

**AFTER TWO WARS:
REFLECTIONS ON THE AMERICAN STRATEGIC
REVOLUTION IN CENTRAL ASIA**

Stephen J. Blank

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FOREWORD

In the course of its wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the U.S. military has deployed forces to hitherto undreamt of destinations in Central Asia and the Caucasus. These deployments reflect more than the exigencies of specific contingencies, but rather are the latest stage in a revolution in strategic affairs that has intersected with the coinciding revolution in military affairs. Thanks to the linked developments in these two processes, the Transcaspian area has now become an area of strategic importance to the United States for many reasons, and not just energy.

In this monograph, Dr. Stephen Blank explains how this newly won access to the Transcaspian has come about and why it will remain important to the United States. He then offers analysis and recommendations as to how we might retain access to deal with future contingencies. By examining intersecting geopolitical and strategic trends, Dr. Blank carries on the Strategic Studies Institute's mission of providing timely and relevant analysis to help the national security community better understand and meet the strategic and policy challenges of our time. To that end, the Strategic Studies Institute presents this work.



DOUGLAS C. LOVELACE, JR.
Director
Strategic Studies Institute

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF THE AUTHOR

STEPHEN J. BLANK has served as the Strategic Studies Institute's expert on the Soviet bloc and the post-Soviet world since 1989. Prior to that he was Associate Professor of Soviet Studies at the Center for Aerospace Doctrine, Research, and Education, Maxwell Air Force Base, and taught at the University of Texas, San Antonio, and at the University of California, Riverside. Dr. Blank is the editor of *Imperial Decline: Russia's Changing Position in Asia*, coeditor of *Soviet Military and the Future*, and author of *The Sorcerer as Apprentice: Stalin's Commissariat of Nationalities, 1917-1924*. He has also written many articles and conference papers on Russia, the Commonwealth of Independent States, and Eastern European security issues. Dr. Blank's current research deals with weapons proliferation and the revolution in military affairs, and energy and security in Eurasia. His most recent SSI publications include "The Foundations of Russian Strategic Power and Capabilities," in *Beyond Nunn-Lugar: Curbing the Next Wave of Weapons Proliferation Threats from Russia*, edited by Henry D. Sokolski and Thomas Riisager, April 2002; and *The Transatlantic Security Agenda: A Conference Report and Analysis*, December 2001. Dr. Blank holds a B.A. in History from the University of Pennsylvania, and a M.A. and Ph.D. in History from the University of Chicago.

SUMMARY

Since September 11, 2001, the United States has fought two wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. In these wars, the United States has accomplished or more precisely revealed a strategic revolution. Most notably, U.S.-led coalitions sustained forces in Central Asia and the Caucasus over an extended period by sea and air for the first time in history. Thus, American leaders and commanders revealed that the new military capabilities hitherto associated with the Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) could be deployed anywhere in the world, that U.S. forces would and could be optimized for global power projection capabilities, and that new theaters like Central Asia were of considerable strategic importance to Washington. Their actions reflected a parallel to the ongoing Revolution in Strategic Affairs (RSA) that reaffirmed the importance of that area as a potential theater of strategic operations (a term taken originally from Soviet military thought).

However, we must understand that the importance of Central Asia and the Caucasus to the United States lies not only in the presence of abundant energy resources, but also in these zones' geographic proximity to key theaters in Europe, the Middle East, and across Asia. Military power can be projected back and forth from any one of these theaters; the Transcaspian area that embraces the Caucasus and Central Asia is pivotal to any such exercise. Access to these zones has become an issue of great strategic and policy importance, in view of America's global responsibilities and vital interests (not to mention less critical interests around the world).

However, these zones are epicenters of domestic instability and great power rivalry. Moreover, the U.S. concept of foreign access is changing dramatically due to the new Global Posture Review. Therefore, our future access to these areas will not resemble that of the past with sprawling bases, but will remain relatively austere pending future contingencies. To secure and maintain that access, it is not enough to have a purely contractual military relationship with these states when a crisis arises. Instead, we need a holistic and strategically conceived program of interaction with them to help them

ward off challenges to domestic security and threats from nearby great powers who would like to subordinate these new and fragile states to their own quasi-imperial designs. Thus the United States has to help strengthen our partners not only against terrorism, but also against threats that could lead to it if state order breaks down. In other words, our presence must become one that is regarded by local governments as not being a purely contractual or one-shot deal, but rather as having a legitimacy acquired by an overall improvement of domestic and foreign security.

The central lesson of the RSA is that there are no intrinsically nonstrategic regions from which U.S. vital interests cannot be threatened. If we wish to avoid being either surprised or overextended, we need extensive peacetime engagement with like-minded foreign militaries and governments in the Transcaspian and elsewhere, so that in wartime we can fight with them and gain access to those theaters. This effort must be seen as a critical factor of our strategy. The purpose of this monograph is to analyze the trends that have gone into making that RSA, particularly as it affects the Transcaspian and surrounding regions, and what the United States must do to retain the advantages that have accrued to us by virtue of the capabilities that we have built and assembled.

AFTER TWO WARS: REFLECTIONS ON THE AMERICAN STRATEGIC REVOLUTION IN CENTRAL ASIA

INTRODUCTION

Today, Central Asia and the Caucasus are epicenters of international rivalry. The visible rivalries among Moscow, Washington, Beijing, and even Brussels (home of the European Union [EU] and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization [NATO]) for influence in either or both of these areas are the stuff of headlines. But the competition for great power influence in these areas is hardly new. Even before September 11, 2001, American interests in Central Asia and the Transcaucasus were growing. But the subsequent wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have triggered a commensurate and enormous growth of U.S. interests in those two adjoining regions. Today, those interests loom so large that some elements of the U.S. military reportedly were or are seeking permanent facilities or so-called operating sites there. Local and Russian newspapers openly state that U.S. forces are building such bases or advocating their presence.¹ These articles are often fabrications since U.S. officials continue to deny the intention to establish permanent bases there; have not announced the final results of the Global Posture Review; and must work out legal arrangements concerning overflight rights, transit rights, and status of forces with all the host countries involved. However, America's expanding strategic presence and interests in the Transcaspian region are taken for granted and are closely tied to the lessons of its two recent wars.² Another reason why these articles carry an inflammatory edge that distorts their meaning is that they tend to leave the reader with the notion that old-fashioned imperialist bases are at issue when an altogether different concept is being discussed. In fact, the concept under discussion in Washington did not agitate the Russian government once it was presented to the leadership in Moscow.³

As Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld recently testified, it is important that U.S. forces be located in places where they are "wanted, welcomed, and needed." Building new relationships with

states that are vital to the war against terrorists, e.g., Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and behind them, Georgia and Azerbaijan as logistical staging areas, is a critical part of our evolving defense strategy. Similarly, leaders of U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM), like former Commander General Tommy Franks (USA Ret.), openly recognized the importance of access to the Caucasus and Central Asia as possible bases and staging areas in both the war against Al-Qaeda and in the war against Iraq.⁴ As a result, the United States is interested in acquiring a permanent access to what Secretary Rumsfeld calls operating sites, not permanent bases as they are traditionally understood.⁵

The geostrategic lessons and consequences of these wars point strongly to the strategic importance of permanent access to these areas in future contingencies. Therefore, an equally important need is to establish agreements with local governments for a mutually acceptable form of permanent U.S. military access, as needed or requested. That need, in turn, presupposes a comprehensive engagement with those states so that agreements facilitating access can be negotiated on the basis of common understandings of the threats to both parties and the specific circumstances where and when access will be granted. Indeed, agreements allowing transit, overflight, and access rights and defining the status of forces can be essential support instruments in case of threats to these governments' security, which is not unlikely. As Secretary Rumsfeld and many others have often stated, we must be able to move troops rapidly and on short notice to unforeseeable contingencies against extremists or other enemies. At the same time, those troops must be flexibly configured, able to gain access to a wide variety of areas, enjoy a welcoming or hospitable attitude from the host country/ies involved, and be able to operate under whatever circumstances may arise.

Insofar as these desiderata apply to the deployment of troops in and around the Caspian basin, which is a landlocked area, we also must update the legal bases for these troops' deployment there—i.e., transit, overflight, and status of forces agreements—should they have to deploy abroad rapidly. These legal arrangements should also encourage interoperability and burdensharing among our partners and ourselves, while giving troops the necessary legal protections. As part of this new strategy, Secretary Rumsfeld observed that we

are transforming our global posture so that in Asia, as elsewhere, “our ideas build upon our current ground, naval, and air access to overcome vast distances, while bringing additional naval and air capabilities forward into the region.”⁶

Accordingly, the purpose of this monograph is to examine the strategic justification of this need for access by examining what the advent of globally capable U.S. forces into these regions has meant, and to recommend programs and/or principles that might help obtain both permanent access to the Transcaspian region (Transcaucasus and Central Asia) and reliable strategic partners, if not allies, from among local governments who can work with the United States.

The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq signify the fundamentally altered strategic importance of the Transcaspian region. U.S. operations in these wars conjoined two simultaneous revolutions: the revolution in military affairs (RMA)—the application of information technology to military operations—and a concurrent revolution in strategic affairs (RSA) discussed below, as well as their lessons. The ensuing geostrategic consequences resonate particularly forcefully insofar as the Transcaspian region—hitherto a relatively inconsequential strategic theater—is concerned.

Four linked strategic lessons have emerged from these wars. First, by projecting and sustaining long-term naval, air, and land power to the Transcaspian area, U.S. forces achieved a strategic revolution there. For the first time in history, externally based naval and air military power has been successfully projected and sustained against Central Asian forces and targets. As Graham Chapman wrote recently, invoking Sir Halford Mackinder, “The Americans have also now built bases in Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan, and so the maritime powers have penetrated the heartland for the first time ever.”⁷ Indeed, Norman Friedman calls the war in Afghanistan a littoral war, highlighting the sustained strategic projection of offshore or externally based power into this theater.⁸

Second, these capabilities can also be projected from there to all of Asia or Europe (including the Middle East) and vice versa, making the Transcaspian literally a pivotal Eurasian theater. Precisely because we have shown that we can both project and sustain such forces in and around the Caspian, a feat that was hitherto deemed impossible, we can and must think seriously about the future projection of

naval, land, and air power into or from the Transcaspian theater to or from adjacent theaters in Eastern Europe, the Middle East, South Asia, and/or East Asia. But this capability obligates the United States to engage this entire area with more strategic purposefulness to maintain permanent access to it and to help ensure its security and stability.⁹ Following Rumsfeld's injunctions, we must build enduring strategic relations with local governments to obtain that access and the legal basis for it, while also upgrading their ability to defend themselves and work with us. These relations must include not only the aforementioned legal agreements permitting transit, overflight, and long-term deployments if necessary, they must also include purposive U.S. actions to help these countries surmount the numerous challenges to their own security that they face daily.

However, an equally critical third consideration or lesson arises from these two preceding lessons of war. America has successfully projected and sustained forces into this area, but it has yet to complete the task of giving those capabilities the legitimacy that alone can make this sustainment successful.¹⁰ A political order based to some degree upon the continuing use of force in Afghanistan and Iraq, not to mention local governments' use of repression, e.g., Uzbekistan, still awaits its transformation into a legitimate political order based on freely given consent. Since "power projection activities are an input into the world order," Russian, European, Chinese, and American force deployments into the Transcaspian represent potentially competitive and profound attempts at effecting a long-term restructuring of the regional strategic order.¹¹ Therefore to build the relationships we desire after having projected force into the area, we must understand the strategic stakes inherent in its achievement and then find a way to resolve one of the oldest questions of political theory, i.e., how to create a legitimate political order based on consent out of that force's deployment.

