

## **Chapter 7**

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### **The United States: The Obama Administration Facing Its Second Year of Challenges**



The problems in Iraq that have beleaguered the United States since George W. Bush's presidency have been getting better gradually as a result of the country's improving security situation and advancement of the political process. Because of this progress, the Barack Obama administration declared an end to the US combat mission in Iraq, and shifted its attention to Afghanistan as the next primary security challenge. Faced with a deteriorating security situation in Afghanistan due to increased insurgent activities, President Obama ordered a surge in US troop deployments to that country in 2010, in keeping with the strategy he laid out in December 2009. At the same time, however, his administration set a July 2011 deadline for the start of US troop withdrawals, and accordingly stepped up efforts to strengthen the capabilities of Afghanistan's army and security forces so that they can assume full responsibility for maintaining security. Nevertheless, if the security situation fails to improve, the United States may have no choice but to extend its military presence beyond the planned timetable—a possibility that will likely affect the US military strategy as a whole.

The report of the first Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) to be carried out under the Obama administration was released in February 2010. This QDR states, as the first among four priority objectives, that the US armed forces must be able to “prevail in today's wars,” and describes policies for building up the capabilities necessary for attaining that goal. It also outlines several initiatives for bolstering US military capabilities to deter and defeat aggression in anti-access environments, such as the development of a joint air-sea battle concept and the expansion of long-range strike capabilities. In order to address the growing challenges to free access to cyberspace—among other domains of the global commons—the 2010 QDR emphasizes the need to reinforce the Department of Defense's abilities to operate effectively in cyberspace, and points to the establishment of the sub-unified command US Cyber Command as an example of efforts toward that end. The report of the 2010 Nuclear Posture Review (NPR), which was conducted simultaneously with the QDR process, declared that the United States would prevent nuclear proliferation and nuclear terrorism, reduce the role of its nuclear weapons in its national security strategy while maintaining strategic deterrence and stability at the reduced nuclear force levels, strengthen regional deterrence, and reassure its allies and partners.

East Asia continues to grow in importance to the United States in terms of not

only economic ties, but also the diverse security challenges that it poses—notably nuclear proliferation, unresolved territorial disputes, and issues pertaining to energy and natural resources. Moreover, the region’s status quo is being challenged by the dynamism of such emerging powers as China and India. This has made East Asia a key focus of the Obama administration during its second year in office. While strengthening its alliances with Japan and other regional powers, the United States has also pursued efforts toward building cooperative relationships with China, India, and Southeast Asian countries, and toward increasing engagement with the region’s multilateral frameworks, particularly the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Through these efforts and regional frameworks, the Obama administration demonstrates its clear intention to support East Asian nations in developing their ability to address both traditional security concerns—namely, prevention of armed conflict—and non-traditional security challenges that transcend geographic boundaries in the region.

## **1. From Iraq to Afghanistan**

### **(1) The Stabilizing Situation in Iraq**

Since the beginning of the Iraq War in March 2003, instability has resulted from Iraq’s ongoing struggle with terrorists and armed insurgents, but the number of incidents of terrorism and the toll of its victims began to decline during the second half of 2007, indicating an improvement in the security environment. This trend continued during 2010, and at a press conference in July 2010, General Raymond Odierno, commander of US forces in Iraq, noted that during the first half of 2010, large-scale attacks fell to almost half of the year-earlier level, and that throughout Iraq, incidents that affected security remained at the lowest level ever.

One of the elements that have improved Iraq’s security environment was the temporary surge of US troops in Iraq, reaching its highest level at 167,000 troops in 2009. This policy was announced by the Bush administration in January 2007, and over 25,000 additional troops were deployed. The primary objective of the surge was to temporarily improve the security situation in Iraq so that Iraq’s security forces could be built up and trained while stability was being maintained by the United States. It is expected that, as a result of this policy, conditions could be created that would permit a withdrawal by US forces accompanying the increasing transfer of responsibility to the Iraqi government. In February 2009,

President Obama announced that with stabilization of the security environment in Iraq, withdrawal of US forces would begin as of July 2010. In keeping with this strategy, over 90,000 personnel and over 40,000 vehicles were withdrawn from Iraq by the August 2010 withdrawal deadline. On August 31, President Obama announced the termination of the US military's combat mission, and Operation Iraqi Freedom officially shifted to Operation New Dawn. The Obama administration, with the agreement of the government of Iraq, has set the end of 2011 as the goal for complete withdrawal of US forces.

The roughly 50,000 US troops remaining in Iraq are maintaining their combat readiness even after conclusion of their combat responsibilities, and they will continue to provide combat support in response to Iraqi government requests until the completion of withdrawal. The aim of the US forces in Iraq, however, is shifting from direct combat missions to more indirect contributions. Three concrete examples are conducting antiterrorist operations in cooperation with Iraqi troops, providing support and assistance to provincial reconstruction teams (PRTs), non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and the United Nations (UN) as they work toward rebuilding the private sector, and assisting in building up Iraq's security forces.

The declaration of an end to the US combat mission, however, does not mean that struggle in Iraq with armed insurgents has ceased. For example, not only was there a series of terror incidents in Iraq at the end of August, as the deadline for withdrawal drew near, but on September 5, after the declaration of withdrawal, the Iraqi army command headquarters also came under attack, and US forces are said to have provided support to repel that attack. On September 11–13 as well, US forces, responding to an Iraqi government request, assisted in an attack on armed insurgents in Diyala province in central Iraq.

