

Chapter 7

The United States— The Obama Administration Strives for Change

Barack Obama assumed office as the forty-fourth president of the United States on January 20, 2009. Under his leadership, the new administration has spearheaded various initiatives aimed at rebuilding the US economy—primarily through financial system stabilization, economic stimulus packages, and investment in energy, healthcare, and education—and at dealing with a host of foreign policy challenges, particularly resolution of the situations in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and the reconstruction of Iraq. At the same time, the Obama administration is endeavoring to restore the United States as a leader of the international community by tackling global issues, such as climate change and nuclear proliferation. Renouncing the unilateralism that marked George W. Bush’s presidency, the Obama administration has made bilateral/multilateral dialogues and international cooperation the cornerstone of its foreign policy.

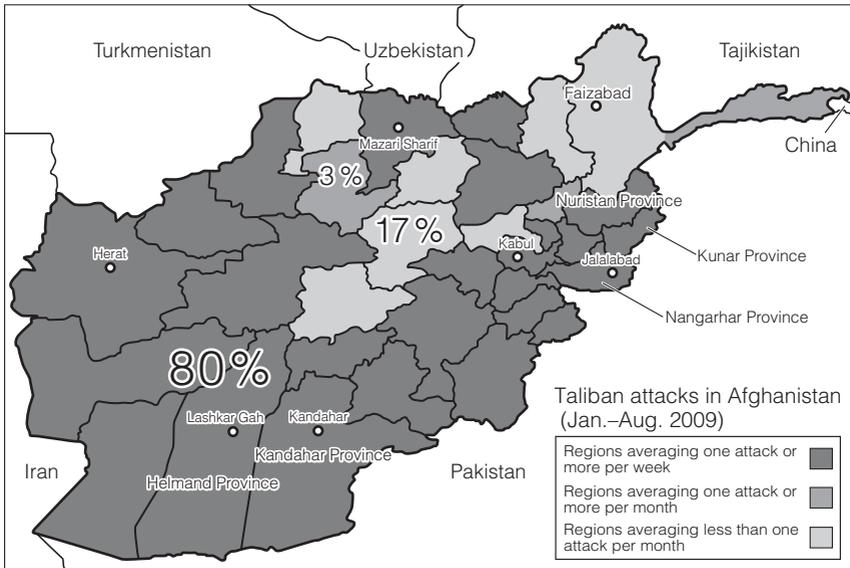
In addition to working to “reset” the US relations with Russia, President Obama roused global enthusiasm for nuclear disarmament and nonproliferation by declaring in his April 5 speech in Prague that the United States would implement specific efforts toward the realization of a “world without nuclear weapons.” With respect to East Asia, the Obama administration’s policy is to create an architecture for regional and global cooperation by establishing collaborative relationships with China and other emerging Asian powers, while maintaining the foundation of close US ties with traditional allies and partners in the region, including Japan.

1. The Afghanistan-Pakistan Issue Receives Top Priority

(1) A New Strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan

Although more than eight years have passed since the “War on Terror” commenced in October 2001 under the leadership of the United States and the United Kingdom, the situation in Afghanistan continues to deteriorate due to the resurgence of the Taliban, who have been increasingly on the offensive. The Taliban’s attacks against the US and NATO forces operating within Afghanistan, and against the Afghan National Army, were formerly confined to the south of the country and parts of the east, but recently their activities have spread to areas north of Kabul. As of October 2009 the Taliban were seen to be raising the tempo of their offensives in almost every part of Afghanistan. The deterioration of the security situation—due to attacks employing suicide bombings and improvised explosive devices (IEDs)—is spreading to the entire country. Other problems that plague Afghanistan include the weakness and corruption of the government and the slow progress of efforts to train the Afghanistan security forces up to an adequate level. In March 2009 President Obama announced a new comprehensive strategy with respect to Afghanistan and Pakistan, but in response to the subsequent deterioration of the situation in Afghanistan the US administration was forced to rethink this strategy. On December 1 the president announced plans to deploy an additional 30,000 troops, and also proposed to begin withdrawals in July 2011. According to the private-sector website iCasualties.org, 835 US military personnel had died in Afghanistan as of December 31, 2009.

The administration of President Hamid Karzai was inaugurated on December 24, 2004, and a certain degree of progress toward normal political life was seen, with elections to the Afghanistan parliament in September 2005 followed by the convening of the new parliament in December. In the presidential election held on August 20, 2009, incumbent President Hamid Karzai won a majority of the votes, but large-scale electoral fraud was revealed. After a recount, it was found that Karzai had not received a majority of the votes cast, and a second round run-off vote between Karzai and former foreign minister Abdullah Abdullah was announced for November 7, 2009. However, Abdullah withdrew from the election process, and the Afghan Electoral Commission on November 2 announced that the runoff election had been cancelled and declared President Karzai the winner by default.

Figure 7.1. Taliban activity in Afghanistan

Source: Prepared from the website of the International Council on Security and Development

The restoration of security to Afghan society is essential to moving the Afghan peace process forward. Operation Enduring Freedom (the term used by the US government for the War in Afghanistan), which is being pursued by the United States together with the United Kingdom and the government of Afghanistan, is paralleled by the operations in Afghanistan of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), which was established by UN Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 1386 on December 20, 2001. Under UNSC Resolution 1510 of October 13, 2003, the ISAF gradually expanded its geographical area of operations from December 2003 over the whole of Afghanistan, taking over responsibility from the US military for the maintenance of peace and security in the entire country from October 2006. From August 2003, NATO took permanent control over the activities of the ISAF, replacing the former system under which countries had taken it in turn every six months to direct operations. As of December 2009, forty-three countries were participating in the ISAF, with a total of 84,150 personnel helping to support the government of Afghanistan through the maintenance of security. Additionally, Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) composed of both

military and civilian personnel were operating at twenty-six sites throughout Afghanistan, working with the Afghan government, the UN and NGOs, among others, to improve the security environment, carry out reconstruction work, and implement humanitarian aid programs. Meanwhile, although the training of the Afghan National Army and Police Force is proceeding, with the support of the international community, the country is a long way from being able to realize security within its borders through its own efforts.

In spite of these wide-ranging operations by the US forces and the ISAF, since 2005 no improvement at all has been seen in the security environment in Afghanistan; in fact, the situation is deteriorating rapidly. Security is relatively good in certain parts of the country, but in addition to frequent clashes between armed factions, as well as widespread criminal activities, the Taliban are once again becoming active over wide stretches of Afghanistan. According to the International Council on Security and Development, an international think tank, as of August 2009 the Taliban operates freely in roughly 97 percent of Afghanistan's territory. While the Taliban had established permanent control over only 54 percent of the country in 2007, by 2009 this had risen to 80 percent (see Figure 7.1). Security is worst in the south of Afghanistan, particularly the Taliban stronghold of Kandahar province, and neighboring Helmand province, which is the world's leading center of opium production. Terrorist bombings and armed attacks occur frequently in this part of the country. The attack on a UN guesthouse in Kabul on October 28, 2009 signaled that the UN was now targeted by the Taliban. As attacks on the UN by the Taliban had been extremely rare up to that point, this incident caused a major stir both inside and outside the country.

Five principal reasons for this deterioration in the security situation can be pinpointed. First and foremost is the fact that the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) of Pakistan have become a safe haven for terrorists—both the Taliban and al-Qaeda. In reaction to the attacks launched in October 2001 by US and coalition forces, working with the Afghan opposition forces of the Northern Alliance, the Taliban in December withdrew from Kandahar province to the “Pashtun Belt,” an ethnic Pashtun-dominated region that straddles the border with Pakistan in the east and south of Afghanistan. Thereafter, they built up their organizational resources in this region, and from 2005 have increasingly used the FATA as a staging point for operations against targets in Afghanistan.