In other words, the acquisition of access must reflect a prior harmony of interests and threat assessments on the part of all the partners rather than being merely a bribe against expected future political payoffs or something coerced out of a reluctant host government.¹² Without the conversion of an order based upon the deployment of forces to the Transcaspian into one based on legitimacy, Central Asia and the Caucasus, notoriously unstable

areas with numerous pathologies and potentials for instability, could descend into that instability, at least in selected places, if not collectively. Then neither we nor local governments will be able to exploit the opportunities provided by our strategic revolution to achieve America's paramount interests of enhancing their security, independence, and sovereignty.

This necessity of transforming force into consent and legitimacy is another reason for a robust American engagement with host governments and their militaries, since their territories' importance to the United States has grown, and their stability and security is vital in the war on terrorism. The third lesson, then, is that it does not suffice to be able to deploy and sustain long-range strike forces in the theater; the theater itself must be cooperatively reordered by the United States, its other partners, and host governments. They must work together to stabilize it and legitimize U.S. presence and a political order that has a genuine chance to evolve in a liberal, democratic direction enjoying popular support. Otherwise, the United States will have merely paved the way for the opening of another front in the global war on terrorism (GWOT).

Creating that legitimacy becomes all the more urgent a task because our success has already alarmed those with whom we must work in the GWOT, but who regard our presence as deeply threatening to their vital interests: Iran, Russia, and China. Their earlier concern, and that of local governments, that local U.S. facilities and assets might be used against Iraq, a war from which they mostly recoiled, indicates the great scope of the strategic revolution and transformation of regional military capabilities that we effected in 2001-04 and their consciousness of its implications for them. Similarly, their public opposition to U.S. military presence in the area, and in Russia's case to any foreign presence there, has become louder and more insistent, even though Russia sees no threat in the projected global restructuring of U.S. bases, as noted above.¹³

At the same time, conditions for building that legitimacy or legitimate order have become more auspicious because European and Asian security,—i.e., Eurasian security—including much more than energy security, are now understood clearly to be greatly influenced by conditions of security in the Transcaucasus and Central Asia. In no small measure, this is because the meaning of security

has undergone a transformation that not only analysts, but also military officers, acknowledge. Therefore, the EU and NATO accept that their own interests mandate greater activity to help stabilize the Transcaspian.¹⁴ The success of the elections in Afghanistan and of the development of a political order based on something more than warlordism also should have a positive and reverberating effect across Central Asia. This consideration partly explains Europe's growing presence in Afghanistan. That presence has gone beyond safeguarding the elections of 2004 to engaging in peace support operations in a unified command structure with the U.S. forces there. Both the earlier mission of safeguarding those elections' occurrence and legitimacy and conducting post-election peace support and counterdrug operations also are acknowledged as key strategic tasks for the United States and its NATO partners in Afghanistan.¹⁵

The coincidence of these strategic trends already influences state policies throughout the Transcaspian. This revamped and expanded definition of security feeds into the fourth lesson of this strategic revolution. To maximize the value of this RSA for the advancement of American interests, we must also develop an appropriate long-term and multidimensional strategy for retaining permanent access to the area. Military engagement must be part of this multidimensional and interagency strategy. Such access need not entail a permanent forward presence, or permanent bases in the traditional sense of such facilities, as in Germany. But it does require a comprehensive engagement with governments and armed forces on both sides of the Caspian Sea and permanent access to military bases in times of crisis and of actual contingencies or so-called forward operating locations (FOL) or operating sites. Essentially, this means that U.S. forces and other agencies of the U.S. Government must devise a comprehensive strategy of security cooperation and regional state-building activities that fosters this permanent engagement with local governments. Likewise, the armed forces cannot evade the tasks of nation-building in these states, if this engagement strategy is to succeed. Instead, those tasks are increasingly an intrinsic part of the U.S. power projection mission in peacetime to shape the potential military theater for future contingencies. In other words, U.S. military strategy and policy here must be part of a larger macrostrategy that

embraces the use of all of America's and its partners' instruments of power: economic, political, military, and informational.

The concept of an FOL denotes an austere or skeletal base or facility with few U.S. or host country troops, but could quickly be readied for use in case of an emergency.¹⁶ This concept of a base corresponds to emerging U.S. thinking about foreign military bases and access, and coincides with the need for comprehensive engagement with local militaries so that they can operate in our place but at a compatible standard or with us, as the situation requires. U.S. military leaders explicitly and generally invoke the strategic importance of continuing security cooperation that represents a form of that engagement as a vital strategic tool, and not just in this region.¹⁷ Because of their austere, skeletal nature, these projected FOLs are quite distinct from bases as traditionally understood, e.g., Ramstein and Rhein-Main Air Force Bases. Since the Pentagon and State Department have ruled out a permanent base in the Transcaspian in conjunction with the new Global Posture Review announced by President George W. Bush in August 2004, the quest for permanent access as needed, rather than a permanent base, fully comports with stated U.S. policy.¹⁸

GEOSTRATEGIC REVOLUTION IN THE TRANSCASPIAN AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF REGIONAL SECURITY

America's Afghan and Iraqi victories in major combat operations invalidated the current strategic argument among some defense intellectuals that geography and geographical considerations no longer matter much to strategy.¹⁹ Allegedly globalization and the RMA have so compressed or shrunk the world that holding ground and other geographical or geostrategic concerns no longer matter much in an age where information is trump. But America's victories also show that strategic victory is inconceivable without holding and controlling ground and without effecting a lasting transformation of the local political orders from which war has sprung.²⁰ In order to achieve those goals, we must find ways to overcome the "tyranny of distance" and sustain short and/or long-term deployments in the Transcaspian when needed. Those conclusions confirm the increased importance of every form of power projection capability,

and the increased ability of air and naval assets to project and sustain meaningful military power onto the land. Not surprisingly, a whole school of thinking now sees naval warfare as entailing not so much combat at sea, as littoral warfare and pushing beyond the littoral area well into the interior.²¹ Such transformations are encouraging armies, especially the U.S. Army, into an ever more joint posture because other forces can plausibly claim to take over responsibilities hitherto organic to the Army or the Marines, such as the provision of fire support.²² They can relieve burdens that used to be placed on the Army and Marines and allow them to concentrate on fighting for and holding ground further inland. Thus technological changes in weaponry affect force structures, packages, and missions.

But technology is not the only driver of transformation, nor does technological change occur in a vacuum. The geostrategic revolutions revealed by these campaigns also are among the drivers of the current transformation of U.S. armed forces and the overall global strategic environment. They confirm Paul Bracken's observations that one of the most important results of the application of Western military technology to Asia was that it reorganized geopolitical space. That is happening again.²³ Today the application of military (and civilian) technology throughout Asia, whether through military campaigns, arms sales, or the normal pattern by which military technology diffuses, is radically transforming Asia's strategic geography and our understanding of it. Our response to this technological and geostrategic transformation must also undergo an appropriate transformation. To understand this technological transfer with all its strategic ramifications, we must contextualize it.

As Randall Collins' study of Max Weber's sociology concluded with regard to military innovation in world history,

*But the crucial aspect of the development, its being made "socially real" by becoming part of a form of organization, generally seems to happen in areas of greater geopolitical importance. In general, then, although elements of innovations may occur because of geographical particularities of where certain natural resources are most easily available, it appears that the geopolitical centers are where they become organized into effective military technologies.*²⁴ (italics in the original)

From this perspective, it becomes clear that U.S. power projection capabilities in Iraq and Afghanistan revealed unprecedented strategic possibilities by illustrating the enhanced strategic importance of Central Asia and the Caucasus. Using those forms of power projection, which can project ground forces into the theater and sustain them for a long time, it is now possible to leverage military power in and throughout Central Asia, and from there throughout Eurasia in hitherto unforeseen ways. Not surprisingly, both halves of the Transcaspian, Central Asia and Transcaucasia, enjoy heightened analytical and policy interest. Ever more security professionals here and abroad realize the importance of addressing the Black Sea and Transcaucasia, as well as Central Asia, to complete the stabilization of Europe or to help stabilize the “Broader (or greater) Middle East” or a reconceptualized Eurasia.²⁵ Many writers here and abroad emphasize the strategic importance of Central Asia and/or the Caucasus to the current geopolitical order.²⁶ Frequently they see new geographical and even strategic unities between the two halves of the Transcaspian and areas like South Asia or Europe. For example, even before the war in Iraq, Sir John Thomson, a former British High Commissioner to India, wrote that,

The geographical definition of South Asia has expanded. If we had any doubt before, September 11 has made it clear that we have to take into account Afghanistan and its neighbors: Iran to the west, all the former Soviet republics to the north, and China to the east. The geographical context for South Asia may be even wider. We in the West say—sincerely, I believe—that we are not against Islam, but many Muslims do not believe it. So, to a greater or lesser extent, our relations with Arab countries can be connected with our South Asian policies. And this potential extension of our area of concern is being reinforced, unfortunately, by the spiraling disaster in Israel-Palestine.²⁷

Brahma Chellaney of India sees those linked regions as constituting an integral arc of threat that should bring together governments in a common threat perception and hence shared strategic interest.²⁸ In 2003 Indian Foreign Secretary Kinwal Sebal similarly told an U.S. audience that,

Asia traditionally has been seen in terms of its sub-regions, each with its own dynamics and its own problems. Traditionally, we deal with them

as unconnected compartments. However, lines that insulate one region from the other are increasingly getting blurred by proliferation deals that link the east to the west; by the chain of terror network(s) across West, South, and Southeast Asia; by the concerns about the safety of commerce from the Straits of Hormuz to the Straits of Malacca; by the challenge of connecting major consumers of energy to its sources in West and Central Asia.²⁹

Most tellingly, Bracken writes that,

The arc of terror cuts across the military and political theaters into which the West conveniently divided Asia, essentially for the purpose of fighting the Cold War: the Middle East, South Asia, Southeast Asia, and Northeast Asia. The ballistic missile, once launched, does not turn back at the line that separates the territory of one State Department desk from another. Thus the Gulf War (of 1991) brought the troubles of the Persian Gulf to Israel, linking theaters that had once been considered separate. Israel, for its part, sends up spy satellites to spy on Pakistan, 2,000 miles away, spooking Islamabad into seeing an Indian-Israeli squeeze play against it. Chinese and Indian military establishments plot against each other, making East and South Asia one military space.³⁰

Note that both Bracken and Chellaney relate technological changes in weaponry—the increasingly easy or ready availability of ballistic missiles (and other new technologies or weapons)—to changes in strategic geography, or more precisely, to a new understanding of it. Given the Transcaspian region’s proximity to the centers of contemporary terrorism, it is hardly surprising that both U.S. policymakers and foreign analysts see enhanced U.S. attention to Central Asia and the Transcaucasus as essential.³¹ But while technological change in armaments drives much of this revolution; technology cannot substitute for strategy or geography. Its contribution to warfare is mediated through geography and geostrategic factors, which are then themselves transformed but not negated by technological change. Technological change occurs within discrete strategic territories, even if it transforms the definition of geostrategic space and leads to new geostrategies by the major powers. In this way, technological change is contextualized.

Collins’ conclusion leads us to consider two points that are critical to a future discussion. First, given the Transcaspian’s enhanced strategic importance, to project effective and lasting military power

into it, innovative technologies, organizational forms of military power, and state policies become necessary. U.S. security cooperation policies, broadly conceived, embody these innovative organizational changes insofar as the armed forces in former communist lands are concerned, and NATO's enlargement to date proves this point.³² Those innovations could serve as a precedent or at least as a point of departure for future changes throughout the Transcaspian region. But the strategic revolution does not end here. Many observers contend that East Asia's dynamism is propelling it into ever greater strategic prominence, and the 2001 *Quadrennial Defense Review* (QDR) openly embraced that view.³³ And we have already postulated the essential fungibility of military force between Central and East Asia.