Some critics have pointed out that Iraqi insurgents could possibly reinforce their efforts in anticipation of the completion of US forces' withdrawal at the end of 2011, and no few voices have cited the danger that the Iraqi security forces' capabilities cannot be brought up to a level where they can assume responsibility from US forces in time to meet the deadline. Others in the United States predict that the security situation in Iraq may make an extended US military presence unavoidable; they argue for discussion both of a status of forces agreement that will make long-term deployment possible in such a case and of the share of the costs to be borne by the Iraqi government.

Reflecting the improvement in the security situation, there has also been some degree of progress politically as well. Following the regional assembly elections held in March 2009, the first such exercise after adoption of Iraq's new constitution, the second election of the Iraqi Council of Representatives was held in March 2010. The voting rate for this election was 62 percent, surpassing expectations, and the election was observed by a number of international observer groups that pronounced it fair.

The political situation in Iraq following the parliamentary election, however, remains unclear. Results of the March elections were finally certified by Iraq's federal supreme court on June 1, but none of the political groups—including the State of Law coalition led by former prime minister Nuri al-Maliki, the Iraqiya bloc of former premier Ayad Allawi, and the Kurdistan Parties Coalition of Iraqi Kurds—captured a majority. Following certification of election results, the first session of the Council of Representatives was held on June 14, but it was immediately adjourned *sine die*, and the process of selection of a new president and premier came to a halt. During the recess of the Council of Representatives, former president Jalal Talabani and former prime minister al-Maliki remain temporarily in office.

Following certification of election results, the leadership of all of Iraq's political groups have continued efforts to find a way out of the political impasse, agreeing on November 10 to resume the Council of Representatives the following day. At the resumed session on November 11, former president Talabani was reelected and then reappointed al-Maliki as prime minister and formed a cabinet, breaking the eight-month political stagnation. Relations remain tense, however, between the majority Shiite political groups and the minority Sunnis and Kurds, and even the administration that was born of the last national elections has taken a form that balances those tensions internally. In particular, the administration has been unable to reach agreement with the Kurds in northern Iraq, namely on such topics as their stake in Iraq's oil and the demarcation of boundaries. Those impending issues remain undeniable sources of possible future strife within the administration.

At this moment, it is unclear whether Iraq can maintain its current stability over an extended period of time. The *Annual Threat Assessment* issued by the US Director of National Intelligence in February 2010 indicates that on the whole Iraq should maintain its stability, but nevertheless its future trends will be influenced by how it deals with tension between Arab and Kurd, incorporating the

minority Sunnis into the political process, and the level of capabilities of the Iraqi security forces. In terms of the last point, following the US military surge of 2009, improvements in the security situation have facilitated the development of the Iraqi security forces and given them a greater role to play in maintaining security, which in turn has made a US military withdrawal seem feasible. For its part, the Obama administration is trying to employ the same strategy of the surge of US forces in Afghanistan as its next focus.

## **(2) The Shift to Afghanistan**

Withdrawal of combat forces from Iraq enabled the Obama administration to focus its attention on Afghanistan, another region of importance in the fight against terrorism. From the very beginning of his term, President Obama has made early withdrawal from Iraq a public pledge of his administration, but he has also made clear his intention to deploy more US troops to Afghanistan and provide support to ensure its security. While President Obama's administration has been focusing on domestic problems such as responding to the financial crisis and carrying out health care reform, Afghanistan—ensuring its stability and assisting in its reconstruction—has been its most important diplomatic issue. At the beginning of 2009, President Obama had already announced sending another 21,000 US troops to Afghanistan, and on December 1 of that year he announced his plan to deploy an additional 30,000 troops. As of October 25, the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) had some 130,000 personnel deployed in Afghanistan, while the United States had some 90,000 military members operating there.

A major goal of US involvement in Afghanistan for the Obama administration has been ensuring that it does not again become a safe haven for terrorist groups. During a September 2010 visit to Afghanistan, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates stated that the US aim in this region was to rid Afghanistan of al-Qaeda and its affiliated terrorist groups and to prevent Afghanistan from providing a haven for such groups. The next most important goal he cited was to ensure Afghanistan's stability and prevent negative influences from affecting neighboring countries. This statement indicates that he had Pakistan particularly in mind, and that a terrorist network including the Taliban and al-Qaeda existed in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) of Pakistan. Thus there was grave concern that if Afghanistan became unstable, Pakistan would come increasingly under the

influence of Islamic radicalism. At the same time, the cooperation of the government of Pakistan is absolutely essential to drive the terrorists from the FATA, and the United States thus supports both Afghanistan and Pakistan and views efforts at their stabilization as a matter of critical importance.

Despite the fact that the US forces and the ISAF are deployed in Afghanistan, offensive efforts by Taliban and other insurgents since 2005 have brought a decline in its security. Particularly in areas where Afghanistan borders Pakistan on the south, the southeast, and the east, armed groups have become increasingly more active, and around Kandahar where the Taliban remains strong, conflicts between the insurgents and US forces have intensified. In addition, in the capital Kabul, which has so far enjoyed a relatively stable security environment, as well as the northern and western parts of the country, terror bombings have occurred and other signs of destabilization have caused grave concern.