In recent years, three Taliban armed groups in particular have been targeted for

search-and-destroy missions by the US military and their allies: these are the Quetta Shura Taliban (QST), the Haqqani Network (HQN), and the Hizb-I Islami Gulbuddin (HIG). Although the three groups are not part of the same command network, they are all fighting to force the withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan and to overthrow the Karzai government and impose their own rule over the Afghan people. As the groups share the same basic aims, their activities are believed to be loosely coordinated. The QST is an organization that operates underground in the city of Quetta in Pakistan's province of Balochistan, under the leadership of Mullah Mohammed Omar. It is an armed group composed mainly of ethnic Pashtuns that operates across the whole of Afghanistan from its bases in the Pashtun-majority south and east of the country. The QST calls for the reestablishment of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (the name given by the Taliban to Afghanistan under their rule from 1996 to 2001). It appoints "governors" for almost all parts of the country, drafts fighters, raises taxes, and conducts propaganda activities. Through the active pursuit of all these activities, the group is consolidating its de facto rule over large parts of Afghanistan. In its early stages, the QST is thought to have received assistance from Pakistan, such as organized troop recruitment and the supply of arms, and it is said still to be receiving support from elements within or linked to Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI).

The leader of the HQN was Jalaluddin Haqqani, an ethnic Pashtun who was formerly minister with responsibility for the country's borders and minister of tribal affairs, as well as a senior military leader, under the Taliban administration. His son Sirajuddin Haqqani is now believed to be the de facto leader due to his father's death or indisposition. The HQN is based in Waziristan in Pakistan's tribal areas, and carries out attacks against the Afghan government in the eastern part of Afghanistan.

The HIG, led by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, an ethnic Pashtun, is believed to be based mainly in regions in the east of Afghanistan, near Kabul, including the provinces of Nangarhar, Nuristan, and Kunar, as well as in Pakistan. The group seeks to exercise control over the mineral resources and smuggling routes of these regions, and is believed to be looking to play a major role in the governance of Afghanistan once the Taliban regain control of Kabul.

These militant groups all receive support from the Pashtun population of Pakistan's tribal areas. QTS and the HQN maintain their links with al-Qaeda, but some experts insist that whereas al-Qaeda is pursuing a global jihad, these two

groups, as well as the HIG, are aiming solely to force the withdrawal of US troops and all other foreign forces from Afghanistan. The Karzai administration has called for peaceful reconciliation with the Taliban, but has thus far received no positive response.

A second principal cause that has been pointed out for the deteriorating security situation in Afghanistan is the fact that the George W. Bush administration placed a higher priority on restoring security in Iraq than on stabilizing the situation in Afghanistan, and it therefore did not commit sufficient numbers of troops or other resources to Afghanistan. The US military handed over responsibility for the maintenance of security over the whole territory of Afghanistan to the ISAF in October 2006, and although the US forces continued to carry out search-and-destroy missions against terrorists, the United States' efforts to ensure the safety of civilians and to train the local security forces up to an effective level appear to have been entirely inadequate.

The third cause is the weakness of the Afghan government structure, as well as endemic corruption among government officials and the lack of basic abilities displayed by the Afghan National Army and the police. As of September 2009 the Afghan National Army had 93,980 members. According to the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board set up under the Afghanistan Compact, in September 2008 the army had reached only 70 percent of the ultimate target of 134,000 troops, and was in need of equipment and training assistance from the ISAF. In addition, although the Afghan National Police have been increased to 90,129 personnel, the force's capabilities and credibility are severely lacking, and increased assistance with training is required.

A fourth cause of the deterioration in the security situation is a lack of clarity in the organization of international assistance for the country, and in the order of priorities for individual projects. Ill-preparedness in the conduct of reconstruction work, resulting from a lack of integration between civilian organizations and the military, has also been cited as a contributory factor.

A fifth factor contributing to the deterioration of the Afghanistan situation involves growing opposition to the US military presence among the Afghan population due to civilian casualties from US air strikes. This is said to be a major factor behind the increasing frequency of terrorist attacks and the expanding influence of the Taliban. Over the past few years the US forces have been stepping up their bombing of targets in areas bordering Pakistan, and actually in Pakistan itself.

This has fueled growing opposition among the Pakistani population and increased activity by anti-government armed groups, leading to a higher frequency of terrorist attacks.

While the security environment in Afghanistan is worsening, the situation in neighboring Pakistan is becoming increasingly chaotic. A string of large-scale terrorist attacks occurred in 2009. On March 3 and 30, armed groups attacked police training facilities in Lahore, the provincial capital of Punjab in the east of the country. On June 9 a high-class hotel in Peshawar in northwest Pakistan was bombed, and on October 5 a suicide bomber blew up the offices of the World Food Programme in the capital Islamabad. This was followed on the ninth by a suicide bombing at a market in Peshawar, on the tenth by an attack by armed militants on the local headquarters of the Pakistani army in the suburbs of Rawalpindi, on the twelfth by a suicide bomb attack on government forces in the Northwest Frontier Province, and on the fifteenth by another attack on police training facilities in Lahore. December 4 saw an attack on a mosque in a residential district of Rawalpindi used by government forces.

Most of these terrorist attacks were carried out by the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), which is based in South Waziristan in the northwest of the country. The TTP gradually came into being around 2002 as a group opposed to Pakistan's military incursions into the tribal areas to clean out foreign militants. The group was officially formed in December 2007 under the leadership of Baitullah Mehsud. The TTP carries out a struggle (which it characterizes as a "jihad") against the Pakistani armed forces, and its aims are the enforcement of Sharia and unification against the foreign forces now occupying Afghanistan. The TTP is composed of various supporting groups active in the seven Tribal Areas and part of the Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP), and is believed capable of mobilizing some 30,000–35,000 fighters. In August 2009 Baitullah Mehsud was killed in a US drone (unmanned aerial vehicle) attack, and he was succeeded as *amir* of the group by Hakimullah Mehsud, who is thought to have directed a number of revenge attacks on the Pakistani establishment. Recently, the TTP is said to have been tightening its liaison with al-Qaeda.

The Pakistani armed forces carried out incursions into South Waziristan from the latter half of 2003 into 2005 with the aim of rooting out Taliban groups and groups affiliated with al-Qaeda. Similar operations were also conducted in 2008. However, the Pakistani military, who supported the Taliban administration of

Afghanistan in the second half of the 1990s, have been attempting to avoid confrontation with the Taliban, whose support they feel they need in order to retain influence in Afghanistan to counter India's growing presence. At the same time, out of consideration for the rising tide of anti-US sentiment, and fearful of possible casualties among the civilian population that could result from search-and-destroy operations, the military have held back from a fully fledged attack in North and South Waziristan, instead concluding a series of peace accords with local militants. In May 2009, however, in response to the rising number of terrorist attacks throughout the country, the military commenced sweeping operations in the districts of Swat and Buner within the NWFP. In October they stepped up the scale of their operations with a full-fledged attack on armed groups in South Waziristan.

Because of these frequent attacks by militants on the Pakistani security forces, such as military headquarters, concern has been growing about the safety of Pakistan's nuclear weapons management. The government of Pakistan is believed to have taken steps to ensure full security in its management of nuclear weapons through cooperative efforts with the United States, although it has not admitted as much publicly. While the danger of Pakistani nuclear weapons falling into the hands of terrorist groups is thought to be small, at least for the time being, there is a possibility that members of extremist Islamic groups might be able to infiltrate nuclear weapons facilities. Pakistan already possesses 60–100 nuclear warheads, and the country's nuclear weapons development program is expected to continue. In these circumstances, if Pakistan were to become a failed state, resulting in its nuclear weapons falling into the hands of terrorists, there would be a heightened danger of attacks on the US forces or those of its allies, using these nuclear weapons.