Second, based on Collins' argument, innovative American military operations over the last generation largely have succeeded, not least because they created appropriate forms of social and military organization to maximize their potential (at least relative to all other competitors). The RSA accompanied and was more fully realized by our ability to move from technological innovation to appropriate operational concepts and organizational forms of military power. The current program to transform U.S. military forces explicitly seeks to leverage technological change to induce organizational change and altered behavior, i.e., a change in military organizations' culture.³⁴ America has hitherto followed the path of successful adaptation because transformations in its military-technological capability drive both the renovation of its concepts of operations and innovative experiments in force structure. Studies of other nations' force structures and operational concepts suggest they are being forced to adopt at least some of the innovations made in the United States.³⁵ Thus continuing U.S. military success closely correlates with the transformation of its partners' and allies' military forces so that they, too, can maximize their defense potential in contemporary conditions. This consideration justifies a priority effort to engage partners and allies, and through them their armed forces, including those in the Transcaspian, in such combined undertakings. Again, the course of NATO enlargement in which applicants had to restructure their entire militaries to enter NATO represents a highly useful precedent.

Accordingly, the organizational changes that emerged from the RMA and RSA affect all the branches of the U.S. military, particularly as they increasingly must fight in distant, often inaccessible theaters which previously seemed to have little or no strategic significance for the United States. Indeed, the continuous reorganization of the forces toward greater jointness is closely tied to the need for responsive expeditionary forces with a real and fast-moving global strike capability across the entire spectrum of conflict.³⁶ Since the United States cannot count on direct unmediated access to battlefields, even in less distant and remote regions than Afghanistan, it must pioneer in creating new joint, expeditionary fighting organizations that can project power to distant theaters and gain access to them in peacetime and wartime.³⁷ And, if possible, it must urgently find a basis for operating in new areas as well, e.g., the Transcaspien. As the Lexington Institute recognized in early 2001, i.e., before the attacks of September 11, 2001, the issue of access is critical, and yet putting large-scale bases in distant lands is increasingly infeasible. It observed that,

The Air Force is heavily dependent on overseas bases for its wartime effectiveness. But the number of foreign bases to which that service has access has declined over 80 percent since the height of the Cold War, and all of the 30 or so bases that remain are subject to political constraints on their use. In many areas of the world, such as Southeast Asia, the Indian subcontinent, and southern Africa, the Air Force does not have assured access to a single nearby base. The base-access issue is likely to grow worse in the future as the interests of the United States and its allies diverge. Indeed, experience suggests the prepackaged presence of U.S. forces at foreign bases can contribute to such a divergence by becoming a political embarrassment for the host government.³⁸

Our war in Iraq forcefully confirmed these and earlier warnings about the very limited reliability of America's preexisting base and access structure for military operations in Southwest Asia. As Robert Harkavy has written,

Planners can no longer count on anything close to such access. A large portion of the troops and aircraft once in Europe have since returned to the continental United States. Access to, and transit rights over, such states as Morocco, Egypt, Turkey, and even Saudi Arabia are problematic,

depending much more than before on the nature of the crisis, despite a much larger “permanent” presence in several of the Gulf Cooperation Council states. Even Europe could be in question if the political divide between the United States and the European Union over Middle Eastern policies should widen. Hence, worst-case scenarios have envisioned the United States in a tough situation, attempting to intervene in the Gulf area mostly from bases in the continental United States and from carrier battle groups and amphibious formations.³⁹

Thus the importance of theaters like Central Asia, U.S. strategic access to them, and the need for joint warfighting and power projection entities are linked and increasingly important, if not vital issues. But that linkage also mandates working with partners and allies to create enduring coalitions enabling us and them to achieve common strategic goals.

These conclusions tally with those of Owen Cote in his 2000 study of access issues and the Navy and with a recent Rand study. Cote observes that,

The need to avoid or reduce dependence on assured access to (fixed) bases ashore is the one common link between the near and distant security environment that can be seen clearly today, and it is therefore the dominant measure of effectiveness that U.S. political and military leaders should use in fashioning their military forces to meet the demands of the new security environment. In responding to this imperative, they will need to find ways of making land-based force less dependent on fixed bases, and of assuring that naval forces can simultaneously maintain access to the sea and project more power from it.⁴⁰

Although much of the Transcaspian is landlocked, these observations pertain equally to the need for resolving the problem of air access so that land-based forces can be inserted into the area. Similarly the Rand study concluded that in peacetime our aims are threefold: enhancing regional security and stability by reassuring partners, deterring adversaries, and developing new options. One such option is to expand the “portfolio” of available bases and infrastructure needed for military operations through a series of both formal and informal understandings. This means we must work with as many countries as possible to devise ways of reducing our vulnerability to anti-access threats that would bar us from this

or other critical theaters. This means exploring ways to reduce the need for large fixed bases and enhancing capabilities for the forcible seizure of ports, airbases, and other infrastructure.

In wartime we and our partners will strive to defend those ports, bases, and critical infrastructural nodes to facilitate a buildup of forces as needed and simultaneously protect our own and coalition forces. We should also protect leadership and population targets that might be attacked to drive a wedge between us and our partners or allies, or that would coerce them into reducing or curtailing access.⁴¹

THE RSA AND THE TRASCASPIAN

The Transcaspian increasingly is important to the pursuit and attainment of those objectives mentioned above because that region lies at the heart of the instability that plagues the world and threatens U.S. and allied interests. As such, its importance is rising, and not only for us.⁴² The attacks of September 11 showed that threats to vital U.S. (or other states') interests could come from anywhere on the globe and achieve total surprise against their intended targets. Thus those attacks confirmed earlier trends in the Central Asian and larger Asian contexts that had already heightened those areas' strategic importance before September 11. Consequently, today, as Robert Cooper, assistant to EU Secretary for Foreign and Defense Policy Javier Solana, observes, "homeland defense now begins with Afghanistan and Iraq."⁴³ Eurasia's strategic destiny is inseparable from that of the Transcaspian area, and this consideration, too, should guide NATO and the EU to take a larger role throughout the former Soviet Union. NATO and EU leaders have said they would do so but that, too often, is not the reality.⁴⁴

At the same time, a countertrend is manifesting itself. U.S. success in projecting power into the Transcaspian and overcoming the tyranny of distance and the threat of so-called Anti-Access and Area Denial strategies, including terrorism, against it or its allies, has also galvanized that countertrend intended to revitalize those threats and deny America or other powers access to Central Asia and other adjoining theaters. Even if our forces can now gain access with *relative* ease, there is good reason to believe that the capability of potential enemies to employ more successful Anti-Access and Area Denial

strategies will rise in the coming decade.⁴⁵ These countertrends or strategies comprise not only an A2 strategy, but also possibly could become part of hostile states' or movements' broader AD strategy and could combine both conventional and unconventional warfare, to include the simultaneous use of both insurgency and terrorism, coupled with nuclear threats or deterrence, coupled with classical conventional threats.⁴⁶ If two or more states having vital interests in this region and/or nonstate entities like al-Qaeda perceive U.S. presence as a threat to their interests, they could form an overt or concealed alliance or at least a community of interests excluding us from the Transcaspian and other adjacent areas. After all, such exclusion is al-Qaeda's overriding strategic priority. Certainly there were signs of this desire for an anti-American bloc, and presumably there were discussions about it in Chinese, Russian, and Iranian policy before September 11, e.g., the creation of the Shanghai Cooperative Organization (SCO) or the Russian-sponsored Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO).⁴⁷

These alternative strategies that would resist or try to curtail U.S. access to Central Asia represent what Thomas Christensen calls a "counter-revolution" in military affairs. It would threaten our presence throughout Asia as rivals increasingly come to possess long-range precision strike capabilities using either conventional or nuclear weapons and cruise and/or ballistic missiles.⁴⁸ In geostrategic terms, that particular response to U.S. military power aspires to imitate our success in projecting power into or from Central Asia to or from the rest of Asia, or to prevent the United States from doing so again. A similar process is happening in the Middle East where proliferation could threaten more and more of Europe with direct military strikes, including ballistic and cruise missiles and even potential nuclear strikes. This development would mark the first time in many centuries that a direct threat to Europe could come from the Middle East.⁴⁹ Here, too, technologically driven transformations are revising the existing strategic geography, or our conception of it, and the nature of war and of threats to security throughout the area.

Meanwhile the increasingly visible strategic linkage of the Middle East and Eurasia with the Transcaspian allows the United States or others to conceive of this expanse of territory as a single theater of strategic military operations (this term is taken from the Soviet

term *Teatr' Voyennykh Deistvii*—Theater of Military [or strategic] Operations [TVD]).⁵⁰ This perception of an overarching strategic unity would constitute one aspect of this RSA. Indeed, other writers now assert that,

Military globalization in the international system can be regarded as a military relation [that is an] interactive outcome of political institutions and a procession of increasing extension. After a long development, military globalization has changed the world to a single geographical strategic space. Thus, the first aspect of this strategic revolution is the transformation of the geostrategic space or battlespace of Central Asia.⁵¹

Thus it is now possible to achieve strategic effects in theaters that are quite distant, e.g., from assets based in Central Asia or to achieve them in Central Asia from distantly based assets. This ability to achieve distant effects through local means is becoming a distinguishing hallmark of contemporary warfare.⁵² The traditional idea that war occurs solely between mutually exclusive spatial entities, either states or blocs, no longer holds. Permeable boundaries and shifting alliances mark the struggles of local militias and the local political economies of warfare in specific places. Enemies can no longer so obviously control territories; violence often is constrained to particular places, but its connections spill over the territorial boundaries of conventional geopolitical categories.⁵³

In this light, the attacks of September 11 might also be understood as an internal Arab or Muslim civil war that is centered upon or in Saudi Arabia over the future trajectory and destiny of that country or world. Osama Bin Laden can then be seen as one of many Saudi or Arab diaspora political figures fighting to impose a specific definition of that future trajectory upon the Muslim world by attacking the United States.

Understood in these terms, the attack on America can be read as a strategy to involve the Americans in the struggle in the Middle East more directly in a classic strategic move of horizontal conflict escalation where an impasse triggers a strategy of broadening the conflict.⁵⁴

By widening the front and projecting an “inter-Arab or intra-Saudi” war into the United States, thereby globalizing the Islamic

or Arab civil war to erode the alliance to Saudi Arabia and thus the stability of the Saudi regime, Bin Laden forced a broader appreciation of the Transcaspian's strategic significance and validated Cooper's insight. Cooper's telling observation also accords with the insight that throughout the former Soviet Union it is now increasingly difficult, if not analytically misguided, to separate internal instability within a state from a broader regional or even global instability. Accordingly, the Transcaspian now comprises an enlarged but flexibly definable battlespace or TVD for current and future strategic level operations. It is, or can be, a front or several fronts in its own right or in a global strategic war. The term strategic battlespace is defined by Dr. Steven Metz and Lieutenant Colonel Raymond Millen (USA) of the Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, as follows:

A strategic battlespace is a mode of war in which the operational and technological aspects of armed conflict are placed within their broader political, economic, social, ecological, legal, normative, diplomatic, and technological contexts.⁵⁵

Asia's strategic space normally transcends any single battlespace or number of them. However, because strategic capabilities are deployable across its breadth, we can view Asia simultaneously as either a single enormous theater or as multiple theaters, depending on the contingency/ies being considered. Threats, as well as the means to counter them, can increasingly exploit the fact that our lead in military technology enhances the porosity of borders to our forces. Therefore, forces based in any one Asian or even adjacent theater can easily move to or strike at threats in other Asian theaters, even over great distances. Thus the presence of capable forces in and around Central Asia and the Caucasus makes the Transcaspian region a pivotal theater or zone from where those capabilities can strike at belligerents from Eastern Europe to the Pacific.