Secretary of Defense Gates addressed this situation in a press conference on September 23, 2010, where he explained that there had been three stages of US involvement in Afghanistan since the 9/11 terrorism. The first stage was the period of 2001 through 2002, when the United States won a quick victory through its use of special operations forces and some conventional forces; this permitted a certain level of progress toward recovery, including the holding of elections and adoption of a new constitution. The second stage was 2003 through 2006; here, US interest turned toward Iraq, with the presence of US forces in Afghanistan small and the number of casualties low as a result. Involvement is currently in the third stage, which began in early 2009 with President Obama's announcement of the surge of an additional 21,000 US troops and long-delayed cooperation with the Afghan government to create an environment for opposition to the Taliban. During the 2007–2008 period between stages two and three, the US was interested in Afghanistan but had few available resources to devote to that country, thus the Taliban was able to rebuild its strength during these years.

While the Obama administration turned its efforts to restoring the impaired stability in Afghanistan, it also announced the new strategy of beginning a “responsible drawdown” in July 2011. The administration has indicated it does not consider the timing of the start of the drawdown as a definitive “exit,” but as a goal for starting the drawdown process based on careful evaluation of the ongoing situation, while also transferring responsibility to the Afghan security forces. According to this approach, the pace of the US withdrawal might be slowed down

depending on changes in Afghanistan's environment. Speaking in Senate hearings, General David Petraeus, commander of US Forces Afghanistan, confirmed the position that the July 2011 start of the drawdown was not an exit; he stressed that setting a deadline was an essential policy to accelerate the strengthening of the Afghan military.

Although the future course of Afghanistan's stability is far from certain, the efforts toward stabilization by the United States and its partners have produced some signs of improvement. For example, according to the US military, the voting rate among eligible voters in the September 18 parliamentary elections is estimated at around 40 percent. This would represent a five percent increase over voting rates in the 2009 presidential election. Interference in the parliamentary elections by the Taliban and other armed insurgents also declined, as attacks against polling stations fell to roughly one-third the level of attacks during the presidential election. Since there have been few statistics compiled on Afghanistan since the 1970s, these figures are not completely reliable. Nevertheless, the increase in voting rates and the decline in interference in elections are positive indicators of progress in Afghanistan's political process.

There are positive developments in terms of security as well. As of June 2010, Afghanistan has fielded some 230,000 security force personnel, an increase of approximately 80,000 over a year before. In July 2010, the International Conference on Afghanistan (the Kabul Conference) sponsored by the government of Afghanistan and the UN set forth the goal of having Afghan security forces conduct military operations throughout Afghanistan on their own initiative by the end of 2014. Furthermore, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) Lisbon summit in November confirmed a similar objective, along with the goals of starting the transfer of authority for the maintenance of security to the government of Afghanistan in 2011 and increasing Afghanistan's security forces to around 300,000 by the end of the same year. Improving the capabilities of Afghanistan's military and police is an essential element in guaranteeing its security, and the training of those forces will be a primary mission for the reinforced US military.

On December 16, President Obama announced the results of an annual review of strategy toward Afghanistan and Pakistan, which is intimately connected to Afghanistan and its stability, indicating that the United States is steadily achieving its policy goals. The review emphasized that in Afghanistan, the efforts of the US military and the Afghan military have successfully prevented expansion of Taliban

influence in most of the regions and dislocating its leadership from the country. Goals for the strengthening and training of Afghan security forces are also being met, which has made it possible to set the timing for the start of the drawdown of US forces and the transfer of authority to the Afghan government.

Afghanistan's military and police forces are still short of personnel, however, and appear still below the levels of equipment and training needed to deal with the Taliban and armed insurgents. The United States also views improvement in the government's capacity to govern as critically important for Afghanistan's stability; the United States continues to push the Karzai administration to seriously address the problem of corruption. Without sufficient capabilities of the Afghan government and its military and police forces, the US military drawdown would not be feasible, thus a long-term military deployment may become inevitable.

As US involvement in Afghanistan has grown, some degree of difference in opinion has appeared within the Obama administration. In June 2010, for example, US Forces Afghanistan commander Stanley McChrystal was in effect dismissed over an article in the US magazine *Rolling Stone* where he implied criticism toward the Afghan strategies of some of the ranking officials in the Obama administration. McChrystal was seen as one of the US military's experts in irregular warfare, however his replacement as commander by General David Petraeus should not result in particularly significant policy changes as Petraeus carries forward the strategies that McChrystal applied in Afghanistan. Nevertheless, this event suggests that if the US military presence in Afghanistan goes long-term in the future, further confrontations within the Obama administration over Afghanistan strategy may emerge.



**President Obama announcing the results of an annual review of US strategy toward Afghanistan and Pakistan (December 16, 2010, White House)** (White House photo by Pete Souza)

Outside the Obama administration as well, events that could negatively affect US strategies toward Afghanistan have taken place. The public website WikiLeaks has released on the Internet numerous official documents that include classified information from the State Department and the Department of Defense (DOD). The disclosed materials include information revealing the identity of informants in Afghanistan as well as cables offering

negative evaluations of President Karzai and his policies. The unintentional but explosive release of this information could potentially harm the cooperative relationship with the government of Afghanistan. The US government maintains that almost all of the leaked information is tactical rather than strategic, that it does not necessarily represent an overall US policy, and further that it is not information that has served as a basis for policy making. Still, the leaking of such information could create danger for the activities of US diplomats and military personnel, thus the United States is pursuing those responsible for the leaks.