(2) United States' Afghanistan-Pakistan Strategy Faces Critical Test

President Obama has termed the war in Afghanistan a “war of necessity,” and the administration is tackling the whole Afghanistan-Pakistan issue on a top-priority basis in order to protect the security of the United States. On March 27, 2009 President Obama announced a comprehensive, new strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan that was the culmination of a sixty-day strategic review. The new strategy focused on the five points described below.

First, the US plans to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat al-Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and it set out a clear goal of ensuring that neither country would

constitute a safe haven for al-Qaeda in the future.

Second, the president stated that he would treat Afghanistan and Pakistan as two countries but one challenge, recognizing that a solution to the Afghanistan problem would require stability in Pakistan. The United States would provide even more assistance to Pakistan than heretofore, and would pursue intensive regional diplomacy involving all key players in South Asia.

Third, President Obama announced plans to make adequate resources available for the training of the Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police.

Fourth, the approach taken by the United States would fully take into account the importance of the problems the Afghan and Pakistani governments were encountering in asserting control over their territories. Additionally, the United States would not concentrate solely on military solutions: its efforts would include a notable emphasis on providing assistance to ordinary Afghan civilians through the dispatch of civilian experts in the fields of agriculture and education, as well as support for economic development and the reconstruction of the social infrastructure. On October 15, 2009, President Obama signed into law the Kerry-Lugar-Berman Bill after it had been passed by both houses of Congress. (The bill was proposed by John Kerry, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and Richard Lugar, ranking member of the same committee, and by Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee Howard Berman.) This legislation authorized the payment of \$1.5 billion a year in non-military assistance over the next five years to the government of Pakistan.

Fifth, the US government pledged to work closely with the Afghan government, its partners in NATO, and the UN in providing resources for the civilian aspects of the mission.

Meanwhile, the combat situation in Afghanistan has deteriorated still further, and there has been a steep rise in the number of deaths among US troops and those of countries participating in the ISAF. The United States and its allies are in danger of becoming bogged down in Afghanistan. In his report submitted to Secretary of Defense Robert M.

Gates, US Commander in Afghanistan Gen. Stanley A. McChrystal stated that the situation was extremely serious, but that success was achievable if the strategy were reworked. According to media reports, McChrystal had requested an additional 40,000 troops at the minimum in order to achieve success.

McChrystal's report stated: (1) The overall situation was very serious, and was worsening as a result of an offensive by anti-government militants. (2) The credibility of the Karzai administration and the international community in the minds of the Afghan people has been very badly damaged. (3) The strategy pursued by the NATO-led ISAF thus far, of attempting to capture or kill the militants, requires rethinking, and a comprehensive approach to counter-insurgency (COIN) operations was needed in which the prime focus would be on securing safety through close collaboration between the military and civilian sectors. (4) Accelerated efforts were required to train Afghan security forces, including expanding the size of the Afghan National Army to 134,000 troops by the autumn of 2011, with a further goal of 240,000 soldiers and 160,000 police officers. To this end, the injection of more staff to undertake the necessary training, as well as additional funds, was required.

McChrystal's report sparked a fully fledged reexamination by the Obama administration of its Afghanistan-Pakistan strategy, as well as lively debate among the experts on the advisability of sending additional troops to the region. In his report, McChrystal asserted that major reinforcements were needed to make possible COIN operations with the focus on securing day-to-day safety for the local population, but in response to this, Vice President Joe Biden and other administration officials are reported to have counseled caution. They are said to have insisted that an increase in the number of troops was unnecessary, calling instead for a shift of focus from COIN operations carried out by US forces across the whole of Afghanistan to search-and-destroy missions employing special forces units or unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), targeting al-Qaeda groups based in Pakistan's tribal areas. Richard Haass, president of the Council on Foreign Relations, one of the most influential political think tanks in the United States, has called for a strengthening of aid to Pakistan on the grounds that the greatest direct threat to the security of the United States comes not from an expansion in the power of the Taliban in Afghanistan, but from al-Qaeda, which is operating out of Pakistan, a nuclear-armed state. Meanwhile, Bruce Riedel, formerly special assistant to the president and senior director for Near East and North African

Affairs, National Security Council, has called for massive reinforcements to enable COIN operations across a wide region of Afghanistan, on the grounds that such operations are the only way to obtain the local information needed to defeat al-Qaeda groups based in Pakistan.

On December 1, 2009 President Obama announced plans to send an additional 30,000 troops to Afghanistan, as well as new plans to begin troops withdrawals in July 2011. These reinforcements would expand the total size of the US military presence in Afghanistan from 68,000 troops as of December 2009 to around 100,000 in 2010.

(3) Issues and Prospects Going Forward

As described above, President Obama's goals are to "disrupt, dismantle, and defeat" al-Qaeda in both Afghanistan and Pakistan so as to deprive the organization of the ability to pose a future threat to the United States. To implement COIN operations in pursuit of this goal, with a prime focus on ensuring the security of the civilian population in Kabul and other major cities, as well as training the fledgling Afghan security forces, the president authorized the dispatch of an additional 21,000 troops in March 2009, and this was followed by the above-described 30,000-troop reinforcement in December. In drawing up and implementing an Afghanistan-Pakistan strategy, the United States is expected to face the following five principal issues, among others.

First, it is extremely important that the United States be involved in Afghanistan and Pakistan on both a long-term and comprehensive basis. If Afghanistan were to once again become a hotbed for terrorism and Pakistan—a nuclear-armed state—were to be destabilized, this could lead to political instability throughout the whole of Central Asia. If the United States were to abandon its long-term involvement in the affairs of the two countries, this could lead to a worst-case scenario in which the Taliban regain control of Afghanistan, Pakistan becomes a failed state, and nuclear weapons fall into the hands of al-Qaeda. It is essential that any plans to withdraw US troops from Afghanistan be carefully deliberated in the light of the unfolding situation on the ground.

Second, it is vital for the achievement of political stability in Afghanistan that the Kabul government's ability to rule is improved and progress is made in training the Afghan security forces. Amid accusations that Ahmad Wali Khan Karzai, President Hamid Karzai's younger brother (who exercises strong political influence

in Kandahar in the south of Afghanistan) has been involved in drug smuggling, unless the Karzai administration tackles corruption head-on and makes significant progress in improving its ability to govern, the government will not enjoy the support and trust of either the people of Afghanistan or the countries of the West. In fact, according to a public opinion survey jointly carried out by the Washington Post and ABC television, whose results were announced in October 2009, President Obama's Afghanistan policy received the support of only 45 percent of the US public, while 47 percent thought that the War in Afghanistan was "not worth fighting."

Third, there is the need for the government of Pakistan to extend its rule over the tribal areas and prevent al-Qaeda or anti-government groups such as TTP from using these areas as a safe haven. Efforts will be needed to improve India-Pakistan relations so as to allow Pakistan to improve its COIN capabilities and direct more resources into COIN operations. Mention should also be made of the fact that Pakistan has provided support to the Taliban in Afghanistan with the aim of realizing a strategic fallback position in Afghanistan to counter the perceived strategic threat from India. Cross-border attacks on Pakistan territory by Afghanistan-based US UAVs have had some success in killing al-Qaeda leaders, and are therefore likely to continue, but they have the downside of exacerbating anti-US feeling among the Pakistani public and thus feeding the growth of anti-government militant groups.