Neither are these strategic realities confined to Central Asia or the Transcaspian. Indeed, they apply throughout Asia. A study of the West Pacific Islands chain argues that the region's political geography with its open maritime borders that facilitate easy movement across them allows separatist movements in one state to move freely back and forth to neighboring Southeast Asian or West

Pacific Island states and draw them into the network of destabilized areas. The means for doing so include not only arms shipments, but also increased attacks on commercial shipping and outright piracy in these waters that already were discernible before September 11.⁵⁶ Assets located or based in one part of Asia can now easily project power to at least one or two other formerly discrete strategic theaters of Asia (and even beyond them to America or Europe, e.g., North Korean missiles) either for offensive or defensive purposes, if not to Asia as a whole.

American force packages designed for purposes of power projection and for national security strategies as a whole are becoming ever more modular, with regard to the theaters in which they can be located and/or used. Thus, for America, the rising importance of the Transcaspian is self-evident. Georgia's and Azerbaijan's security have become important U.S. interests, for reasons far beyond access to energy. They are vital logistic bases where America has access and overflight rights that enable the U.S. military to support its forward bases in Central Asia and Afghanistan in the war against terrorism—a cause that hardly exhausts the reasons for their strategic importance.⁵⁷ But beyond the heightened importance of these two former Soviet zones lie the areas adjacent to them: Southeastern Europe and the Black Sea area, the Middle East, and South and even East Asia. As contemporary wars even before September 11 showed, U.S. and other foreign forces are either being projected or optimized for purposes of future projection into these zones because of the long-term crises that are taking place throughout them. In fact, as the author has noted elsewhere, the Transcaspian is already undergoing a process of increasing external and internal militarization because of the proliferation of threats and a resulting sense of insecurity.⁵⁸ Therefore, permanent access, if not forward presence, to, from, and within these areas, will and should remain fundamental precepts and goals of U.S. defense strategy for a long time.

THE TRASCASPIAN AND THE CONTINUUM OF MILITARY OPERATIONS

But beyond having the requisite capabilities to project forces into the Transcaspian or adjoining theaters, our military-political

leadership must also embrace the strategic, i.e., military and political, requirements attached to those missions. Militarily, these expeditionary and power projection forces must, as required in numerous U.S. official documents, dominate throughout the *entire* continuum of military operations and the entire battlespace, including both terrestrial space and cyber-space.⁵⁹ And, as the Pentagon has belatedly had to acknowledge, that continuum of military operations can no longer omit the various types of stability and reconstruction or peace operations that follow the termination or alleged termination of force upon force operations. Indeed, we now see the Pentagon trying to restructure U.S. expeditionary forces to develop and deploy a “social intelligence” capability to better perform the tasks of state-building (a better term than nation-building) and reconstruction.⁶⁰ And Rumsfeld has instructed the Pentagon to reconsider the entire nature of the range of threats that may be directed against U.S. forces to include irregular, disruptive, conventional, and catastrophic threats.⁶¹

Despite substantial political-bureaucratic resistance to the idea that U.S. forces must help reconstruct states as an essential part of strategic operations, the U.S. Government has had to accept that “full spectrum dominance” or, more precisely, full domination of the aforementioned continuum of military operations means just that. Failure to provide for that requirement in U.S. strategy dooms our military efforts to enormous prolongation and a high risk of failure as occurred in Iraq.⁶² U.S. armed forces, both in wartime and in peacetime, must help assure security in areas like Central Asia. Any concept of U.S. victory in America’s current wars that does not also insist that those forces dominate not only the combat, but also post-combat phases of operations to achieve strategic victory, is intrinsically wrong.

For example, if future contingencies necessitate the presence of U.S. combat forces in former Soviet republics, their peacetime and wartime missions could include engagement in protracted peace and support operations due to the strategic nature of the mission and the theater’s socio-political configuration. Or, if these governments do not succumb to insurgencies, U.S. forces there can perform missions to help them modernize their armed forces and render them increasingly interoperable with those of NATO. In any

case, using all the instruments of power, America, either alone or as a part of a coalition, will help these states expand their governing capacities and make them more capable of defending themselves against threats, as well as fostering an end to their isolation from the West. These tasks and goals include military missions to help achieve this interoperability and to conduct priority operations such as anti-terrorist operations, peace support operations, counterdrug, counterproliferation operations, and border security. Security professionals active in these areas already embrace this expanded mission. They know that security includes the entire range of activities necessary to reconstruct viable states and societies.⁶³ As R. Craig Nation of the U.S. Army War College wrote in 2002,

Disappointments notwithstanding, the capacity to project forces into combat zones to enforce peace when diplomatic mechanisms fail, maintain peace in the wake of negotiated ceasefires, and ensure a safe and secure environment within which a process of post-conflict peace-building can go forward remain vital attributes of any effort to contain and reverse a proliferation of low and medium intensity conflicts in the Adriatic-Caspian corridor. What the poor track record of the past decade makes clear is that the means to carry out these tasks effectively are not yet in place.⁶⁴

However, as suggested above, the advent of U.S. and NATO forces into these areas and Afghanistan has triggered a process that could reverse Nation's pessimistic conclusion and offer the capabilities for achieving success in this security and state-building process. Given the foreseeable consequences of failures in these theaters, the United States, as the main strategic actor today and the only one with a global projection capability and responsibility, cannot walk away from the strategic revolution of our times. America's global interests and the obligations stemming from the GWOT and the war in Iraq compel its military and government to devise an enduring and stable way to project its power and influence into these crisis zones, and stay there until the mission is truly completed. But completion means leaving behind a legitimate and secure order, not a country or region racked by new threats and wars. Ideally, as well, U.S. forces should be able to replicate or extend the pre-2001 achievement of U.S. forces in places like Central Asia and engage in security cooperation with

those states and armies to help ensure that, when necessary, we can obtain the requisite access.⁶⁵ Therefore U.S. forces must gain reliable access to these theaters during peacetime and wartime. It may become necessary for them to conduct, with host nation support, a series of missions that embrace the expanded concept of security including what we now call Stability and Support Operations (SASO) that are openly embraced by the Pentagon and such commands as the U.S. European Command (USEUCOM) and USCENTCOM.⁶⁶

Gaining wartime access to these or other theaters, therefore, is not merely an issue of overcoming the Anti-Access or Area-Denial wartime threats, including terrorism, to our forces which many commentators and military leaders have discerned in the past.⁶⁷ It is not enough to argue, as did General John Jumper, the current Chief of Staff of the U.S. Air Force, when he commanded U.S. Air Forces in Europe (USAFE) that, "Access is an issue until you begin to involve the vital interests of the nation that you want and need as a host. Then access is rarely an issue."⁶⁸ It is also not enough to think we need do this only in time of crisis or actual conflict. The Clinton administration's shaping strategy, though derided by its successors, was essential to facilitating U.S. entry into Central Asia and Afghanistan within a month of September 11.⁶⁹ It was a wise and productive strategic investment and should be continued, if not expanded.

Local governments value this long-term engagement to secure reliable access when necessary, because throughout Central Asia and the Transcaucasus they correctly perceive the internal integrity, security, independence, sovereignty, and external security of their states to be permanently at risk either from internal or external threats, if not a combination of them.⁷⁰ They also benefit materially from our presence, as in Kyrgyzstan.⁷¹ Local governments will also invoke the new strategic situation to enhance their own importance and attract favorable foreign involvement. U.S. involvement probably will grow, not just because the war on terrorism will be protracted or because bases, once established, generate their own constituencies and arguments in favor of preserving them. The Transcaspian region's importance to Washington also will grow because of the plethora of domestic pathologies and misrule that offer ideal breeding grounds for terrorism, variants of radical anti-western Islam, and failed states,

and because of the area's proximity to major Asiatic strategic actors—Russia, China, Iran, India, and Pakistan, and beyond that, the broader Middle East and Europe. This would be the case even if they were energy poor. The presence of large energy deposits only enhances an already transformed strategic interest. Given those considerations, local governments have every reason to draw the United States into a deeper involvement with them to ensure, or so they believe, their own domestic and external security against the many threats confronting them. And that involvement certainly includes a deeper bilateral military relationship with the United States, as seen from their capitals.

Under the circumstances, engaging them comprehensively as potential host states and partners in both peace and war duly necessitates a profound and permanent involvement in their affairs by all organs of the U.S. Government, including the military. While local governments ultimately may resent our emphasis on democratization; this engagement is necessary lest their own policies undermine the stability upon which both they and us depend. If we seek to optimize the RSA in the Transcaspian and adjoining theaters and obtain the necessary access to them, we cannot avoid that permanent civil and military involvement in their affairs and security.

Indeed, geopolitical changes since September 11 indicate that the capacity whose absence Nation lamented now exists in place, even if policy (not only in America) has not yet totally caught up to strategic reality. Apart from the activities of combatant commands like USEUCOM or USCENTCOM, NATO now plays an active role in Afghanistan and many, including its Secretary-General Jaap Hoop De Scheffer, think it should play a broader long-term role throughout the entire Middle East.⁷² As pressure upon NATO and EU for greater involvement in the Caucasus and Central Asia grows, those organizations should and hopefully will also respond positively to that pressure and also deploy increased capabilities for providing security.⁷³ These considerations alone justify a profound Western involvement and investment in all aspects of Afghanistan's reconstruction.

THE NEED FOR MILITARY ADAPTATION

We and our enemies have both been forced into cycles of permanent transformation and adaptation. Since we cannot preplan enough capability to ensure global and multidimensional readiness against every conceivable threat, and because we visibly failed to plan sufficiently for a post-conflict scenario in either Afghanistan or Iraq, the evolving nature of the threat environment has driven the Pentagon to develop new concepts that relate to the need for forces tailored to SASO and to irregular or unconventional war.⁷⁴ These concepts relate to the size and composition of our forces, their training, logistics, materiel systems, and operations to provide the capabilities we need across multiple dimensions of contemporary war.

Contemporary war's multidimensionality requires not only traditional reactive strategies but a shift in emphasis to proactive and preventive activities to thwart terrorism or weapons of mass destruction (WMD) usage, or, as Australia has shown in its intervention into Papua New Guinea, even humanitarian intervention to prevent a situation from deteriorating into one conducive to terrorism.⁷⁵ While all U.S. forces would have to possess a power projection rapid deployment capability, the Army would bear the greatest burden of this broad range of missions. That burden is great because so much of the current wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, i.e., SASO, must be fought on land. But beyond that, and bearing the Australian example in mind, a RAND study observes that one broad strand of Army activities will have to encompass SASO.⁷⁶ This conclusion accords with that of other military thinkers, e.g., General Anthony Zinni (USMC Ret.), former Commander-in-Chief of USCENTCOM.⁷⁷ Traditional military assistance or security cooperation will expand to other states and include programs for training indigenous forces in new states, e.g., large numbers of special forces operations through Foreign Internal Defense (FID) missions. This has already fostered a heavy reliance on Army Special Operations Forces (ARSOF) for such purposes in host countries, given their special role in counterterror operations.⁷⁸ All these operations are costly in money, time, and manpower, and are often protracted. But they also are inevitable and essential, not least and not only in

the Transcaspian. They are among our most productive investments in regional security and not just because they upgrade local forces' professionalism and ability to work with us as needed.