While the Obama administration has set goals for its withdrawal from Iraq, it has also moved to increase its level of involvement in Afghanistan. As a result, depending on the situation on the field, the United States may find itself in long-term military deployment in both areas. The United States so far has laid out over \$1 trillion in costs for its military activities in Iraq and Afghanistan, but in the wake of the financial crisis, the US government is facing its own economic difficulties, and it will be hard-pressed to devote resources beyond the current levels. For the Obama administration, it will be increasingly critical to find the right balance between the resources needed for current military activities and the need to prepare for future threats.

## **2. Trends in Defense Policy**

### **(1) Release of the Quadrennial Defense Review**

On February 1, 2010, Secretary of Defense Gates announced publication of the first QDR prepared under the Obama administration, along with the fiscal year 2011 defense budget request based on that QDR. The QDR is “one of the principal means by which the tenets of the National Defense Strategy are translated into potentially new policies, capabilities and initiatives.” It “will set a long-term course for the DOD to follow and will provide a strategic framework for the DOD’s annual program, force development, force management, and corporate support mechanisms.” Work on the QDR was carried out based on the National Defense Strategy announced in June 2008.

The QDR notes the need to find a balance between resources and risks as the United States works toward four priority objectives: prevail in today’s wars, prevent and deter conflict, prepare to defeat adversaries and succeed in a wide range of contingencies, and preserve and enhance the all-volunteer force. The

review also highlights gaps in current capabilities and the near-, medium-, and long-term shortfalls in the US military’s ability to accomplish its mission. Based on this assessment, the QDR has determined the strengthening of military capabilities in six key mission areas: defense of the United States and support for civil authorities at home; success in counterinsurgency (COIN), stability, and counterterrorism operations (CT); building the security capability of partner states; deterring and defeating aggression in anti-access environments; preventing proliferation of and countering weapons of mass destruction (WMD); and operating effectively in cyberspace.

An independent, nonpartisan panel (the QDR Panel) was established to evaluate this QDR; the panel was co-chaired by former Secretary of Defense William Perry and Stephen Hadley, former presidential national security advisor, and presented its report to Congress on July 29.

A number of other reviews were conducted in parallel to the QDR. In his speech in Prague in April 2009, President Obama set the goal of a world without nuclear weapons, and in keeping with the president’s expressed policy of reducing the role of nuclear weapons, a NPR was released on April 6 to serve as a roadmap to put that policy into action. A Ballistic Missile Defense Review (BMDR) was also released simultaneously with the QDR; the BMDR evaluated the threat from ballistic missiles and set a strategic and policy framework for missile defense to

**Table 7.1. The QDR’s four priority objectives and six key mission areas**

2010 QDR		Four priority areas in the 2006 QDR
Four priority objectives	Six key mission areas	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Prevail in today’s wars</li> <li>2. Prevent and deter conflict</li> <li>3. Prepare to defeat adversaries and succeed in a wide range of contingencies</li> <li>4. Preserve and enhance the All-Volunteer Force.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Defend the United States and support civil authorities at home</li> <li>2. Succeed in counterinsurgency, stability, and counterterrorism operations</li> <li>3. Build the security capacity of partner states</li> <li>4. Deter and defeat aggression in anti-access environments</li> <li>5. Prevent proliferation and counter weapons of mass destruction</li> <li>6. Operate effectively in cyberspace.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Defeat terrorist networks</li> <li>2. Defend the homeland in depth.</li> <li>3. Shape the choices of countries at strategic crossroads.</li> <li>4. Prevent hostile states and non-state actors from acquiring or using WMD.</li> </ol>

Sources: 2006 and 2010 QDR reports.

counter that threat. A Space Posture Review (SPR) was also conducted jointly by the secretary of defense and the director of national intelligence to study policies and objectives on space from the standpoint of ensuring national security over the coming decade. An interim report was presented to Congress in March. Although these various, roughly-simultaneous reviews were carried out separately, they were conducted in coordination with each other.

## **(2) “Rebalancing” Forces and “Prevailing in Today’s Wars”**

A feature of the current QDR is that it spotlights victory in the ongoing wars in Afghanistan and Iraq as the most important goal. Defense Secretary Gates has called this “truly a wartime QDR,” which places the current conflicts “at the top of our budgeting, policy, and program priorities.” “For the first time,” as Gates points out, the QDR seeks to ensure that those fighting America’s wars and their families receive “the support they need and deserve.”

The QDR encompasses a number of decisions relating to “today’s wars,” but many of these are less concerned with major weapon systems and more focused on “enablers” which will permit US forces to operate on the battlefield more effectively. For example, the QDR cites a need for expansion of both manned and unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) for the purpose of intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR). The FY2011 defense budget request includes such recommendations as doubling the procurement of the MQ-9, the cutting-edge UAS of the US Air Force. The QDR also cites decisions to strengthen the helicopter fleet, which it characterizes as “indispensable to successful counterinsurgency and counterterrorism operations.” The demand for such vertical lift capabilities is expected to be high in Afghanistan, where shortfalls are already occurring. In order to respond to such demand for helicopters, the QDR proposes boosting helicopter units of both special operations forces and general purpose forces, and FY2011 defense budget request includes procurement of the UH-60, CH-47, V-22, and MH-60R/S systems. In addition, the QDR also lays out expansion of training of US Army helicopter pilots and addition of two new combat aviation brigades to the existing eleven.