Fourth, there is a vital need for the government of Afghanistan to reach an accommodation with the many and varied tribal groups within the country, including moderate elements of the Taliban, through reconciliation agreements and the reintegration of their members into the mainstream of civil life. The Taliban movement originally rose when students at madrassas (schools of religious instruction) in Pakistan close to the Afghan border, espousing Islamic principles, set out to rid Afghanistan of the corruption, brutality, and incessant fighting that characterized the rule of the Mujahideen warlords. The Taliban are an indigenous movement fueled by Pashtun ethnic nationalism, and despite their association with al-Qaeda, most observers do not believe that the Taliban are interested in waging global jihad. The Taliban are composed of a diverse group of factions, including hard-liners fighting to rid Afghanistan of all foreign troops as well as many members who joined for economic reasons or under pressure. Consequently, it is thought vital to promote dialogue with moderate Taliban factions so as to

move forward with reconciliation agreements and the reintegration of Taliban members into society.

Finally, there is the question of international collaboration and the creation of a regional approach to the Afghanistan-Pakistan problem. In addition to regular three-way talks between the United States, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, a wider regional approach is required that draws in participation from India, Iran, Russia, China, and all the countries of Central Asia. The United States should seek to liaise and cooperate with Russia, Iran, and Uzbekistan—whose territories can be used to channel men and material to the Afghan insurgents—and consider engaging the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation.

As of the end of 2009 there were still no clear pointers as to whether President Obama's new strategy would succeed or fail. While the COIN operations by the US forces and the ISAF have produced some results, if there is no improvement in the corrupt nature of the Karzai regime or substantive progress in the training of the Afghan security forces, the stabilization of the country cannot be hoped for. At the same time, the situation inside Pakistan continues to be a decisive factor in determining the direction of the US strategy in Afghanistan. In the event that no improvement in the situation in Afghanistan and Pakistan is seen even over the long term, this will not only seriously harm the United States' reputation for international leadership, but will also exert a far-reaching influence on the capabilities and procurement plans of the US military.

2. The Obama Administration's Defense Policy and Future Developments

(1) Rethinking of Major Weapons Procurement Plans

Since President Obama's inauguration, his administration has been faced with a serious economic crisis, and the administration has also been under pressure to carry out a major overhaul of the defense budget, which has been growing consistently since September 2001 in response to the terrorist threat to the United States. The apparent long-term nature of the US commitment to Iraq and Afghanistan and the concomitant increase in costs have also been putting strong pressure on the US authorities to pare back the defense budget.

In its fiscal 2010 budget message of February 16, 2009 which lays out the policy for the compilation of the budget, the Obama administration announced

that the annual growth rate of defense expenditures, which had been rising at around 10 percent year-on-year over the past five years, would be held down to approximately 4 percent. At a press conference on March 24, President Obama mentioned that a revision of the Department of Defense's procurement plan was underway, and that the budget might be reduced by as much as \$40 billion.

In recent years the Pentagon's procurement plan has been consistently over budget by wide margins, and the plan has also been criticized for procuring a great deal of equipment that is not really needed for the US forces to perform their current missions. It is for this reason that the defense budget has been reviewed under the Obama administration. In line with the administration's policy, on April 6 Secretary of Defense Gates announced that his FY2010 defense budget recommendations to the president would include proposals to cancel or rework certain key programs. Gates referred to the fiscal 2010 budget bill, which incorporates these proposals, as a "reform budget." He said that it reflected lessons learned in Iraq and Afghanistan, but that it also addressed the range of other potential threats around the world, now and in the future.

Among the proposals, Gates attracted wide attention for his bold decision to terminate procurement of the F-22 Raptor fighter at 187 aircraft. Featuring such capabilities as supercruise, excellent maneuverability, and robust stealth technology, the F-22 had originally been expected to serve as the main fighter aircraft of the US Air Force (USAF). However, it became the target of criticism for vastly overrunning its planned unit cost, and for having no mission to fulfill as an air superiority fighter—the role for which it was conceived—in military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. At present, no other nation possesses fighters capable of countering the F-22, which is classified as a fifth-generation fighter. Gates pointed out that it would take around six years for Russia to begin deploying fifth-generation fighters, and ten to twelve years for China to accomplish the same. Because of the hefty price paid for the F-22's seemingly excessive capabilities, Gates' new defense plan aims to accelerate development of the F-35 Lightning II multirole fighter as an affordable alternative to the F-22, setting a total procurement target of 2,443 aircraft, 513 of which are to be delivered during the next five years.

Other major procurement plans have been discontinued or downsized as part of the reworked budget proposals. With regard to the USAF, principally notable is the announcement of plans to halt production of C-17 Globemaster III military

transport aircraft and to rethink plans for the development of next-generation long-range bombers. The development of new helicopters for combat search-and-rescue missions will also be revised. This decision was based not simply on budget fund and timeframe overruns, but also because it was deemed inefficient for a single branch of the armed forces to procure equipment for a single objective when it is clear that the USAF would not be the only service operating important missions such as search and rescue.

Turning to the US Navy, it was decided to cancel plans for the new VH-71 presidential helicopter, as the development work had already overrun the budgeted cost and was behind schedule. Revised plans for the construction of warships were announced. In particular, the Obama administration decided to slow down construction of nuclear-powered aircraft carriers, which will bring about a carrier fleet of ten vessels in 2040, a reduction of one from the present fleet. Additionally, a decision was made to reduce the number of new classes of destroyer constructed. The current destroyer classes equipped with the Aegis Combat System (ACS) are deemed to be fully capable of carrying out their missions, and construction of them would be continued. A decision was also made to reexamine plans for the construction of next-generation cruisers in light of future development.

With regard to the US Army, Gates decided to revise the ground vehicle development project within the Army's Future Combat Systems (FCS) program. While the FCS as a whole had achieved some success, it was judged that the ground vehicle's design would not adequately serve actual combat needs. The design was based on the view that future combat vehicles should be lighter and more fuel efficient. In order to save weight, the vehicle was conceived to be lightly armored, with this potential vulnerability being offset by advanced situational-awareness capabilities. However, it was decided that the design was not appropriate for the operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, which feature close-range combat and the need to carry out missions under the ever-present threat of ambush. For deployment in conflicts of this kind, ground vehicles would need to be strongly armored against mines, roadside bombs, and rocket-propelled grenades. Hence, the Department of Defense is expected to put priority on the development and procurement of such vehicles, referred to as MRAP (Mine Resistant Ambush Protected) vehicles, for the foreseeable future.

The Obama administration has also indicated its intention to scale back expenditure on missile defense, which received a high priority under the Bush

administration. As Barack Obama had signaled during the election campaign of 2008, the current administration places the focus of its missile defense not on protection against intercontinental ballistic missiles, but on protection against the threat of shorter-range or theater missiles launched by rogue states. For this reason, in the fiscal 2010 budget the authorities have decided not to further increase the number of land-based interceptors deployed in Alaska. In addition, regarding the development of airborne lasers for use in destroying ballistic missiles during the boost phase, aircraft fitted with these systems that have already been used in tests will be maintained, but no additional planes will be purchased. Finally, the Multiple Kill Vehicle (MKV), a project to develop small, multiple kinetic energy warheads that could intercept and destroy multiple-warhead ballistic missiles in the midcourse phase, was terminated. This decision was made on the grounds of technological limitations and a perceived lack of need for these weapons. As a result, the budget will be reduced by \$1.4 billion for missile defense alone.

