic Russians even more reason to enjoy the residency they currently enjoy.

## DEMOCRATIC COLOR REVOLUTIONS

Further feeding into Russian security paranoia are concerns about its own political stability. Stark differences in US and Russian world views become very apparent in interpreting the so-called color revolutions of Eastern Europe and Central Asia, and the more recent Arab Spring uprisings in North Africa and the Levant. To many in the United States, the revolutions represented the inevitable rise of liberal democratic passions against oppressive regimes. The revolutions may be temporarily destabilizing, but in the long run (as Francis Fukuyama and other neoconservatives would contend) they will eventually produce a peaceful and more interconnected world order.<sup>14</sup>

In 2007, and ironically before its incursions into Georgia or Ukraine, Putin chastised the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, for “interfering in the internal affairs of other countries,” and deemed the West irresponsible for attempting

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12. Putin, “Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly.”

13. Putin, “Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly.”

14. Charles R. Kesler, “Democracy and the Bush Doctrine,” *Claremont Review of Books* 5, no. 1 (Winter 2004/05).

to determine how “states should live and develop.”<sup>15</sup> Putin’s contradictions of words and his own deeds are worth noting, but so is his perspective that nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and Department of State democratic reform initiatives are state-sponsored—and heavily financed—political interventions by a foreign power in the domestic affairs of his country. Russia sees Western attempts to spread their version of liberal democracy and free market principles as actions that undermine Russia’s economic and security interests within its historical sphere of influence and, more importantly, its own domestic political stability.<sup>16</sup> General of the Army Valery Gerasimov, Chief of Staff of the Russian Federation Armed Forces, has described “hybrid warfare” as a US and NATO strategy of using military force to promote economic interests “under the slogan of protecting democracy or instilling democratic values in some country.” He further described “nonmilitary forms” of confrontation “shifting in the direction of extensive employment of political, economic, diplomatic, information, and other nonmilitary measures, implemented with the involvement of the protest potential of a population.” Gerasimov proposed that Russia implement “new-type warfare” (now known as the “Gerasimov doctrine” by Western analysts) as a response to US confrontations below the threshold of armed conflict.<sup>17</sup>

For example, Russia views US Secretary of State James Baker’s visit to Tbilisi and rebuke of Eduard Shevardnadze during Georgia’s Rose Revolution (2003–4) as further exemplifying US meddling in the domestic politics of another nation.<sup>18</sup> The 2004 Ukraine Orange Revolution protested the election of pro-Russian candidate Viktor Yanukovich; the government buckled under popular protest and following a reelection, pro-Western candidate Viktor Yushchenko rose to power. In 2005, Kyrgyzstan’s Tulip Revolution drove Askar Akayev to seek sanctuary in Moscow. While the United States courted revolutionaries and celebrated a bow wave of liberal democracy, Putin lamented his loss of political influence and continued Western “meddling” in former Soviet Union states. In the mind of Putin’s Secretary of the Security Council, the United States attempted to “redesign the post-Soviet space in America’s interests.” In Russia’s worldview, “the US created the conditions and pretexts for the colored revolutions and financed them lavishly,” with Secretary of the Security Council of Russia Nikolai Patrushev listing US Agency for International Development (USAID), Department of State, and Pentagon contributions to Ukraine totaling \$5 billion over the last two decades.<sup>19</sup>

Uprisings in Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, and Syria in 2011—known as the “Arab Spring”—upended the secular control of Pan-Arab nationalists, created a power vacuum filled by Islamic extremist groups, and threatened Russian interests in the region. US financial

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15. Putin, “Speech at the Munich Conference.”

16. Putin, “Speech at the Munich Conference.”

17. Valery Gerasimov, “Contemporary Warfare and Current Issues for the Defense of the Country,” trans. Harold Orenstein, *Military Review* 97, no. 6 (November–December 2017).

18. Peter Conradi, referenced by Matthew Olson, *Deterrence and Reassurance in the Baltics – A Balanced Approach*, Strategy Research Project (Carlisle Barracks, PA: US Army War College, April 1, 2018), <http://publications.armywarcollege.edu/pubs/3586.pdf>.

19. Nikolai Patrushev, “Ukraine Crisis—The View from Russia,” *Guardian*, October 25, 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/oct/24/sp-ukraine-russia-cold-war>. See also Conradi, *Who Lost Russia?*, 167.

contributions in support of these democratic movements and NATO's relentless air campaign against Libya resulted in Muammar al-Qaddafi's brutal killing at the hands of a mob, and Hosni Mubarak's humiliation in a courtroom cell. Fueled by Western democratization principles and funded by various NGOs, USAID, and Department of State initiatives, the 2016 *Russian National Security Strategy* accuses the United States of hubris and ill-intended consequences: "instead of democracy and progress, there is now violence, poverty, social disasters, and total disregard for human rights."<sup>20</sup> In each case – not to mention the 2003 Iraq invasion – Putin and many other Russian statesmen see the US hand in bringing down sovereign governments as forms of malign statecraft, open military invasion, or simply ignorant blunders. Seventeen years removed from the 9/11 attacks, Russians view US actions as misguided hegemony and reckless foreign policy and fears that Moscow is next.