The QDR also takes up expansion of special operations forces, including the addition of 2,800 personnel and an additional \$6.3 billion in the FY2011 defense budget request. As a means to “increase COIN, stability operations, and CT competency and capacity in general purpose forces,” by FY2013 the Army will

convert a heavy brigade combat team to a Stryker brigade, a configuration that has proven effective in COIN operations in Iraq. The QDR also notes that based on ongoing examination of the changing situation, several more heavy brigade combat teams may also be converted to Stryker brigades.

The QDR also addresses security cooperation reforms. It emphasizes security force assistance (SFA) missions including activities to train, equip, advise, and assist foreign forces to improve their proficiency; such SFA activities will be “the most dynamic” element in security cooperation in the coming years, according to the QDR. It maintains that US efforts in SFA will keep in mind the need for support for healthy civil-military relations, respect for human dignity and the rule of law, promotion of international humanitarian law, and the professionalization of partner military forces. The QDR points out that these SFA activities can help enable the host country’s forces to contribute to stabilization and peacekeeping as well as counterterrorism operations, but at the same time the US forces can benefit from partnering with host-nation units who have the advantage of knowing terrain, language, and local culture. In an article contributed to *Foreign Affairs*, Secretary Gates recognized that situations may occur in future that necessitate the same types of capabilities that the United States has put to use in Afghanistan and Iraq; in such cases, he notes, “the effectiveness and credibility of the United States will be only be as good as the effectiveness, credibility, and sustainability of its local partners.” Thus, concludes Secretary Gates, the United States must also improve its ability to help its partners build their own capabilities.

In light of the US experience in Iraq and Afghanistan, the importance of SFA is shifting from peripheral to central among missions of the US military. As



**US soldiers providing weapons training to Afghan National Police personnel (February 2010)** (DOD photo by Staff Sgt. Dayton Mitchell, US Air Force)

Secretary Gates has noted, “Within the military, advising and mentoring indigenous security forces is moving from the periphery of institutional priorities, where it was considered the province of the Special Forces, to being a key mission for the armed forces as a whole.” Reflecting this awareness, the QDR lays out a policy of expanding the SFA mission to general purpose forces and improving their capacity to perform

the mission. For example, the QDR cites policies such as the four services' addition of 500 personnel to their train-the-trainer units for general purpose forces and enhancement of the general purposes forces' linguistic, regional, and cultural abilities needed to carry out SFA. These efforts were already cited in the Quadrennial Roles and Missions Review (QRM) Report presented to Congress in January 2009, and were further reflected in the QDR.

### **(3) Deterring and Defeating Attacks in an Anti-access Environment**

The ability of the United States to project the necessary military force in a timely manner to locations far from the American homeland is essential to maintaining its allies' security and regional stability. The QDR shows an awareness, however, that in the future the United States is likely to face adversaries that possess some degree of anti-access capability, meaning the ability to delay or impede US power projection. In response to this possibility, the QDR lays out measures to “deter and defeat aggression in anti-access environments.” It recognizes the possibility that ballistic missiles of North Korea or Iran could place US air bases, ports of debarkation, logistics hubs, command centers, and other assets at risk, and notes that China is developing and fielding large numbers of advanced medium-range ballistic and cruise missiles, new attack submarines equipped with advanced weapons, increasingly capable long-range air defense systems, electronic warfare and computer network attack capabilities, advanced fighter aircraft, and counterspace systems. Such points have already been addressed in the 2008 National Defense Strategy.

As a means to counter anti-access capabilities, the QDR raises the expansion of long-range strike capacity that can outrange the adversary's missiles. Examples would include expanding the capacity of *Virginia*-class attack submarines for long-range strike, ISR and strike operations using a naval unmanned combat aerial system (N-UCAS), as well as studies and testing being conducted on conventional prompt global strike (PGS) prototypes. The review also addresses defensive steps toward the threat of anti-access capabilities, such as studies and consultation with allies regarding options to enhance the resiliency of forward bases (including hardening key facilities, ensuring redundancy, and dispersal of functions).

The US military also relies heavily on space for C4ISR capabilities. For this reason, US space systems can become targets for anti-access capabilities. Robert

Butler, deputy assistant secretary of defense for cyber and space policy, in hearings held by a subcommittee of the House Armed Services Committee on April 21, testified on the results of the SPR that was conducted in parallel to the QDR. He noted that space is increasingly becoming a “contested” domain, and the space assets of the United States and its allies are increasingly coming under a variety of threats, both kinetic threats, that can do physical destruction such as antisatellite (ASAT) weapons, and “soft” threats such as jamming. In light of this situation, the QDR includes “assuring access to space and the use of space assets” among measures to counter anti-access capabilities. While not spelled out in detail, the QDR notes that vulnerability of US space systems can be reduced; by leveraging expertise of, and cooperating with, commercial and international partners, and implementing the Space Protection Strategy, which was jointly prepared and presented to Congress in August 2008, by the US Air Force Space Command and the National Reconnaissance Office.