Principal defense procurement plans have come under review in these budget proposals. While ways to reduce expenditure have been sought, the budget also seeks to strengthen the United States' capabilities in areas felt necessary to deal with the future strategic environment. For example, US naval vessels in recent years have undertaken a growing number of missions close to shore, and as this trend is expected to intensify in the near future, the budget authorizes the construction of Littoral Combat Ships. Also, the purchase of an additional fifty unmanned aerial vehicles has been approved to improve US military capabilities in reconnaissance and surveillance, particularly in Iraq and Afghanistan, where the need for such equipment is rising. Finally, helicopters are becoming increasingly important in operations conducted in Iraq and Afghanistan, but the US military has long been short of trained pilots and other helicopter-related personnel. The budget therefore makes provisions for an increase in the number of military units operating helicopters.

On October 28, 2009 President Obama signed the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2010, in which the results of these revisions are incorporated. The Act provides for total expenditures of \$680.2 billion. At the signing ceremony, the President said: "This bill is an important step forward, but it's just a first step" and added that "There's still more waste we need to cut." Unless there is a major change in the situation, such as a recovery by the US economy and a turn for the

Mine Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) Vehicles

Mine Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) vehicles are currently being deployed in forward combat zones on a priority basis in order to protect US troops from IEDs. The US Army's principal 4WD motor vehicle, the High Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicle (HMMWV or Humvee), is a lightweight, highly mobile form of troop transport, but its comparative lack of armor has led to a high rate

of casualties. Although supplemental armor kits have been introduced to provide better protection, the IEDs used by insurgents have become increasingly sophisticated and more destructive, forcing the US military to seek a still-higher level of protection.

Against this backdrop, MRAPs are specially designed, heavily armored vehicles for the protection of drivers and passengers from land mines and IEDs. MRAPs have demonstrated lower casualty rates from IED attack than even the M1 Abrams tank, the US Army's main battle tank: they are thought to possess the best protective capability against IEDs of any equipment in the US armed forces. In 2008, about 16,000 MRAPs were procured, and they are producing satisfactory results in protecting US troops from IED attacks in Iraq and Afghanistan.

According to studies conducted by a team headed by Christopher Lamb, senior research fellow at the Institute for National Strategic Studies (INSS), there were requests from field commanders for the immediate deployment of MRAPs in February 2005, and if this were met quickly, there would have been a dramatic fall in fatalities from IED attacks. Despite the requests, it took more than two years to deploy MRAPs in Iraq, which was in November 2007. These studies also asserted that senior Pentagon officials were skeptical of the validity of MRAPs and failed to recognize the need for the type of equipment in irregular warfare as one of the main causes of the delay.

The authorization of large-scale procurement of MRAPs is symptomatic of a shift of US military thinking from the emphasis on conventional warfare capabilities, to a greater focus on irregular warfare capabilities. That said, MRAPs are not without their faults. Being large and heavy, they are reportedly difficult to use on rough roads or in hilly terrain. More mobile versions are currently under development, and the new models are expected to be deployed in a wide variety of regions. Current MRAPs cost between \$600,000 and \$1 million each, which is 3–7 times the cost of a Humvee with supplemental armor. Even so, they will continue to be regarded as highly effective vehicles for combat theaters facing IED challenges. Consequently, MRAPs are expected to be widely used, not only by the United States, but by many other countries as well.



MRAP vehicle (US Army photo by Christian Marquardt, 7th Army JMTC)

better in Iraq and Afghanistan, US defense expenditure will continue to come under severe scrutiny. The Obama administration will probably be forced to implement further substantial revisions in the Department of Defense's plans, but it will not be easy for the government to push through major cuts to the defense budget, as evidenced by the intense opposition from some members of Congress to the termination of the F-22 procurement project. The government will have to pursue further revisions over the long haul as part of an overall rethinking of military strategy. Longer-term revisions of defense policy by the Obama administration have been left to the Quadrennial Defense Review.

(2) Adapting to Irregular Warfare, and Balancing Present and Future Needs

The Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) is the major policy document describing the military strategy of the United States, and the first QDR under the Obama administration was announced on February 1, 2010. Deputy Secretary of Defense William Lynn described the nature of the 2010 QDR as follows: "The QDR takes a long-term, strategic view of the Department of Defense and will explore ways to balance achieving success in current conflicts with preparing for long-term challenges." The Department of Defense had completed its guidelines by the autumn of 2009, and the fiscal 2010 budget was drawn up on the basis of the insights obtained from the process of creating the initial draft of the QDR. The final version of the QDR contains major revisions of large-scale procurement plans that were not included in the 2010 budget review process.

During the process of drawing up this latest QDR, particular emphasis was placed on improving the ability of the US military to engage in irregular warfare, such as guerrilla war or counterterrorism operations conducted in Iraq and Afghanistan. The importance of the capability to counter terrorist threats and engage successfully in irregular military operations was also stressed in the 2006 QDR announced during the Bush administration, but Secretary of Defense Gates has set out a target of incorporating the lessons learned in Iraq and Afghanistan into the system, and has called for further efforts to adapt the capabilities of the US armed forces to asymmetrical or irregular forms of warfare. This policy tallies with the recommendations of the National Defense Strategy issued in 2008 toward the end of the Bush administration, and thus forms the basis of the Obama administration's QDR. As Gates also served as defense secretary during the Bush

administration, this has clearly helped to ensure the continuity of US defense policy.

One issue that has been reiterated in the new QDR is the need to achieve a balance between dealing with present conflicts and threats on the one hand, and preparing for future threats and other challenges on the other. This issue was also strongly pinpointed for solution during the Bush administration. A particularly pressing issue is the need for replacement of large amounts of military equipment purchased around the end of the Cold War period. Rather than simply procuring new equipment, the Bush administration had originally aimed at the replacement of existing weapons with advanced, next-generation models, so as to transform the armed forces. This goal was significantly obstructed by the need to carry out military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan on an urgent basis, but following the September 11 attacks, the United States' defense spending posted sharp growth, and consequently this problem did not surface.

The Obama administration, however, is unable to contemplate a significant increase in defense expenditure for some time to come. This is because of the present economic downturn, which was triggered by a financial crisis, and the severe condition of the country's public finances. The government is thus faced with difficult choices relating to the procurement of major equipment. For this reason, Secretary of Defense Gates has underlined the importance of pursuing a balanced strategy, which aims to achieve a balance between strengthening the United States' present capability to handle operations in Iraq and Afghanistan and to combat terrorism on a wide front, and investment in preparing to meet future threats. This policy guidance is confirmed by the QDR, and budgets in 2010 and after are expected to reflect a balanced strategy.

This concern with balance has been evident in the process of drawing up the QDR. One example is the use of war games to confirm the effectiveness of the strategic premises proposed in the QDR. From a long-term viewpoint, the central focus of US strategy is to prepare for future threats. Andrew Marshall, director of the Office of Net Assessment in the Department of Defense, and USMC Gen. James Mattis, commander of the Joint Forces Command, participated in these war games as part of the so-called "Red Team," to test for strategic vulnerabilities from the viewpoint of preparedness for potential threats.

The Office of Net Assessment is responsible for long-term forecasts of the strategic environment, and Marshall is known for his acute focus on the perceived future military trends of China, as well as new types of threats, including

cyberwarfare. Mattis is one of the principal architects of the Joint Operating Environment (JOE) report of 2008, an analysis of the future strategic environment that was undertaken by the Joint Forces Command at the request of Secretary of Defense Gates. Mattis also participated in the invasion of Iraq and the subsequent stabilization operations, and because of his extensive experience in irregular warfare, he is believed to be playing an important role in the process of strengthening the US military's capabilities in such operations, which is being promoted by Gates.