Yet at the same time, neither the Army nor the other services can ignore conventional theater battles or operations, for those are no less likely to occur as Operation ANACONDA and Operation IRAQI FREEDOM suggested.⁷⁹ In Asia, numerous efforts are underway to achieve both the requisite power projection capabilities discerned by other governments besides the United States and also more traditional, albeit high-tech, capabilities for major warfare. Let us remember that the QDR of 2001 clearly warned against trouble throughout Asia and with China, and that some of this trouble would look very much like a classic naval and air war over Taiwan or a similar high-end conventional contingency.⁸⁰ A Korean war would probably be another example of a theater-level conventional war. Therefore we also must constantly consider the possibilities for high-end conflict in Asia and the military trends that are plainly discernible there. A U.S. military configured to dominate as much of the spectrum of conflict as is humanly possible (how does one dominate an actual nuclear war?) must be ready to deal with incredibly diverse threats and forms of conflict.

Failure to master any one or more forms of operations will mean more than that we cannot claim dominance over the entire spectrum of conflict. In turn, that outcome places the attainment of strategic victory in jeopardy. Failure to be so prepared means that we shall almost certainly find ourselves trapped in an open-ended, protracted, and potentially inconclusive conflict. Then failure to achieve a durable and legitimate peace after victory magnifies the difficulties we will face, and lengthens the duration of our engagement. Failure here ultimately substitutes strategic defeat for operational victory and displays an inability to adjust means to ends or to adopt a policy that can be carried out by military means.

Any protracted conflict where we fail to achieve our postulated strategic outcome will soon be perceived here and abroad first as a quagmire and then as an American strategic defeat with unpalatable global consequences. Saddam Hussein, Slobodan Milosevic, Osama bin Laden, and Chinese generals and elites, as well as other Arab terrorists, all have publicly stated that the United States is intrinsically

weak because it cannot stand casualties or protracted warfare based on what they saw in Lebanon and Somalia. Our potential enemies evidently still think that they can defeat us by bleeding us despite what Iraq now shows and despite the defeats administered to Iraq, Serbia, and the Taliban during the 1990s and in 2001-03. Thus, as Christensen wrote in 2001,

It is difficult to assess Chinese perceptions on this score, especially from open sources, but it is clear that at least one important strand of thinking in Beijing elite circles suggests that the United States cannot withstand many casualties. In fact, several of my interlocutors and the colleagues to whom they refer in my interviews seem to differ not on whether the United States can be compelled to back down over Taiwan, but how quickly and at what cost to China. A minority seem to believe that the United States can be deterred from entering such a conflict at all; others believe that a small number of American casualties would lead the Americans to withdraw; still others believe that it would require hundreds and perhaps as many as 10,000 American casualties to drive the United States out.⁸¹

While it might seem callous to say so, 10,000 casualties is not a lot. But to foreign elites who cannot understand the United States and are imbued with an authoritarian, extreme nationalist, and even quasi-Fascist point of view, episodes like Lebanon and Somalia outweigh other military realities. Indeed, their perception of what happened in those places often differs radically from the perceptions of those who were in official positions in Washington then.⁸² Certainly our failure to secure a rapid peace and victory in Iraq quickly generated pressures to withdraw at once, lest it become a quagmire akin to Vietnam. Moreover, the perception of an intrinsic U.S. weakness of fiber clearly seems to be a “professional deformation” of these adversarial elites and movements insofar as democracies are concerned.

Therefore we must master all the forms of SASO however they are called—small wars, or small scale, or low-intensity, or protracted conflicts, as well as peace support operations—or suffer repeated exposure to them. This mastery is essential because the conflicts that could break out in the theaters in question here will largely showcase those kinds of warfare and threaten our forces or interests even as they involve more classically conceived engagements. Such conflicts

must engage our attention because protracted asymmetric conflicts are increasingly our enemies' chosen form of war. Bitter experience also shows that no region or failing state can simply be written off as being too far away or too obscure a conflict to merit our attention. While we always need a discriminating approach to policy; there are no longer any intrinsically nonstrategic regions from which our vital interests cannot be threatened. If we wish to avoid being either surprised or overextended, extensive peacetime engagement with like-minded foreign militaries in the Transcaspian and elsewhere, so that in wartime we can fight with them and gain access to those theaters, must be seen as critical factors of U.S. strategy.

Alternatively, robust military-political engagement with those states helps reduce the likelihood of insurgencies breaking out or of succeeding. This is particularly true if our overall engagement strategy, including, but going beyond military relations with these states, fosters reform and evolution over time towards more liberal, democratic socio-political, and economic forms of governance in them. Working with local armed forces, not only to enhance interoperability, but to bring them as well to a western standard in civil-military relations is an essential component of this strategy. It has been indispensable in expanding Europe to include the former Soviet bloc and in finally bringing visible signs of pacification to the Balkans.⁸³ Even as we take account of individual conditions in these states, there is no *a priori* reason why this strategy should not be employed. After all, many post-Soviet states in the Caucasus and Central Asia already have indicated their desire to work with NATO, or even join it, among them Ukraine, Kazakstan, Azerbaijan, and Georgia.⁸⁴ And even those states that have not expressed a desire to work with NATO regard the Western and U.S. military presence as an indispensable part of their overall security strategies.

U.S. FORCES IN ASIA, THE RSA, AND THE GLOBAL POSTURE REVIEW

The recurring Chechen attacks on domestic Russian targets, the prolongation of that war, and the flood of articles that stated that Georgia and Russia were at the brink of war in August 2004 due to Tbilisi's efforts to pressure Moscow to abandon support for its South

Ossetia and Russia's resistance to that pressure only underscore how perilously close many situations in these areas are to conflict and how little it might take to start off a real war among local states. These and other examples of great power involvement here highlight the rising importance of the Transcaspian as an area where the local states, major Asian and European powers, including NATO, EU, Russia, and China, will invest serious security resources and with good reason.

Equally importantly, advanced weapons and information technologies, if not other innovative systems, are increasingly available to local and external states, not to mention nonstate actors like criminals and/or terrorists. This rising availability of modern military capabilities virtually ensures that any conflict could cross state and regional borders and engage many governments or nonstate actors. The ensuing conflicts could easily require new kinds of missions and strategic goals, given the protean nature of contemporary war. Thus the RMA both abets and parallels a commensurate and corresponding RSA. As Lawrence Freedman wrote in 1998,

The link between the military and political spheres is the realm of strategy. If there is a revolution, it is one in strategic affairs and is the result of significant change in both the objectives in pursuit of which governments might want to use armed forces, and in the means that they might employ. Its most striking feature is its lack of a fixed form. The new circumstances and capabilities do not prescribe one strategy, but extend the range of strategies that might be followed. In this context, the issue behind the RMA is the ability of Western countries, and in particular the U.S., to follow a line geared to their own interests and capabilities.⁸⁵

Hence the heightened importance to the United States of secure bases in and around the Indian Ocean and of India's strategic role there as the United States considers the idea of an Asian NATO with India, Australia, Singapore, and Japan.⁸⁶ As the availability of bases for power projection into Asia decline, the possibility of new ones becomes all that more critical a factor. This trend predated the current war against Iraq, but that crisis highlighted just how unreliable and harmful the process of securing base access and overflight is to the effective prosecution of the war effort. This consideration also helps

drive the Pentagon's parallel development of a new concept for U.S. bases abroad, and enhances America's natural interest in obtaining permanent access through one or more "operating sites" in the Transcaspian.⁸⁷

Our military presence in these areas has triggered immense speculation here and abroad as to its nature, purposes, and duration. Even if we do not intend to retain those bases or sites permanently under agreement with the host states as now seems to be the case, we evidently want to be able to return and use them if necessary. Meanwhile, as Robert Legvold observed, by committing troops to Central Asia, U.S. intervention into Central Asia has transformed dramatically the regional security equation in three ways.

First, U.S. new dramatic, but incidental, military involvement in Central Asia added a Central Asian dimension to the U.S.-China relationship. Whether Washington fully appreciated it or not, the two countries were no longer engaged only in East Asia; the new American role and the old Chinese concern created an Inner Asian front in the relationship. Second, Central Asia became a far more salient factor in the evolution of U.S.-Russian relations. The interaction of the two within the region would have a good deal to do with whether the post-September 11 détente deepened or ran aground. And, in turn, this outcome would decisively affect international politics within the region.⁸⁸

Thus the intervention has accelerated Legvold's first and second consequences by which Central Asia increasingly can be seen as a venue for local and international strategic rivalry beyond our relations with Moscow and Beijing.

The third way in which U.S. presence transformed the regional security structure is that it altered the region's political makeup. Uzbekistan's strategic significance and regional standing as America's ally was greatly enhanced as are U.S. obligations with regard to these states' security. Likewise, our enhanced presence accelerated a tendency that was discerned already in 2000 for competitive projects of regional integration where a pro-Russian set of structures competed with a pro-Western or pro-American series of structures in economics and security.⁸⁹ Temur Basilia, Special Assistant to former Georgian President Edvard Shevardnadze for economic issues, has rightly written that in many Commonwealth

of Independent States (CIS) countries, e.g., Georgia and Ukraine, “the acute issue of choosing between alignment with Russia and the West is associated with the choice between two models of social development.”⁹⁰ The aptness of this observation transcends Georgia and Ukraine to embrace the entire post-Soviet region, since it is clear that Moscow opposes exporting democracy to it. Indeed, it regards the idea with contempt. Moreover, both it and Beijing would be happy to perpetuate undemocratic, authoritarian regimes and elite networks to enhance their local influence.⁹¹

But beyond Legvold’s and others’ insights, a fourth consequence must also be considered. U.S. victories have blazed a path that others are now following of preparing forces to be ready for all forms of war in the GWOT or other conflicts, including those in Central Asia. We may also expect that in keeping with these states’ broader military strategies and doctrines, they will also strive for dominance of as much of the spectrum of conflict as they can to gain the ability to interfere with U.S. or our partners’ interests militarily, or by the threat of force, when and if they deem it necessary. Iran’s nuclearization and support for international terrorism, the Chinese and Russian efforts to upgrade their military influence throughout these regions, Pakistan’s support for terrorism against India, and al-Qaeda’s global campaign originating in Afghanistan and its environs embody this trend in one way or another.

We should resist leaving the Transcaspian, and indeed the entire former Soviet area, because others are trying to oust us to ensure their own monopoly. That is precisely why we should stay and increase our overall presence as appropriate. Withdrawal at the behest of Moscow, Beijing, Tehran, or under pressure from terrorists will be seen correctly abroad as a sign of weakness and will trigger a series of unending and long-term, probably intractable crises with profound, if unforeseeable consequences. Instead, the United States already is being drawn into a deeper involvement with the larger Transcaspian region, as is already the case with USEUCOM.⁹² Since September 11, the ample evidence of an intensified U.S. concern for gaining access to distant theaters, and therefore a parallel quest for lodgments, access, basing, port rights, overflight rights, and the like, throughout Asia and surrounding areas also entails a growing search for allies or at least

robust strategic partnerships with like-minded states.⁹³ Hence the interest in an as yet undefined “Asian NATO,” including allies and/or partners throughout Asia.⁹⁴ In this context, U.S. officials clearly want to retain access to Pakistani, Indian, and Indian Ocean bases and ports given to us after September 11, from which to refuel or to gain overflight rights, if not necessarily permanent facilities, as well as greater access to all of Asia to fulfill the requirements outlined in the QDR and subsequent foundation documents of U.S. strategy and policy. This quest, as specified in the QDR and elsewhere, comports with the requirements for effectively retaining access to Central Asia and the Caucasus in all contingencies. In fact, even before September 11, the United States was seeking broader access to bases throughout Asia.⁹⁵

Administration officials openly spell out the rationales for obtaining new bases throughout Asia. Basing himself upon the QDR, then Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Peter Brookes told Congress in 2002 that,