One of the approaches raised by the QDR to counter such anti-access threats has received particular attention: the “air-sea battle” (or “joint air-sea battle”) concept currently being developed by the Air Force and the Navy. According to media reports, work began on this concept at the direction of Secretary of Defense Gates, and a memorandum of agreement on the development process had already been signed by the Air Force Chief of Staff and the Chief of Naval Operations in September 2009. In his commencement speech at the US Air Force Academy graduation ceremony on May 26, 2010, Admiral Michael Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, noted that the Air Force and the Navy would soon begin rolling out the concept.

The QDR explains that the concept is about “how air and naval forces will integrate capabilities across all operational domains—air, sea, land, space, and cyberspace—to counter growing challenges to US freedom of action.” Needless to say, it is not cost efficient, nor very effective, for the each military service to take action separately to counter anti-access capabilities of potential adversaries. The air-sea battle concept can be called a means to break down the fences dividing the individual services.

On December 15, 2010, in an address at the National Defense University, Air Force Chief of Staff General Norton Schwartz recognized the need for “more disciplined spending, efficiency, innovation, and inter-service integration and interoperability” in order to deal with a potential adversary’s anti-access and area-

denial capabilities during a time of budgetary constraints. He cited the air-sea battle concept as one possible approach. As General Schwartz explained it, this concept would establish a more permanent, more strategic relationship among the Navy, the Marines, and the Air Force. It would address three dimensions: the institutional dimension, with changes in service cultures and organizational structures to normalize collaborative behavior; the conceptual dimension, on how various services will integrate and interoperate; and the material dimension, to enhance interoperability. Further, General Schwartz raised an example of inter-service cooperation: Air Force unmanned aircraft can provide full-motion ISR video to naval vessels in action, reducing risk to the vessels and assuring freedom of movement at sea. The strategy of joint procurement can also assure the interoperability of naval and air force equipment, he noted, as well as assuring appropriate redundancy.

So far, the specific kinds of operations to be covered by the air-sea battle concept have not been defined. The Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments (CSBA), a think tank that has close ties with Andrew Marshall, director of the DOD Office of Net Assessments, who is said to have provided ideas that led to the concept, issued a widely noted report on the air-sea battle concept on May 18, some three and a half months after release of the QDR. That report argues that the air-sea battle concept is designed as a means to deal with China's anti-access capabilities and lays out a number of operations encompassed by the air-sea battle concept. Among these operations are: enhancing resiliency and the capability to withstand an initial strike (measures to minimize possible damage from a missile strike, such as enhancement of warning and surveillance capabilities, dispersed basing of aircraft, and enhanced air defense of bases); attack of Chinese ISR capabilities so as to reduce the effectiveness of its missile attack (including neutralization of on-orbit assets, cyber attacks against space systems, strikes against over-the-horizon radar, and disruption of airborne ISR sensors and communications relay platforms); and use of attacks against missile forces to reduce with strike capacities.

The CSBA report points out that it will be necessary to create synergy among the Air Force and Navy capabilities in carrying out such operations. The Air Force, for example, would conduct operations to disrupt China's space-based ISR systems, which would restore naval freedom of maneuver, and in turn the Navy's antisatellite capabilities would support the Air Force's counterspace operations;

the report also notes that the Navy's missile defense system could defend Air Force bases against Chinese missile attack, while Navy attacks against Chinese air-defense or ISR systems using submarines and N-UCAS could support strikes by the Air Force.

The CSBA report was, needless to say, the product of a private, independent research organization. Still, the report was made by an organization that carries some weight in discussion of defense policy, and the CSBA had been making a case to Congress for the necessity of an air-sea battle concept before the DOD publicly launched its own study of the concept. The contents of the CSBA report also correspond to the countermeasures raised in the QDR, so this report should also be of reference in future as the air-sea battle concept takes on more concrete form.

#### **(4) Emphasis on Cyberspace Operations**

One topic that comes in for particular attention in the QDR is its emphasis on "operating effectively in cyberspace." In the 2006 QDR, terrorists' use of cyberspace as a sanctuary and the threat of cyber attacks against the United States were each addressed, but they were not treated as an independent mission area. The QDR recognizes that although it is a manmade domain, cyberspace is now as relevant a domain for DOD activities as the naturally occurring domains of land, sea, air, and space, and that active use of cyberspace is essential to US military operations. The DOD's information networks are being targeted for attack and a variety of sources, "ranging from small groups of individuals to some of the largest countries in the world," are seeking to infiltrate those networks in order to blunt US military operations. The QDR points out the need for developing a comprehensive approach to DOD operations in cyberspace, promoting greater cyberspace expertise and awareness, centralization of command for cyberspace operations, and enhancing partnerships with other agencies and governments.

The establishment of the US Cyber Command (USCYBERCOM) comes in for particular attention in the QDR. Defense Secretary Gates directed the establishment of USCYBERCOM on June 23, 2009, as a subordinate unified command of the US Strategic Command, to oversee the operation and defense of DOD information networks and conduct full spectrum cyberspace military operations. Under USCYBERCOM are the cyber commands of the four services (the Army Cyber Command, the 24th Air Force, the Fleet Cyber Command/10th Fleet, and the

Marine Corps Cyberspace Command). In the QRM Report submitted to Congress in January 2009, the DOD had already noted its plan to have each of the four services establish its own capability to carry out cyberspace operations and recognized the need for improvement in the areas of education and training as well as in command and control of cyberspace operations. In addition, the *National Military Strategy for Cyberspace Operations* adopted in December 2006 also determined policy along similar lines.