Be that as it may, the policy of improving the US military's abilities in irregular warfare, which was clearly revealed in the drafting process of the QDR, will undoubtedly have a major impact on the composition of the armed forces. However, as Gates and others have pointed out, the military will not only have to prepare themselves for irregular warfare, but also for so-called "hybrid threats," employing both conventional tactics and asymmetrical means. To deal with such threats, it will not be enough to strengthen only one aspect of military capability. How to realize a balance between current needs and investment for the future has been a consistent theme of the past three QDRs. However, the Obama administration is faced both with external needs—maintaining security and providing support for national reconstruction in both Iraq and Afghanistan—and internal needs in the form of an economic crisis. Thus, realizing this balance has become an even more urgent issue than was the case for previous administrations.

(3) Moves Toward Nuclear Disarmament and the Reexamination of the Proposed Missile Defense Systems in Europe

Following his inauguration, President Obama positioned nuclear disarmament as one of his top priorities. Since their advent, nuclear weapons have played a critical role in guaranteeing the security of the United States as a deterrent against nuclear attack, but the importance of this role is currently diminishing. This is particularly so because, in the conflicts in which the United States has been involved in recent years, such as Iraq and Afghanistan, the relative importance of conventional weaponry has been rising, whereas nuclear weapons have become virtually unusable owing to the fact that this would endanger the large numbers of US personnel and resources dispatched to the countries in question. Hence, compared with the Cold War era, nuclear weapons are now assigned a much lower priority in terms of resource allocation. Already, the United States has sharply cut back its

nuclear arsenal since the end of the Cold War, and the desire to reduce US reliance on nuclear weapons added momentum for nuclear disarmament.

On April 5, 2009 President Obama gave a speech in Prague in which he called for the realization of “a world without nuclear weapons.” He also stated that while the threat of a global nuclear war had receded, the possibility of new kinds of nuclear attack was, in fact, growing. Obama expressed apprehension about the growing list of countries developing or in possession of nuclear weapons, and the proliferation of fissile materials and nuclear weapons technology. In particular, he cited the increasing danger of nuclear weapons falling into the hands of terrorists. To help realize a world without nuclear weapons, President Obama made clear that he would take steps to reduce the role of nuclear weapons in the United States’ security strategy. He also called for measures to strengthen the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and pledged steps to prevent nuclear weapons or fissile materials from falling into the hands of terrorists.

Particularly significant from the standpoint of reducing the role of nuclear weapons in the United States’ security strategy is the start of talks on a follow-on treaty to the first Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START I), which expired in December 2009. At a summit meeting of the leaders of the United States and Russia held on July 6, 2009, the two countries announced an agreement to limit strategic nuclear warheads to 1,500–1,675 for each side, and to reduce the number of delivery vehicles to 500–1,100. However, the two sides were unable to agree on a follow-on treaty, due to disagreements on technical matters, and START I expired on December 5. At a summit meeting on December 4, however, the parties issued a joint statement in which they expressed the intention to conclude a follow-on accord at an early date, in the spirit of START I.

The Obama administration’s rethinking of the role of nuclear weapons is expected to be expressed in even more concrete fashion in the 2010 Nuclear Posture Review (NPR), which will spell out the US nuclear deterrence policy, nuclear strategy, and nuclear capabilities for the next decade. It is scheduled to be announced roughly simultaneously with the QDR. In the last NPR, which was announced in 2002, the Bush administration called for the replacement of the “nuclear triad” employed during the Cold War. This triad consisted of the three key components of the country’s nuclear arsenal—land-based intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs), and strategic bombers. The 2002 NPR called for the adoption of a new triad consisting

of an offensive capability (employing both nuclear and conventional weapons), defensive systems (both active and passive), and a revitalized defense infrastructure that will provide new capabilities in a timely fashion to meet emerging threats. The Bush administration's 2002 NPR placed high priority on non-nuclear weaponry, including missile defense systems, and thereby focused on reducing the country's reliance on nuclear weapons. The Obama administration is expected to maintain this policy direction.

Conversely, a significant difference has emerged between the Obama and Bush administrations with respect to missile defense, in particular the deployment of missile defense systems in Poland and the Czech Republic. Fearing that Iran was developing weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missiles, the Bush administration drew up plans to deploy interceptor missiles (a scaled-down version of a ground-based missile defense system deployed on the US mainland) in Poland, with the radar equipment for the system to be deployed on Czech soil.

This plan drew objections from Russia, which claimed that the missile defense plan posed a threat to the strategic stability between Russia and the United States. Moscow also warned that, in retaliation, it might have to deploy short-range missiles in Kaliningrad Oblast, the Russian exclave located between Poland and Lithuania on the Baltic coast. Amid this situation, Barack Obama indicated during his election campaign that, if elected, he would review this missile defense program and focus resources on the development of systems targeted at short- to medium-range ballistic missiles, which were a more immediate threat. On September 17, 2009 President Obama announced that the plans for missile defense sites in East Europe would be scrapped in favor of missile defense systems located on US Navy warships.

The decision to replace the previous plan for deployment of a missile defense system in Eastern Europe has been driven by two principal factors. The first was a reevaluation of the ballistic missile threat posed by Iran. A new intelligence analysis indicated that what the United States had to fear from Iran was not so much ICBMs that could reach the US mainland, but shorter-range missiles targeted at Europe and elsewhere. It appeared that Iran's development of short- and medium-range missiles was proceeding faster than originally forecast, necessitating a missile defense system to protect the United States' European allies and US troops stationed on their soil. The second factor was the need for a highly cost-effective system utilizing proven technology in order to deal with the threat from Iran. At the moment, one of the most promising options is an improved version of

the ship-launched SM-3 missile.

Based on these factors, the Obama administration has announced plans to introduce missile defense systems into the European theater in a phased approach. In Phase One, up to 2011, SM-3 interceptor missiles (Block IA) will be deployed on naval vessels, combined with mobile radar systems. In Phase Two, up to 2015, upgraded SM-3 interceptors (Block IB) will be deployed in both sea- and land-based configurations, as well as more advanced sensors. In Phase Three, up to 2018, a more advanced version of the SM-3, Block IIA, which is currently under development, will be deployed. Finally, in Phase Four (up to 2020), the United States will deploy the SM-3 Block IIB to provide better protection to the whole of Europe against medium-range missiles as well as protection against ICBM attacks on the US mainland.

The Obama administration maintains that these measures will provide a more flexible defense against the threat of ballistic missiles than the plan pursued by the Bush administration. The SM-3 is a proven design, and Aegis-equipped warships can carry a large number of interceptors, pulling down the cost of deployment per missile below that of the originally-planned land-based interceptors. Additionally, it is expected that this system will be compatible with the radar systems and missiles of other countries, allowing further cooperation. Regarding this planned deployment, James E. Cartwright, the vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, has said: “This is a significant opportunity to work in a global construct to both field and fund and maintain this capability in a way that we had not been able to do in the past.”

Through the development of the SM-3 interceptor, the United States will be able to strengthen ties with allies and partners in the field of missile defense, and such multilateral cooperation will enable the United States to jointly counter the ballistic missile threat. If, as hoped, this cooperative effort leads to a decline in the military importance of ballistic missiles, a decline in the number of countries making serious efforts to acquire such missiles can also be



Test-firing of a SM-3 from the Aegis destroyer USS Hopper off the coast of Kauai, Hawaii (July 30, 2009) (US Navy)

expected. For this reason, the recent change of tack by the United States in its plans for deployment of missile defense systems may not only have a positive effect by encouraging greater cooperation between the United States and its allies, but may also contribute to prevent the proliferation of ballistic missiles.