Distances in the Asian theater (note the singular-author) are vast, and the density of U.S. basing and en route infrastructure is lower than in other critical regions. Moreover, the U.S. has less assurance of access to facilities in the Asia-Pacific region than in other regions. The QDR, therefore identifies the necessity of securing additional access and infrastructure agreements and developing military systems capable of sustained operations at great distances with minimal theater-based support. The QDR also calls for a reorientation of the U.S. military posture in Asia. The U.S. will continue to meet its defense and security commitments around the world by maintaining the ability to defeat aggression in two critical areas in overlapping time frames. As this strategy and force planning approach is implemented, the U.S. will strengthen its forward deterrent posture. Over time, U.S. forces will be tailored to maintain favorable regional balances in concert with U.S. allies and friends with the aim of swiftly defeating attacks with only modest reinforcement.⁹⁶

Subsequent testimony to the House by Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Affairs Peter Rodman fully explicated the administration’s thinking regarding overseas basing in Asia. Rodman stated that the administration’s goals entail tailoring our forces abroad to the particular conditions of those regions, and strengthening U.S. capabilities for prompt global response

anywhere. He observed that, since threats are not confined to a single area and because we cannot anticipate where the next one will be, even though an immediate response is often warranted, we need a capabilities-based strategy, not one based on force levels. Forces are not expected to fight where they are based; mobility and speed of deployment are the critical factors.⁹⁷ Rodman then laid out the working assumptions behind the transformation of our basing structure. A consideration of administration objectives, taken in conjunction with these assumptions immediately tells the reader why an Asian NATO with India is now a priority. India as an ally or area where bases may be located meets virtually every criterion laid out in Rodman's testimony. But the implications for the rest of Asia are no less evident. These working assumptions are as follows:

- U.S. regional defense postures must be based on global considerations, not regional ones.
- Existing and new overseas bases will be evaluated as combined and/or joint facilities as befits the new emphasis on combined and joint operations.
- Overseas stationed forces should be located on reliable, well-protected territory.
- Forces without inherent mobility must be stationed along major transportation routes, especially sea routes.
- Long-range attack capabilities require forward infrastructure to sustain operations.
- Forward presence need not be equally divided among all the U.S. regional commands to reduce the "seams" that separate them from each other.
- Expeditionary forces and operations require a network of forward facilities with munitions, command and control, and logistics in dispersed locations.

All these requirements are ways to increase U.S. forward forces' capabilities for deterrence and operations, and allow for reinforcement of other missions by reallocating forces. Rodman observed that we intend to accomplish this by increasing precision intelligence and strike capabilities on a global basis and exploiting

our forces' capability for superior strategic mobility.⁹⁸ Therefore, changes in U.S. basing policies aim to strengthen defense relations with key allies and partners and allow more effective response to unforeseen contingencies. These changes entail:

- Diversifying the means of U.S. access to overseas bases and facilities to obtain military presence closer to combat regions and offering our forces a broader array of options;
- Posturing the most flexible forces possible for overseas missions so that they will be capable of conducting a wide range of expeditionary operations; and,
- Promoting greater allied contributions and establishing more durable defense relationships with those allies and partners.⁹⁹

ISSUES OF ACCESS AND A GLOBAL BASING SYSTEM

The demand for such bases obviously aims to meet a perception of greatly expanded and diversified threats to U.S. interests. Equally, if not more, importantly, the states throughout Asia confront increasing and diversified threats, or believe that they do. This heightened insecurity is not only because perceived threats may possess a greater order of magnitude than was previously the case. The interaction of technology and geography also has transformed the predictability, quantity, and range of threats, as well as their point of origin. Accordingly, U.S. strategists cite an American geopolitical imperative "to retain control—the ability to use and to deny use of the sea line of communications between the Middle East and East Asia."¹⁰⁰ They also cite the vastly expanded mission and capabilities of the U.S. Navy in this connection, specifically,

The U.S. Navy can be considered a *globalized*, as well as a global navy—delivering the security of access function across the entire world system. It is this security function that requires the primary contribution of naval power (as an element of sea power) to peacetime globalization. During periods of conflict, this access function allows the United States (and the globalized world) to project power into contested and otherwise inaccessible regions.¹⁰¹

Given this transformation in international security, especially in Asia, many Asian military figures increasingly view naval power and power projection as the way to defend national security before threats reach the mainland. Thus energy security can be assured, territorial waters can be defended against rival claimants, and power can be projected. This line of reasoning applies to both U.S. allies and potential adversaries.¹⁰² In other words, America's interest in projecting military power into or from the Transcaspian also must be seen as an interest in enhancing the joint capabilities of all arms of our military, as well as in extending the possibility for combined operations with allies and partners from within the area or from outside of it. These considerations also extend to the real possibility that we may have to act preemptively in the Transcaspian or in other Asian theaters with allies and partners if they are available.

As a result, American planners fully understand their need for a global presence and rapidity of access to threatened theaters. General Gregory Martin, the former Commander of U.S. Air Forces Europe (USAFE), advocates a comprehensive global peacetime and wartime military presence that he calls *geopresence*.¹⁰³ He defines the achievement of this *geopresence* as entailing a comprehensive series of policies with key states in peacetime to include the full range of bilateral military-to-military relationships, exercises, and training missions. As all this occurs in tandem with the Pentagon's mandated transformation policy, the result should be conditions "that will enable us to define the battle space on our terms anywhere in the world." What counts here is not just the capability to define the battle space, but equally, if not more importantly, to do so on our terms.¹⁰⁴ Martin's concept of *geopresence*, fostered by the conscious deployment of every instrument of power available, is clearly a response to the perception of the transformation of both strategic space and weapons' capabilities, particularly those owned by the U.S. Air Force.

But this redefinition of strategic space and the other consequences that flow from the two interactive revolutions cited above, the RMA and RSA, does not only include the new capabilities of the U.S. or other navies. As defined by Edward Luttwak, Benjamin Lambeth, and by British observers, air power, which must be understood not as a single service or arm of the military but rather generically, is

the driving factor in the current transformation of strategic space. It should be understood not as a service capability, but as a generic form of military power that amalgamates both the hardware and the less tangible but other vital ingredients of airpower's effectiveness: doctrine, concepts of operations, training, and tactics.¹⁰⁵ Second, in this understanding, "Air power is functionally inseparable from battlespace information."¹⁰⁶ Third, airpower is not any one service's attribute, but rather an activity in which all the services play a critical role.¹⁰⁷ Accordingly, Martin's concept of global presence is not a service presence but a joint one, especially as ground forces may be needed to protect forward deployed air bases or operating sites, while the need for long-range sea-based strike power also grows.

Thus airpower, as understood here, becomes a flexible asset in strategic, operational, and tactical terms that allow for power projection by all the services. This clearly is a lesson of the 1990-91 Gulf War, but its full significance has only made itself felt since the wars against Iraq and Afghanistan. This technological-strategic trend also allows all military forces, be they land, sea, air, informational, or space-based, to use airpower thus defined to strike directly at enemy centers of gravity and critical targets on a globalized basis, as suggested above, or to move forces into position from where they can perform that mission. This also suggests that any future facilities in the Transcaspian most likely will be air bases, but they will provide the capability to expand for the insertion of ground forces, as needed.

THE NEED FOR COMPREHENSIVE ENGAGEMENT

The transformation of the Central Asian and overall Asian battlespaces forces us to address the domestic pathologies of local governments that make the Transcaspian a breeding ground for perennial instability. These domestic pathologies are well known in the policy and analytical literature, but it is worth citing a capsule list of them so that they are kept in mind. Throughout the area that Nation called the Adriatic-Caspian corridor, we encounter the following signs of state fragility and weakness. To use Nation's terminology, we encounter here,

Fragility of institutions and politico-administrative apparatus; democratic deficit, absence of civil society and legal mechanism for orderly transfer of power; crisis of identity owing to religious or ethnic rivalry; interstate, ethnic, tribal, and clan tensions; ethnic separatism; competitive involvement of major power mechanisms for organizing and controlling aid; incomplete modernization; relative underdevelopment; social disparities; corruption; crime; founding of pseudo-states; [and] weakness of the State.¹⁰⁸

Worse yet, these factors that cause a security deficit and challenge to local states often interact with and affect each other in circular fashion, thereby creating a vicious circle.¹⁰⁹ Some analysts liken Central Asian regimes to those of Africa, and argue that they combine the pathologies of “big man” rule visible in Africa, with a hangover of Soviet structures. Therefore, failure in one or more states is virtually a certainty, even if we cannot predict how or when this will happen.¹¹⁰ Such possibilities place a great responsibility and burden upon policymakers. As countless observers and scholars have warned, to ensure any kind of security throughout this region and throughout the so-called arc of crisis, policymaking must be holistic, utilizing all the instruments of power to the greatest possible extent. Equally importantly, security management, to be successful, must leverage the capabilities of all those allies and international organizations that have a growing stake in security there.¹¹¹ Therefore, failure to develop cooperation among all those working for Transcaspian stability and security raises the likelihood of persistent local crises and the possibility of U.S. unilateral intervention into them. In that case, absent structural reform, U.S. involvement will ultimately serve to secure some other government’s interests, not Washington’s.

America’s overall objectives for this region remain unchanged. They include defense of the independence, sovereignty, security, and integrity of the new post-Soviet states; their freedom from reintegration into a new imperial scheme whether by Russia, China, Iran, or terrorists; open markets guaranteeing equal access to foreign interests, especially oil and gas, and support for evolutionary moves towards democracy that ensure these states’ gradual political and economic integration into the Western world.¹¹² In the context of the GWOT, certain missions become priorities insofar as work with their armed forces are concerned. Those include, first, counterterrorism as

a vital objective or interest. After that come the important interests of counterproliferation, counterdrug, or border security (these also are conceivable as subsets of a more broadly conceived mission of counter-contraband operations, including WMD capabilities, drugs, or illicit trafficking in people for sexual, terrorist, or other purposes), and energy security (defense of pipelines). These turn into specific missions of counterterrorism, counterproliferation, counterdrug, and littoral security.¹¹³

Such priorities translate into specific operational objectives, the most important of which is permanent access in both peacetime and wartime. The point is to work with local regimes and their militaries to shape the local environment; establish relations of mutual trust, confidence and interoperability; and to raise local capabilities. All of these aspects become operational objectives of modernizing local forces' capabilities to meet threats to security and to work with us and our allies and partners. In so doing, we pave the way for a third set of objectives, namely facilitation of these countries' ultimate integration into the Euro-Atlantic political and military current, a process that also can provide leverage to help foster more democratic internal military structures and civilian democratic controls of the armed forces. Thus the hierarchy of operational goals starts with access and descends through modernization and its components to Westernization or integration and its components.¹¹⁴

To attain this access and realize our other objectives entail continuing cooperation with the new states' entire security sector. We must work with regular armed forces, border forces, intelligence, and police (often in the Ministry of the Interior). To gain trust, mutual confidence, and to raise the capacity of these forces to carry out these missions requires a broader engagement than in the past with all these different members of the security sector. This broader engagement grows from, and is fully compatible with, our efforts to integrate these states with the Euro-Atlantic security community.

For instance, the most visible or recent example of a policy whose roots began in the Clinton administration's doctrine of shaping the environment and are now continuing forward is our continuing concern to stabilize Georgia. This includes making it more compatible with NATO, and defending it from coercive threats from Russia or from its own internal pathologies in the wake of its recent revolution.

Thus we are increasing military assistance to Georgia.¹¹⁵ Since September 11, the wisdom of this perception reasserted itself so that now we are engaged in state-building on a massive scale in Iraq, Afghanistan, and putatively in the West Bank. All these are missions that have been embraced enthusiastically by the administration as essential aspects of its security profile.