In the background of these DOD efforts to deal with security in cyberspace is an information security incident that occurred in 2008. It had been reported that a flash drive infected with a worm was inserted into a laptop at a US military base in the Middle East. This worm infiltrated a network operated by the US Central Command and for some time transmitted classified information outside the network. This incident was first officially admitted in an article for *Foreign Affairs* by Deputy Secretary of Defense William Lynn, who stated that the flash drive's malicious code had been placed there by a foreign intelligence organization. He also noted, this incident is "the most significant breach of US military computers ever," and the DOD's efforts to counter it represents a "turning point in US cyber defense strategy."

As already noted, the mission of USCYBERCOM is "to conduct full spectrum cyberspace military operations" including both defensive and offensive operations. This seems to indicate that the US military has evolved its policies to treat cyberspace activities on an equal plane with military operations on land, at sea, and in the air. However, it remains to be seen whether the establishment of USCYBERCOM means something more than just unifying chain of command by putting DOD cyberspace operations under a single commander including defense of information networks, which have so far been conducted separately by different entities.

## **(5) The QDR Panel Report and Alternative Force Structure**

The independent QDR Panel, established to evaluate the QDR produced by the DOD, presented its report to Congress on July 29, 2010. Of the points raised by the panel, what drew particular attention was its recommendation on US force structure. While the report recognizes that the QDR is "a wartime QDR" that "is of value in helping Congress review and advance the current vital missions of the Department," it nevertheless criticizes the "significant and growing gap between the force structure of the military—its size and its inventory of equipment—and

the missions it will be called on to perform in the future.”

The report emphasizes in particular that the force structure in the Asia-Pacific region needs to be increased because of the need to transit freely the western Pacific and fully maintain the US presence in the Asia-Pacific region. The panel report also expresses concern that the force structure indicated in the QDR may not be sufficient to assure other countries that the United States can meet its treaty commitments in the face of China’s increased military capabilities.

Based on such an awareness, the QDR Panel report offers an alternative to the force structure (fiscal 2011–2015) indicated by the QDR. One feature of the alternative force structure is that, while it maintains support for the force structure indicated in the QDR for the Army and Marine Corps, it emphasizes strengthening naval and air forces. For example, the QDR calls for the Navy to have 288–322 ships for fiscal 2011–2015; against this, the QDR Panel report advocates 346 ships. The same applies to bomber aircraft, with the report suggesting that the number should be increased from the maximum of 96 aircraft in the QDR to 180 aircraft. The report also notes the aging of US military equipment and promotes the modernization of equipment that will be needed in the future. Specifically, the report cites the modernization of surface vessels, including the next generation cruiser slated for cancellation in the QDR, modernization of tactical aircraft, purchase of tanker aircraft, and development of ground combat vehicles for the Army, as well as enhancement of investment in long-range strike systems and related sensors needed to counter anti-access capabilities.

The alternative force structure presented in the QDR Panel report supplements the QDR’s policy emphasizing victory in today’s wars with increased emphasis on preparing to meet potential threats in the future. Realizing this alternative will necessarily invite increases in the defense budget. While the QDR Panel report notes the need to hold down wasteful expenditures by pushing ahead efficiency efforts, including acquisition reform, it also recognizes the impossibility of meeting the necessary expenses through such savings alone; there will have to be additional long-term investment. In this respect, panel co-chairman William Perry, a former secretary of defense, noted in the Senate Armed Services Committee that while preparing the QDR, the DOD was constrained by the budget, whereas the QDR Panel was not, with the result that it focused on whatever it deemed necessary. He stressed the need to maintain the capacity for free transit

in the western Pacific and reemphasized the inescapable need to strengthen the Navy for that purpose.

## **(6) Nuclear Posture Review Report**

In his April 2009 speech in Prague, President Obama set a goal of a world without nuclear weapons and announced a policy of reducing the role of nuclear weapons, and close attention has been paid to the 2010 NPR Report to see how that policy would be addressed in specific terms. Although the NPR was also conducted in 1994 and 2001, so that the current report is the third in the series, this is the first time that the report has been publicly released.

The 2001 NPR dealt primarily with the US nuclear posture itself; it is notable that the current NPR puts non-proliferation in the forefront, reflecting the positioning of this report as “a roadmap for implementing President Obama’s agenda for reducing nuclear risks.” This in turn reflects the Obama administration’s awareness that nuclear terrorism is the most “immediate and extreme threat” and that nuclear proliferation is “today’s other pressing threat.” To deal with such threats, the NPR called for strengthening the International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards as a way to strengthen the non-proliferation posture, and seeks to speed up efforts to ensure the security of vulnerable nuclear materials. Further, the NPR also views conclusion of the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (the “New START”) with Russia and efforts toward the early ratification and entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty as a means to reaffirm US commitment to fulfilling its obligation to pursue nuclear disarmament under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

At the same time, the reduction in the role of nuclear weapons cited in the Prague speech is one of the keynotes of the NPR. The NPR defines the fundamental role of US nuclear weapons as deterring nuclear attack on the United States, its allies, and its partners, and it cites changes in the security environment as rationale for it. In other words, during the Cold War, US nuclear weapons served as a deterrent to conventional attacks (as well as attacks using biological or chemical weapons) by the Soviet Union and Warsaw Pact countries; with the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact, the United States has reestablished the superiority in conventional forces. Thus the role of nuclear weapons in deterring non-nuclear attacks has already declined greatly.