## ISLAMIC TERRORISM

Threatened by NATO military might on its doorstep, Russia also faces a growing Islamic threat from abroad and within. Russia believes US policies since 9/11 have made the "global terrorist threat much worse, spreading it to new regions around the globe."<sup>21</sup> Conflict between Western liberal beliefs and Islamic extremism can trace its modern-day foundation to two seminal events in 1979. The first was the Iranian Revolution precipitated by a collection of Shia Islamists, leftists, and students who joined forces to overthrow the Western-aligned monarchy of Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi in favor of a totalitarian theocracy led by Ruhollah Khomeini. For the past 40 years or so, Iranian proxies have incited violence in the region, notably in Israel; Lebanon; southern Iraq; and, today, in northern Syria.

The second event was the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan (1979–1989), which incited a global network of Sunni Muslim mujahideen, well-financed by Persian Gulf States and armed by the United States, to fight the Soviet Union and its client communist state.<sup>22</sup> Al-Qaeda arose from the ashes of Russia's Afghan War in the 1980s, and later turned their attention to US targets, including embassies in Nigeria and Kenya, as well as the attacks on New York City and Washington, DC, on September 11, 2001. Russia has, in fact, not forgotten the US role in arming and financing an organization that would come back to haunt America on 9/11. Putin acknowledged the mistakes of past Soviet dogma and recognized his own country's ill-fated ideological zealotry with communism and expansionist tendencies in his 2015 UN speech, stating, "we remember examples from our Soviet past, when the Soviet Union exported social experiments, pushing for changes in other countries for ideological reasons, and this often led to tragic consequences and caused degradation instead of progress," but also noted that the United States was "equally irresponsible to manipulate extremist groups and use them to achieve your political goals, hoping that later you'll find a way to get rid of them or

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20. Vladimir Putin, *Russian National Security Strategy* (Moscow, Russia: The Kremlin, December 31, 2015).

21. Putin, "Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly."

22. Michael Rubin, "Who is Responsible for the Taliban?," *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, March 2002, <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/who-is-responsible-for-the-taliban>.

somehow eliminate them.”<sup>23</sup> Russia lost a reported 13,833 soldiers in 10 years of fighting in Afghanistan, almost 6 times the number of casualties the United States lost in its own Afghanistan War.<sup>24</sup>

In the 1990s, Russia eagerly contributed peacekeepers to the Bosnian conflict, working directly with NATO in a short-lived sign of solidarity for creating stability in a region long plagued by ethnic and religious conflict given its divide of west from east and Christianity from Muslims. But Russia’s endorsement waned in the late 1990s when NATO initiated its air campaign against Serbia. Kosovo had been the ancestral homeland of the Serbs since 1190 and Russia viewed US actions as openly siding with Albanian Muslim jihadists over Russia’s fellow orthodox Slavs.<sup>25</sup>

Closer to home, Russia was dealing with a festering Islamic secessionist movement on its own soil. Between 10,000 and 15,000 Russians have died fighting two wars in Chechnya since 1994. The Russians viewed their operations as a campaign against political separatists and Islamic extremists who demonstrated an active threat to populations within Russia.

Another fleeting moment of solidarity between Russia and the United States occurred following 9/11. President Putin was the first international leader to call President Bush to offer condolences and support. Russia provided intelligence, overflight permissions, and tacit support to US basing in Central Asia where Russia still had significant clout. But this Russo-American unity in the global war on terrorism was to be a short-lived honeymoon. Their individual interests again diverged as Russia adamantly opposed US intention to invade Iraq. Ironically, the United States was Saddam Hussein’s principal supporter during the Iran-Iraq War, and Russia was concerned that the proposed US invasion of Iraq would violate a UN member’s sovereignty, was premised on ill-founded intelligence, would create chaos in an already fragile geopolitical region, and was another sign of unchecked US military interventionism. Furthermore, Russia believed the United States was deflecting blame for the 9/11 attacks and broader Wahhabi extremism from Saudi Arabia. Fifteen of the nineteen 9/11 hijackers were Saudi, their Wahhabi brand of Sunni Islam originated in Saudi Arabia, and a large majority of al-Qaeda and consequently Chechen funding largely originated from there.<sup>26</sup>

From Moscow’s perspective, radical Islam threatens “the very integrity of the Russian state.”<sup>27</sup> Through immigration (both legal and illegal) and a high birthrate (relative to Slavs), Russia’s Muslim population has grown 40 percent since the collapse of the Soviet Union, now representing 15 percent of the total Russian population. In 1990 Russia had

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23. Vladimir Putin, “Address to the UN General Assembly” (speech, UN Headquarters, New York, NY, September 28, 2015).