Therefore, U.S. forces are already operating and will do so even more in a new and larger perimeter than was the case previously. This term does not necessarily refer to a location where U.S. forces confront an adversary and a military threat or single out a likely site for war. Instead, it refers to the locations where U.S. forces will be conducting operations regularly in peace, crisis, and war. But it could also mean expanded cooperation with host nations' security sectors. Most of these operations will be conducted in peacetime for purposes of promoting engagement, integration, and stability. The key point is that the U.S. operating perimeter may be enlarging even when no immediate threat exists or is expected. It may be enlarging for broader purposes that transcend planning for wars, i.e., for purposes of facilitating the broader integration of hitherto isolated areas into a broader Euro-Atlantic stream.

Thus in the Transcaspian, as in the adjacent theaters of Europe, the Persian Gulf, and Asia, our forces must continue to pursue operations and objectives beyond theater conflicts in any one of those three theaters. But if conflict should ensue, "Defense planners will therefore need to contemplate how to modify today's U.S. overseas presence by developing an altered posture, an outlying infrastructure, and better-prepared allies and partners."¹¹⁶ Indeed, U.S. exercises and activities with the Transcaspian governments' armed forces represent both a basis for future combat operations as in Operation ENDURING FREEDOM in Afghanistan or Operation IRAQI FREEDOM (OEF and OIF respectively), or for deterrence against future threats to those states' vital interests. At the same time, they also deter threats in regions from which American power, located in Central Asia or the Transcaucasus with host government consent, can be projected to the threatened area.

Roger Barnett, writing even before September 11 and focusing upon the Navy, clearly demonstrated the importance of such relationships for both deterrence and the transition to combat. His

words apply with equal force to all the services, not just the Navy. Barnett's remarks comport with the fact that U.S. military analysts even then were quite frank in how they saw the kinds of activities contained under the rubric of engagement and Partnership for Peace (PfP), not only in Europe or Central Asia, as essential aspects of the U.S. strategy of "extraordinary power projection." Our engagement programs took, and still take, the form of joint exercises, staff visits, training, and increasing interoperability.¹¹⁷ These activities also facilitate transition to war and, if necessary, participation in its initial stages. For example, as Barnett wrote,

It is often the action and activities of these forces that provide the dominant battlespace knowledge necessary to shape regional security environments. Multinational exercises, port visits, staff-to-staff coordination—all designed to increase force interoperability and access to regional military facilities—along with intelligence and surveillance operations, are but a few examples of how naval forces [and the same undoubtedly applies to other services—author] engage actively in an effort to set terms of engagement favorable to the United States and its allies. These activities are conducted at low political and economic costs, considering the tangible evidence they provide of U.S. commitment to a region. And they are designed to contribute to deterrence.

Deterrence is the product of both capability and will to deter a nuclear attack against the United States, its allies, or others to whom it has provided security assurances, . . . deterrence of other undesirable actions by adversaries or potential adversaries is part and parcel of everything naval forces do in the course of their operations—before, during, and after the actual application of combat force. . . .

That the United States has invested in keeping these ready forces forward and engaged delivers a signal, one that cannot be transmitted as clearly and unequivocally in any other way. Forward-deployed forces are backed by those which can surge for rapid reinforcement and can be in place in 7 to 30 days. These, in turn, are backed by formidable, but slower deployed, forces which can respond to a conflict over a period of months.¹¹⁸

Thus the United States and/or NATO use these operations to prepare for peace, or for short or protracted military operations in crucial security zones, and point to the Transcaspian's rising profile as one of these zones. Undoubtedly Central Asia and the Transcaucasus will look increasingly appealing to Pentagon planners

confronted with the daunting strategic requirements of ensuring sufficient U.S. presence in and around Asia to deter and prosecute any contingencies that may threaten important or vital U.S. interests there or in contiguous theaters in the future.¹¹⁹ But this obliges us to grasp clearly the nature of contemporary war and contemporary threats to stability, peace and U.S. interests throughout these regions (and those are not all the same three things).

Based on the foregoing analysis, we now turn to the task of recommending programs of engagement with Transcaspian militaries to secure our objectives of encouraging democracy—in this case, most prominently in civil-military relations. This engagement should aim at increasing security, reassuring allies and partners, and upgrading local capabilities so that those forces can become more interoperable with American forces. Ultimately, based on this engagement, relationships of trust are built which would allow for access pending future contingencies and host country agreement.

It is also clear that America needs local partners, if not allies, and that it must seek either to reinvigorate old alliances like NATO to support it in the former Soviet areas, or to find ways to forge enduring connections with new partners who share our interests and goals. On the one hand, we need to invigorate and make our security cooperation with former Soviet states more comprehensively strategic. And on the other, we need to forge productive relations with major alliance or interested major powers insofar as these areas are concerned. Regarding security cooperation with local governments, we need to investigate what the goals of these programs are (and we confine ourselves here to military programs). Regarding major alliances or governments; we need to define common interests and build upon them.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The first set of recommendations pertains to the search for partners from outside the Transcaspian in descending order of desirability of working with the governments listed here. The second set of recommendations pertains to working with local governments.

Set 1.

Despite the undoubted inter-allied tensions, NATO is becoming a venue of choice for an expanding commitment in Afghanistan. France commands the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) there as of December 2004, and NATO has also accepted that securing Afghanistan is its priority mission.¹²⁰ Moreover, it is also a priority security organization of choice for most post-Soviet states. Even Armenia is significantly upgrading its military ties to the West and NATO.¹²¹ The new states seek to be identified as Western, and recognize that adherence to the PfP program provides meaningful enhancement of their security through affiliation, if not membership, in a nonpredatory multilateral and cooperative security arrangement.¹²² Furthermore, it is the only effective organization that provides a standard of measurable activity and security against contemporary threats of terrorism, proliferation, etc.¹²³ Third, it has now demonstrated its ability to provide security for Afghanistan's elections and to work on behalf of a broader security stabilization than simply a conventional peace support operation. These trends were already visible in the PfP exercises that occurred in Eurasia before September 2001, but those attacks only reinforced that trend and the Afghan experience should add considerably to NATO's reputation in Central Asia and the Caucasus. So despite the numerous security deficits that plague the post-Soviet expanse, PfP signifies a positive way to foster multilateral security cooperation of a nonpredatory type.¹²⁴ Thus the programs that function under its rubric enhance local military capabilities, foster cooperation among local militaries and governments, and also provide a lasting foothold for Western military presence and influence.¹²⁵ Since the PfP is NATO's main instrument for providing all these security benefits and gaining local visibility, it is essential for Washington to support it financially. Washington should also use all available diplomatic instruments to galvanize NATO, to upgrade both bilateral and multilateral forms of cooperation with Central Asian and Caucasian governments, to work with local militaries, and use these programs as a basis for reaching a new strategic consensus with its allies about current and future threats and responses to them. Because no one power can overcome

the enormous security deficits unilaterally throughout the Caucasus and Central Asia, it is also essential that these discussions help narrow the gaps between American and European perceptions of threats emerging from the Transcaspian and thus approach common solutions to those threats.

NATO's Istanbul Initiative of 2004 clearly articulates such a commitment, but ways must be found to actualize it.¹²⁶ Local Transcaspian governments must be able to utilize the experience of new members, e.g., of the Baltic and Balkan countries and their armed forces, as they moved into NATO and that experience can and should be made available to them by those countries and NATO.¹²⁷ One way to do so is to change how NATO funds missions like Afghanistan. Essentially, each state sending troops today must fund its participation through its own exchequer, a process that obviously magnifies the domestic political costs of participation. If NATO's guidelines were revised so that it pays for operations like Afghanistan through a common fund, that could spur more funding and more programs, hence more opportunities for programs bringing together local and Western militaries.¹²⁸ The same procedure can be employed subsequently for operations like PfP and other activities with local governments.

Another possibility is expanded expert conferences among NATO and EU members since the two organizations are largely coterminous. There are also numerous signs of an enhanced EU interest in this area, especially the Transcaucasus.¹²⁹ These conferences would deal with the modalities of using the EU's and or NATO's military instrument, the Common European Security and Defense Program (CESDP), in the Transcaspian or of suggesting ways to internationalize the peace support operations currently taking place in the Caucasus. The EU would be able to go about its economic and political business in these areas either as part of this common strategy or on its own accord, but at least there would be a real possibility for cooperation among these organizations. Doing this would not only signify a genuine step even beyond the expanded interests of European security agencies in the Transcaspian. It could relieve the pressure on Russia and the tension between it and its neighbors, especially but not only Georgia. This is another possibility as well toward reducing the likelihood

of a revival of fighting in Nagorno-Karabakh. European models of conflict resolution have long been discussed for these conflicts, but in the absence of a real and tangibly expressed European interest in conflict resolution the discussion has remained academic. The likelihood of some real political and military muscle being brought to bear here might galvanize the participants and external mediators to seek real and innovative answers to unblocking those frozen conflicts and resolving them, thereby forestalling greater opportunities for terrorist penetration into the Caucasus.¹³⁰ Clearly, enhanced cooperation between NATO and the EU or between America and Europe in an area increasingly recognized by all parties as a security priority would contribute materially to easing intra-alliance and EU-American tensions. Common threat perceptions and responses to them would have a tonic effect on the sorely tried alliance and enhance both its self-confidence and capability for action beyond Europe's traditional borders.

In this connection, it merits considering whether NATO or the United States expand their programs of educational exchanges with former Soviet governments. Obviously this includes the international military education and training (IMET) program that funds attendance at institutions like the Marshall Center or NATO's Defense College in Rome. But it also can lead to the creation of a Transcaucasian and/or Central Asian Defense College modeled after the Baltic Defense College in Tartu, Estonia, which has been very successful in training and educating a new generation of officers.¹³¹

Turkey's likely entry into the EU also raises the need for intense discussions among Washington, Ankara, and Brussels as to how Turkey could contribute to the military and broader political objectives we have proposed here through NATO, the EU, or in bilateral ties to Transcaucasian regimes. The demarcation and definition of the ways in which this aid can most effectively be channeled cannot be postulated from outside or from above or *a priori*, but the need for a trilateral diplomatic initiative is obvious and would be highly productive. Since Turkey has already begun such activities on its own, finding a satisfactory method of reconciling all these partners' interests in expanding such programs merits sustained discussion and investigation. Turkey's being a Muslim country with an Islamic party leading a government that has embraced republican

and democratic policies and values will have profound impact on the Transcaspian once Turkey joins the EU. Turkey and the EU would be throwing away a golden opportunity if they refrained from stimulating this discussion because it could easily have a major impact throughout the region. Thus there is an urgent need and opportunity for Turkish-American-EU talks on how Turkey could contribute materially to the EU's rising interests in the post-Soviet area and how, as a member of NATO, it can do so as well, while reconciling its obligations and responsibilities to both the EU and NATO.

India is another potentially valuable partner with whom we could work, particularly in Central Asia, to gain access through bilateral, trilateral, and multilateral military engagement. India's interests in Central Asia are large, strategic, and growing. It already has an air base in Tajikistan and is engaged in buying weapons from and selling weapons to Central Asian governments. India's commercial profile in the area is large and growing.¹³² It also has a very long tradition of a highly competent military with much experience in SASO and a robust tradition of strict democratic control over the armed forces. But perhaps most importantly, India has a millennium or more of contact with Central Asia. Although Central Asian rulers like the Moguls have conquered India, India has never conquered Central Asia or harbored any such interest, a fact well known throughout the area.

Indo-American relations are currently better than ever, with a growing and comprehensive program of bilateral military engagement with exercises and exchanges throughout all the services. But there is no reason why discussions should not commence on upgrading India's participation in the modernization and westernization of Central Asian forces. Those forces could also be introduced to the bilateral Indo-American exercises now being conducted among all the services so as to build up strong trilateral working relationships based on experience and trust. The same applies to educational exchanges and expert dialogues. Certainly New Delhi and Washington share many critical interests in Central Asia, such as prevention of terrorism and the stabilization of Afghanistan. These fora would be ways to reinforce activities toward those ends

and toward the larger end of helping to stabilize the Central Asian region as a whole.