3. Change and Continuity in the United States' East Asian Policy

(1) United States Puts Focus on East Asia

The United States, having branded itself as an Asia-Pacific nation, is striving to maintain and strengthen its forward-deployed military forces and its ties with allies and partners in the region, while also preserving the current US-dominant international order. The Obama administration's strong focus on East Asia was made clear by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's round of visits to Japan, Indonesia, South Korea, and China in February 2009, and her participation in the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) in July and the APEC leaders meeting in November, as well as by President Obama's tour of Japan, Singapore, South Korea, and China in the same month. In a speech made in Tokyo, Obama emphasized his administration's intention of taking an active part in the Asia-Pacific region, saying: "As America's first Pacific president, I promise you that this Pacific nation will strengthen and sustain our leadership in this vitally important part of the world."

Thus, President Obama has clearly placed a stronger focus on Asia than any previous administration, and this is highly significant for the maintenance of peace and stability in the region. The following five notable features of Obama's East Asian policy can be cited:

1. The US-Japan alliance remains the linchpin of the United States' East Asian policy. Maintaining close ties with traditional allies and friends in the region, such as Japan, South Korea, and Australia, is treated as the cornerstone of US policy toward the Asia Pacific region.
2. The United States places importance on building new partnerships with emerging countries in Asia such as China and India. Particularly noteworthy is the start of new talks between the United States and China. The US-China Strategic Economic Dialogue between US and Chinese economic officials, which was begun under the George W. Bush administration, has been upgraded to include political and security issues.

3. The Obama administration has broken with the unilateralism seen under the Bush administration, and puts great store by cooperation with international bodies such as the UN. Rather than indulging in ideological flag-waving, the Obama administration takes a realistic approach based on case-by-case situation assessments, and has therefore sought direct talks with such antagonists as North Korea and Myanmar.
4. The Obama administration is attempting to build structures of cooperation that encompass the whole Asian region or even the entire globe while also promoting further collaboration with allies and partners. The administration pursues active involvement with existing multilateral institutions such as ARF and APEC, while searching for a solution to the North Korean nuclear weapons issue by maintaining the Six-Party Talks framework.
5. The administration is working in unity to find solutions to a wider range of global issues such as nuclear disarmament and nonproliferation, the struggle against terrorism, climate change, energy security, and infectious diseases, and looks to the nations of East Asia to play their part in these efforts.

(2) Relationships with the countries of East Asia

For many years following the end of World War II, the United States deployed its military power in forward positions in East Asia so as to provide security for its allies and maintain peace and stability in the region, and this played a vital role for the US-Japan alliance and the region as a whole. In the new security environment in which we find ourselves at the start of the twenty-first century, the United States continues to position the US-Japan alliance as the foundation of its Asian diplomatic and security policy, and is taking steps to further strengthen this relationship and expand its scope. In recent years, notable progress has been made in further evolving the security relationship between the US and Japan, principally concerning the realignment of US military forces stationed in Japan, at the Japan-US Security Consultative Committee (2+2 Meeting). As a result of the agreement concluded between Japan and the United States in February 2005 on common strategic objectives; the Japan-US joint statement issued in October of 2005 regarding the roles, missions, and capabilities of the Japan Self-Defense Forces and the US military; the United States-Japan Roadmap for Realignment Implementation (relating to the realignment of the US military's troop strength in Japan) of May 2006; and the joint statement issued in May 2007 entitled "Alliance

Transformation: Advancing United States-Japan Security and Defense Cooperation,” the Japan-US security partnership has become even more effective, and is expected to make an even greater contribution to realizing security both in East Asia and the world as a whole.

Particularly notable with regard to cooperation in ballistic missile defense (BMD) is the joint statement issued after the 2+2 Meeting in May 2007, entitled “Alliance Transformation.” This statement announced an agreement on the deployment and operation of the X-Band radar system at the Air SDF Shariki Base, and the deployment and operation of a PAC-3 battalion at Kadena Air Base. These agreements were aimed at further strengthening the US-Japan security partnership by accelerating improvement in BMD system capabilities through close liaison between the two sides.

However, the new administration of Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama, which was inaugurated on September 16, 2009, issued a statement to the effect that Japan would seek to create “a close and equal Japan-US alliance.” On this basis, the Hatoyama administration proposed to review the plans for the relocation of Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) Futenma, but the Obama administration displayed a lack of enthusiasm for this proposal, and strongly requested that the existing agreement on the realignment of US forces in Japan be implemented. Subsequently, a Japan-US cabinet-level working group was set up to facilitate a speedy resolution of the matter. On the Japanese side, a special cabinet-level committee meeting on basic policy set up a dedicated subcommittee to deal with the Okinawa military bases issue, chaired by the chief cabinet secretary. Currently this subcommittee is still examining the Futenma relocation issue.

At a bilateral meeting held in New York on September 23, 2009 between President Obama and Prime Minister Hatoyama, the two leaders reaffirmed their determination to strengthen and deepen the US-Japan alliance. With regard to issues facing the East Asia region and the world as a whole, they were united in building a constructive and forward-looking relationship, and in working to further expand collaboration between the two countries. At a Japan-US summit meeting held in Tokyo on November 13, Prime Minister Hatoyama stated that, as the year 2010 marks the fiftieth anniversary of the revision of the Japan-US Security Treaty, he would be proposing the start of a new round of talks to strengthen the Japan-US alliance. Also at the summit meeting, the two sides released the “Japan-US Joint Statement toward a World without Nuclear Weapons.”

In this document, which was clearly released with an eye on the upcoming 2010 Nuclear Security Summit to be hosted by the United States as well as the 2010 NPT Review Conference to be held in May, they set out their intention of cooperating closely on the NPT's three pillars—nuclear disarmament, nuclear nonproliferation and the peaceful uses of nuclear power, and nuclear security.

President Obama has voiced his conviction that the creation of a positive, cooperative, and comprehensive relationship between the United States and China is important for the realization of peace and prosperity both in East Asia and the world as a whole. On this basis, the Obama administration is working to expand its cooperative relationship with the Chinese government in a wide field of activity including diplomacy and security issues. At the US-China summit meeting in April 2009, an agreement was reached to expand cabinet-level economic talks between the two sides, that had begun under the administration of President Bush into the "US-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue," which will encompass security and political issues as well as issues of global significance. The first session of the US-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue was held in Washington the following July.

There are a number of factors behind this development. First, there is the need for Washington to cooperate with Beijing in the area of financial and economic policy, given that China is the world's largest foreign holder of dollars and US treasury securities. In addition, the United States suffers from a heavy trade imbalance with China, whose economy has been growing at a steep pace for many years. The US government also recognizes that dialogue with China is required to solve a raft of regional issues relating to North Korea, Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, as well as global issues such as climate change and the problem of energy resources. The Obama administration also welcomes recent moves toward the establishment of a dialogue between Beijing and Taipei, and an improvement in mutual trust across the Straits of Taiwan.

China suspended military exchanges

with the United States in October 2008 in response to the submission to Congress of plans for the sale of weapons to Taiwan, but exchanges were resumed in February 2009. In October 2009 Secretary of Defense Gates met with Xu Caihou, vice chairman of the Central Military Commission, in Washington. At this meeting, the two sides agreed to promote mutual visits by top military officials, military exchanges in the fields of humanitarian aid and disaster relief, and joint exercises relating to search-and-rescue missions at sea.