24. George Michael, “Is a Greater Russia Really So Bad?,” *Military Review* 95, no. 1 (January–February 2015): 105.

25. Qualls, “Current US Policy,” 115.

26. *Unclassified Version of DCI Testimony: Hearings before the Joint Inquiry into Terrorist Attacks against the United States* (June 18, 2002) (statement of George J. Tenet, Director of Central Intelligence), graphic #385295AI 6-02, [https://www.cia.gov/news-information/speeches-testimony/2002/DCI\\_18\\_June\\_testimony\\_new.pdf](https://www.cia.gov/news-information/speeches-testimony/2002/DCI_18_June_testimony_new.pdf).

27. Ilan Berman, *Implosion: The End of Russia and What it Means for America* (Washington, DC: Regnery, 2013), 39, quoted in Michael, “Greater Russia,” 105.

500 mosques, compared to 8,000 in 2008. By some estimates, Russia is on a glide path to be a majority Muslim state by the middle of the century with significant domestic and geopolitical implications.<sup>28</sup> Today, more than 2.5 million Muslims live in Moscow alone, more than any European city other than Istanbul, Turkey, and more than in any other non-Islamic country.<sup>29</sup> Fueled by economic stagnation and ethnic isolation, over a thousand domestic terrorist attacks have occurred in Russia since 2001 accounting for over 3,067 civilian deaths.<sup>30</sup> In this light, Russia has a vested interest in the rise of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria and other terrorist groups, and the future of Afghanistan and Syria (given regional interests, terrorist movements, and refugee migrations that influence Russia's border countries and domestic Muslim population).

## CONCLUSION

As the United States considers its strategy to counter malign Russian activities and strengthen a combat capable military presence in Europe, it must account for Russia's security interests and recent actions through the lens of Russia's history and worldview. Russia's actions in the past decade might appear patently revanchist and potentially bellicose; however, Russia has neither the intent nor the means to resurrect the Soviet Union of yesteryear. While their national identity yearns for global significance, President Putin is a pragmatic opportunist with measured objectives.

Thucydides suggests the actions of a state can be traced to one of three motives: fear, honor, and interest. In Russia's case, its defensive-minded security paranoia is deeply rooted in its historical exposure to outside invasion, which accounts for its negative perception of NATO expansion since the dissolution of the Soviet Union and Warsaw Pact. In addition to their physical security, Putin and Moscow's political elites are fearful for their own political security and what they deem would be devastating instability in their absence. Through this lens they view the power of various color revolutions and the Arab Spring as a predictor of their own precarious positions.<sup>31</sup>

Russia is also prideful. Putin personally exemplifies the machismo characteristic of the Slavic/Eastern culture and as such views honor as a transactional commodity, of which Russia's stores have been depleted by US action. Through this cultural understanding one can make sense of brazen cyber meddling and political assassination attempts, reckless military flybys, declarations to protect Russian diasporas, and inter-theater missile launches. Putin is not driving his own foreign policy so much as reacting to perceptions of US policy.

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28. Michael, "Greater Russia," 104.

29. Michael, "Greater Russia," 104.

30. National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, "Russian Terrorism," Global Terrorism Database, n.d., <http://globalterrorismdatabase.com/rf/rfexcel.html>.

31. Darya Korsunskaya, "Putin Says Russia Must Prevent 'Color Revolution,'" Reuters, November 20, 2014, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-russia-putin-security-idUSKCN0J41J620141120>; and Neil MacFarquhar, "Vladimir Putin, in First Remarks on Russian Protests, Warns of Potential Chaos," *New York Times*, March 30, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/30/world/europe/putin-russia-protests.html>.

Russia acts in its own interests, which unsurprisingly do not always align with US visions of hegemony. Most important is economic security and its relation to Russia's physical and political security. Other interests include supporting the Assad regime and maintaining basing access to the Mediterranean and Black Sea, expanding its anti-access capabilities considering US global strike technologies, ensuring a credible nuclear deterrence policy, and working to maintain political and economic influence on its periphery.

Russia under President Putin is resurgent. In 20 years, Russia has resurrected its economy, its military, and its political stature from the brink of collapse to that of a regional influencer. But as this paper argues, Russia is not revisionist or, as some have described, revanchist. Russia is not resurrecting the Soviet Union. Moreover, as noted in the main text, Russia's future will likely be marked by economic decline and dwindling populations. These trends, however, will only make Russia more dangerous. As the above history indicates, the Russian people share the same sense of geographic insecurity and political humiliation as their government. These points thus suggest that demonstrations of global power and confrontation with the West, especially in Eastern Europe, will only serve to bolster the popularity of any future Russian government. Problems for the Russian government at home could thus lead to greater problems for the United States abroad.

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