Admittedly, any program undertaken with India would likely anger Pakistan, especially if it embraced the new Afghan army. However, the initial scale of such activities could remain relatively small, be confined to the five former Soviet republics, and take place under a primarily bilateral Indo-Central Asian umbrella. If the program is successful, it could then even expand to bring Pakistan in as a confidence-building measure. In time, India's participation could help further integrate its military with Western democratic notions of conduct and provide a lasting institutional mechanism by which to influence it. Such fora could also stimulate a regional dialogue with India and the Central Asian militaries or governments that would be mutually beneficial to all parties.

It should be pointed out that all these aforementioned possibilities for increasing our partners' participation in these programs in the former Soviet Union require both intergovernmental agreements and also intense detailed participation in these activities and exercises by all the services of those countries and the United States. Thus the U.S. Army, Navy (where appropriate), and the Air Force all have roles to play in making such programs work.

China is not considered despite the undoubted importance of its rising military and other interests in Central Asia. While China has recently begun a dialogue with NATO on Central Asia, its bilateral military programs with the United States have not progressed to anything like the mutual trust needed for it to be taken into Washington's confidence in such a program. Nor is it likely that Central Asian states that are very wary of China would warm to the idea. Even though the SCO has upgraded China's military profile considerably through combined exercises, its platform remains an avowedly and openly anti-American one, and China's perception of the U.S. military's presence in Central Asia is openly hostile, seeing it as a real threat and opposing its continuation.¹³³ Since our level of cooperation with China does not even approach what we have in intelligence sharing or as regards to Afghanistan with Russia, and bearing in mind all these existing factors that inhibit bilateral military cooperation, it would be premature to approach China with such a proposal.

Finally, there is Russia. The September 2004 incident at Beslan has led the Russian government to appeal for international support against international terrorism, even though the Chechen insurgency is largely homegrown despite its ties to al-Qaeda. Nevertheless, it has stimulated some experts to call for increased bilateral cooperation, even to the point of collocating American and Russian Central Asian or other bases in the CIS so that American and Russian troops would actually be conducting combined missions.¹³⁴ However, the Russian Defense Ministry and government, despite previous calls for NATO assistance in reforming the Army back in 2002 and 2003, has shunned cooperation programs proposed by the U.S. military and shows no sign of being able or willing to change that posture.¹³⁵ Indeed, according to Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov, the Russian Army is on the verge of collapse because of large-scale draft evasion.¹³⁶ This alone makes cooperation difficult, and it does not begin to include the enormous and well-founded regional suspicion of Russian policies and objectives throughout the former Soviet Union or the Russian elite's equally profound suspicion of U.S. objectives and atavistic attachment to an imperial outlook regarding the former Soviet Union. These considerations continue to limit the scope for cooperation.

But they do not close that window. It would be possible to propose a bilateral or NATO-Russian program to share intelligence, training, and, perhaps after that, missions of an anti-terrorist nature to gain a wedge for cooperation with Russian forces. Not only would such cooperation be useful in itself, it would also provide a basis, if achieved, from which planning for future cooperation could ascend and advance. At the same time, this proposal tests Russian intentions as to whether calls for Western help are for real. Based on the answer and subsequent follow through, it will be possible to proceed accordingly, insofar as the Transcaspian is concerned.

Set 2.

In considering how to approach local regimes, we must take care to tailor U.S. programs to the needs of each country. At the same time, those programs should reinforce each other as part of a coordinated larger regional strategy. For instance, we must avoid

future situations such as has occurred with Uzbekistan where the U.S. State Department was legally obligated to suspend aid to the military—one of the more Westernizing institutions there—because of the government’s antidemocratic policies. But shortly thereafter, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Richard Myers (USAF) visited Uzbekistan, praised the government as an American ally, and transferred weapons to it.¹³⁷ While one can defend each of these actions on its own merits, they create an impression that our policies are incoherent, not truly interested in Uzbekistan’s democratization, and that the Uzbek regime can disregard calls for democratization because of our alliance with it, leading Uzbeks to think that we are not serious and can therefore be played.

Hence, the need for well-conceived interagency and multi-dimensional strategy of engagement becomes apparent. That strategy should assign priorities to our engagement with local governments and make them known to avoid such embarrassments. Those agencies that are disbursing funds for one or another form of assistance and security cooperation to these countries should ensure that pledged and allocated funds are quickly allocated and disbursed, and their programs are implemented. As one recent article observed, “Experience shows that Tajikistan actually receives a fraction of what has been pledged.”¹³⁸ The same kinds of delays have plagued our reconstruction efforts in Iraq and have to be accounted as contributing to the serious insurgency there. Because we are at war into the foreseeable future, it may turn out that military assistance is the current priority, to be replaced over time with democratization and good governance as the priorities. While undoubtedly that position will arouse criticism, it certainly is an eminently defensible and readily understandable one in wartime.

Thus what we are about in these countries with respect to security cooperation that originates in the Defense Department and other police and intelligence agencies who are assisting these states is *defense development*—otherwise known as defense-sector reform, or more broadly security-sector reform (military, police, intelligence, and border troops).¹³⁹ Particularly in wartime, such comprehensive defense development is essential to securing our goals of access and interoperability, not to mention the goals of more stable and secure regimes which confront internal and external threats.

Too often “underdeveloped” defense sectors—incapable, bloated, corrupt, opaque—endanger neighboring states, contaminate domestic politics and markets, engage in transnational crime, and even fail in their assigned mission: to provide adequate national security. Countries with militaries that detract from security, squander scarce resources, and cannot be trusted by their own leaders or citizens, are countries with three strikes against them. Such consequences cannot be ignored. With the globalization of economics, interests, and threats, damage to development and to security in the South can harm the West.¹⁴⁰

Hence the need for comprehensive approaches that encompass all the sectors of the government in question who provide security, not only the regular military, but the police, intelligence, border troops, and even arguably the criminal justice system.¹⁴¹ Admittedly defense development is a long term-goal that far transcends the immediate ones of security cooperation, access, and influence. Nevertheless, the effort to shape partner military establishments who wish to reform to the highest standards of military conduct, which are today Western standards, must be the long-term objective that we keep firmly in mind, even if we make temporary compromises, particularly in wartime.¹⁴² While our immediate objectives in the military sector pertain to the immediate needs of the GWOT, our strategy must constantly be informed by the objective of helping to stabilize these countries and modernize their military establishments in a cooperative manner, according to the highest standards of military proficiency and conduct that are available to them.

Consequently, with regard to bilateral military engagement with each country to achieve access, we need to enter into serious discussions with these governments to assure them of our support in return and the conditions of threat that will trigger such support. As a Rand study on gaining access observes,

To the extent that allies conclude that their overall security interests are best served by a direct relationship with the United States, additional cooperation of various kinds can be expected, including plans to provide access to U.S. forces under various circumstances. To the extent that their relationship with the United States is increasingly seen as a liability, cooperation might be reduced. Thus the antecedent for increased security cooperation—including access—will be some harmonization of threat

perceptions and in calculation of which policies and position will best enhance overall security in the face of internal and external threats.¹⁴³

Thus one essential requirement is an institutionalized strategic dialogue with these states between both uniformed officers and experts to work out this harmonization.

Second, the Army, as part of its current transformation process, needs to emphasize the rapid availability of those forces which could be used to gain access, forcibly, if necessary. This entails three requirements: diversifying the “portfolio” of access options in the regions considered here and also in adjoining ones, improving and enhancing force capabilities that pertain to gaining access to contested areas, and diversifying the flexibility of those capabilities that enhance aerial and maritime mobility.¹⁴⁴ This is particularly crucial in the Caucasus and Central Asia since most of these countries are landlocked. Therefore, and building upon the expanded and broader conception of security mentioned above, it would be a shrewd investment for the services as a whole to invest in infrastructure; ports, where possible; air bases; road, rail, and airports; as well as communications and logistics infrastructure for water and petroleum, oils, and lubricants (POL) so that it becomes easier for us to gain access, if needed. Such investments would also enhance these countries’ economic and political capabilities substantially by helping to overcome the lack of transportation assets and egress to the sea that have perpetuated their backwardness. Since we are going to fight jointly if deployed to these areas, all the services have an equal stake in these security-building and investment projects, as they are both wealth and force multipliers.¹⁴⁵ Such programs would also foster increased contacts and communications among neighboring states that could help build more mutual confidence and trust. For example, demining Uzbekistan’s borders with its various neighbors, in particular Tajikistan, might help foster more cooperation, ease their mutual security dilemmas, and increase travel and trade between them, particularly if good roads could replace the mines.¹⁴⁶ These actions also characterize the kind of military interoperability and bilateral relationships we want to emphasize in our relations with these states and the kinds of operations we think will be preminent for them in the foreseeable future.

Recent reports indicate, first, the military priorities we want to accomplish in security cooperation, prosecution of counterterrorism, counterproliferation, and counterdrug operations.¹⁴⁷ Those reports also underscore the need, cited by Secretary Rumsfeld and by a recent Rand study on this subject, to overcome the many problems that currently afflict the Army's International Activities (AIA), and security cooperation in general.¹⁴⁸ While some of these reforms have been launched, it is still too soon to evaluate their success.¹⁴⁹ Nevertheless, the reform of the security cooperation program in general, and the AIA in particular, should accompany the idea of focusing on a strategy based on priorities and on better interagency coordination of policy toward post-Soviet countries. It might be useful to review not only the Pentagon's program, but also those of other departments to verify that they contribute to a unified strategy based on shared departmental priorities and, if so, to what degree. Enhanced coordination would reduce the contradictions that appear in the policy, but also impart a clearer strategic focus and set of priorities to all aid projects undertaken by the federal government, not just the military programs.

Because we are at war and will be for the foreseeable future, the Pentagon's security cooperation programs should focus on those military capabilities that enhance our ability to gain access and to work with a responsive infrastructure and local forces to conduct combined operations. We need to emphasize those operations that are of most interest or priority to us in the GWOT as listed above, and also to expand military exchanges and education programs just as we did for NATO. This would also include focusing on the IMET program, and continuing to use the Marshall Center and NATO Defense College as centers for Central Asian and Transcaucasian military students, use Central and East European governmental and military personnel who are so inclined to mentor these new governments, and set up comparable institutions. Just as the Army funds the Baltic Defense College in Tartu, it could also fund a Caucasus-Central Asian Defense College in a suitable venue to train officers in English, interoperability, and in a different form of civilian-military interaction than what they have known, as well as in contemporary strategy and operations, especially peace support operations.

Undoubtedly we could do a great deal more, because the integration of these former Soviet republics into the West is the work of generations, not of years, and must be accomplished under both the current wartime conditions and hopefully once peace returns to the area. Moreover, such forms of security cooperation of both a military and nonmilitary nature are of increased importance and interest to security analysts here and abroad, testimony to the area's strategic significance and that of these territories in the modern world.¹⁵⁰ Clearly this work will not be finished soon. But due to our responsibility for our own security and interest in the security of these states and peoples, we are no longer exempted from taking that responsibility in hand and working with our allies to pacify the area and integrate it into the Euro-Atlantic community. In the final analysis and notwithstanding the current severe differences among the allies, this security community remains the paramount example of successful international security cooperation in our times and a shining example for all of the post-Soviet regimes. If we fail to exploit the revolutionary trends in regional and world affairs discussed above and these countries remain black holes of instability, the price that our allies and we pay, notwithstanding our differences, may not be as high as that paid by the local regimes. But as shown on September 11, 2001, it will still be far too high and traumatic a price for past negligence after repeated warnings about contemporary threats.

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