Although Washington is steadily implementing its policy of encouraging China to become a responsible member of the international community, it also continues to pursue a hedging strategy of preparing for the future possibility of hostile Chinese actions against the United States or its allies. In its 2009 annual report on Chinese military power issued on March 25 of that year, the US Department of Defense expressed misgivings about the uncertainty surrounding China's future course. One major concern noted was that the limited transparency of Beijing's military affairs could risk destabilizing the region by increasing the potential for misunderstanding and miscalculation. The report also highlighted several advances in Chinese military power that were of particular interest to the United States, including: (1) stronger anti-access and area-denial capabilities in the form of short-/medium-range ballistic missiles, cruise missiles, antiship ballistic missiles, submarines, and other military assets that can be used to prevent distant enemy forces from deploying to a theater of operations (anti-access) and from freely operating in the theater for some time (area denial); (2) improved capabilities in nuclear, space, and cyber warfare; and (3) enhanced power projection capabilities, as seen in the PLA's deployments abroad in operations pertaining to peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance, disaster relief, and counter-piracy.

The defense authorities of the United States and China signed the Military Maritime Consultative Agreement (MMCA) in 1998, and have held talks on the establishment of rules to ensure the safety of operations on the high seas. Some progress has been seen since then in military exchanges, including the setting up of a telephone hot line connecting the two countries' defense authorities in 2008. Despite this, relations between the two countries' military forces remain sensitive, as illustrated by the incident on March 9, 2009 in which the USS *Impeccable*, a US Navy surveillance ship operating on the high seas near the island of Hainan, was harassed by five Chinese ships, which approached close to the *Impeccable* and attempted to prevent it from proceeding.

In recent years the United States and South Korea have been tackling a number of issues relating to the US forces stationed in South Korea. Specifically, in response to changes in South Korea's security environment, the democratization of the country, and changes and realignment among the US forces, wartime operational control over the ROK-US Combined Forces has been handed over to Seoul. At a defense authorities summit between the two countries on February 23, 2007 it was agreed that the ROK-US Combined Forces Command (CFC) would be disbanded on April 17, 2012, and that wartime operational control in the event of a crisis on the Korean Peninsula would be handed over to the South Korean side. Subsequent to this handing over of wartime operational control, each side would set up their own independent headquarters. The South Korean forces will play the leading role in military operations, with the US forces under their own commander providing backup. Further, with regard to the realignment of the US military in South Korea, an agreement was reached in 2003 whereby the Yongsan Garrison, located within the city of Seoul, would be transferred to a site near the city of Pyeongtaek, while US troops stationed north of the Han River would be redeployed south of the river. However, the implementation of this plan is being delayed due to difficulties encountered in expropriating the necessary land in the Pyeongtaek area.

On June 16, 2009 US President Barack Obama and South Korean President Lee Myung-bak signed the "Joint Vision for the Alliance of the United States of America and the Republic of Korea." This document contained the following commitments:

1. The two sides pledged to "build a comprehensive strategic alliance of bilateral, regional and global scope, based on common values and mutual trust."
2. They stated their intention to adapt to changes in the twenty-first century security environment and maintain a robust defense posture. The United States pledged to continue its commitment of extended deterrence, including its nuclear umbrella.
3. The two sides pledged to work together to achieve the complete and verifiable elimination of North Korea's nuclear weapons and existing nuclear programs, as well as ballistic missile programs, and to promote respect for the fundamental human rights of the North Korean people.

On October 22, the Forty-First US-ROK Security Consultative Meeting was held in Seoul, at which Secretary of Defense Gates emphasized the US policy of

strengthening its alliance with South Korea. Gates asserted that the presence of US troops on the Korean Peninsula constituted an important element of deterrence, and reaffirmed the US commitment to provide extended deterrence for the ROK, using the full range of military capabilities, to include the US nuclear umbrella, conventional strike, and missile defense capabilities. He also noted with appreciation the South Korean government's May 26, 2009 endorsement of and participation in the Proliferation Security Initiative, as well as its announcement in October of plans to increase the number of South Korean personnel participating in Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) activities in Afghanistan as well as its plans to send troops to provide security for the PRT operations.

From the standpoint of the United States, North Korea's nuclear weapons and ballistic missile development programs not only seriously threaten the security of its allies, notably Japan and South Korea, but also constitute a threat to US efforts to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. In particular, the United States is concerned about the possibility that nuclear weapons or fissile materials could find their way from North Korea to other nations or non-state actors, as well as that the perceived growing threat from North Korean nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles could spur other countries in the region to acquire nuclear weapons for themselves. As a precondition for the provision of assistance by the United States to North Korea in the areas of energy or the economy, the normalization of diplomatic relations between the two countries, and the replacement of the existing armistice that ended the Korean War with a permanent peace treaty, President Obama has stipulated that North Korea must implement a complete and verifiable denuclearization. To this end, he is encouraging the resumption of the Six-Party Talks process. Also notable with respect to this issue is the statement made in Tokyo by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in February 2009 expressing the United States' determination to tackle the two problems of North Korea's missile program and the abductions of Japanese nationals by North Korea.

On April 5, 2009 North Korea launched a rocket that it claimed was carrying a satellite, and on May 25 it carried out its second test nuclear detonation. These acts were condemned by most of the international community as threatening the peace and security of Northeast Asia and beyond. In addition, North Korea continued to refuse to resume the Six-Party Talks on its nuclear development program. In response, President Obama proposed four avenues toward a solution:

(1) conducting further consultations with US allies and partners in Asia through such forums as the Six-Party Talks; (2) taking new steps that would increase the cost to North Korea of such a dangerous course of action; (3) increasing the military force of the United States and taking defensive measures aimed at extended deterrence, while liaising with allied nations; and (4) attempting to reach a solution through diplomatic channels including bilateral discussions within the framework of the Six-Party Talks.

In view of the ongoing increase in North Korea's arsenal of nuclear warheads and missiles, the possibility of instability within North Korea as a result of a change in the country's power structure, and the need for a comprehensive policy vis-à-vis North Korea with an eye to the future after the death of Kim Jong-il, the United States is expected to continue urging the resumption of the Six-Party Talks and to call even more strongly for three-way consultations between the United States, South Korea, and Japan, as well as the involvement of China.

President Obama is also pursuing a policy of active diplomatic engagement with the countries of Southeast Asia. The United States and ASEAN had become somewhat estranged during the Bush administration, but Washington is reshaping this relationship, and has proposed closer collaboration in a wide range of fields including security arrangements, economic issues, and the environment. This is believed to be partly motivated by the strategic goal of counteracting the influence of China, whose presence in this region is growing. On July 22, 2009, on the occasion of attending a meeting of the ASEAN Regional Forum in Phuket, Thailand, Secretary of State Clinton signed the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC) on behalf of the United States. ASEAN had insisted on US accession to TAC as a precondition for participation in the East Asia Summit (EAS), and Washington's future participation in EAS will be the focus of considerable interest. In November, Kurt Campbell, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, visited Myanmar for direct talks with the military junta. The talks are believed to have been held at the request of the junta, which wishes to improve relations with Washington, but Campbell and his team also met with leaders of opposition parties, including Aung San Suu Kyi, raising some hope of a change in the relationship between the United States and Myanmar. Campbell strongly urged the Myanmar government to move forward with the democratization process, and also held talks with Myanmarese officials on the country's military collaboration with North Korea, as well as the illegal drug trade.

On balance, President Obama's East Asian policy does not seem to differ significantly from that of President Bush. Both administrations placed the focus of their East Asian policy on the maintenance of longstanding alliances such as with Japan and South Korea, as well as on maintaining the presence of US forces in the region. At the same time, they have both encouraged China to become more deeply involved in a wide range of regional affairs. The Bush administration has been criticized for not paying enough attention to East Asia because of its overwhelming focus on Iraq and the struggle against terrorism. However, against the backdrop of a marked shift in geopolitical power with the rise of China and India, the Obama administration has clearly demonstrated its strong commitment to East Asia, and this is likely to help stabilize the region's security environment. That being said, developments relating to the presence of US forces in East Asia will need careful watching over the medium-to-long term.