In order to further reduce the role of nuclear weapons, the NPR declares that

the United States will fulfill its non-proliferation obligations under the NPT to refrain from the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear states, strengthening the US policy of “negative security assurance.” The report notes, however, that in the case of use of biological or chemical weapons against the United States, its allies, or its partners, the United States will respond with devastating conventional attacks even against nations that are subject to the above assurances; it also notes that in such cases, the United States reserves the right to make adjustment in the negative security assurance that may be warranted by the evolution and proliferation of the biological weapons threat. In addition, the NPR takes the position that in order to deter attacks using conventional, biological, or chemical weapons against the United States, its allies, or its partners by either states that possess nuclear weapons or states not in compliance with their nuclear non-proliferation obligations, the United States cannot discard the possibility that nuclear weapons will have a role to play. The United States is therefore not prepared at the present time, the NPR states, to adopt a policy that the “sole purpose” of US nuclear weapons is to deter nuclear attack on the United States, its allies, and its partners.

Since the end of the Cold War, the United States and Russia have greatly reduced their nuclear arsenals, but the NPR notes the Obama administration’s awareness that the United States still possesses more nuclear weapons than are necessary to nuclear deterrence. The report raises the primary goal of maintaining strategic deterrence and stability at reduced nuclear force levels, and it views the New START concluded with Russia on April 8, 2010, as a first step in that direction.

The New START specifies that both the United States and Russia shall reduce the number of deployed strategic nuclear warheads to 1,550 or fewer and the number of deployed strategic nuclear delivery vehicles to 700 or fewer. The NPR makes clear, however, that in order to maintain strategic stability and provide for technical problems and vulnerabilities that might appear in future, the United States will act within the limits set by the New START to maintain the triad of intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBM), submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBM), and heavy bombers. In addition, the *Ohio*-class nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarines (SSBN) will be maintained for the time being at the current level of fourteen, and all ICBMs will carry only a single warhead. Even when ICBMs and SLBMs are mounted with conventional warheads and are converted to PGS purposes, they will still be subject to the New START limits. However, the

number of delivery vehicles contemplated under the PGS concept is itself limited. Thus holding the number of delivery vehicles and warheads required for nuclear deterrence within the New START limits will not imply that the treaty will place limits on the development of PGS capabilities.

The NPR also addresses the goals of strengthening regional deterrence and reassuring US allies and partners. As the NPR notes, the United States is committed to strengthening bilateral and regional security ties and guaranteeing the security of its allies and partners and will demonstrate this commitment not only through words, but also through deeds, including forward deployment in key regions, improvement of the non-nuclear capabilities of itself and its allies, and continued provision of extended deterrence. Specifically, the NPR indicates its awareness that the role of nuclear weapons in US national security strategy has declined and that non-nuclear elements will take on a greater share of the deterrence burden; the strengthening of regional security architectures, including missile defense, counter-WMD capabilities, and conventional power-projection capabilities, is essential for strengthening regional deterrence while reducing the role and numbers of nuclear weapons. This point is also made in the BMDR. The means to this end will include deployment of nuclear weapons on tactical fighter-bombers and heavy bombers such as the B-2 and B-52, maintenance of the capability for forward deployment, and life extension for the B61 nuclear bomb that is carried by such delivery vehicles. Another means will be the development of PGS capabilities that will permit rapid, precise attacks against targets anywhere on the globe. The role of close consultation and cooperation with allies and partners is also raised, with it being made clear that the United States will not make changes in its extended deterrence capabilities without such consultations.

In short, the NPR presents a posture of moving forward realistically, recognizing the need for balance between the Obama administration's ambitious goal of a world without nuclear weapons on the one hand and, on the other hand, a response to present threats and consideration of US allies.

### **3. The Obama Administration's East Asian Policy**

#### **(1) The Basis for East Asian Policy**

The Obama administration continues to view East Asia as an important region to the United States, even identifying itself as a "Pacific nation," strengthening the

sense of its presence in the region as it deepens and broadens its involvement with individual countries as well as regional frameworks. East Asia has taken on growing economic importance as a major US trade partner, but it also presents security problems as well, such as nuclear proliferation, unresolved territorial issues, and growing tensions over energy and natural resources. And against the background of a growing dynamic prominence of emerging states such as China and India, this region is assuming a new level of strategic importance in US security.

As the Obama administration entered its second year, it set three policy goals towards East Asia: promotion of economic growth within the region; structuring stable security; and expansion of democracy and protection of human rights. Through the realization of such goals, the United States aims to expand multilayered cooperation with the countries of the region, and it is moving forward enthusiastically with attempts to build not only traditional bilateral relationships, but also multilateral relationships including those with regional frameworks. Specifically, while deepening its alliance relationship with Japan, the Republic of Korea (ROK), Australia, Thailand, and the Philippines, at the same time it is trying to strengthen its ties with emerging states such as India and China as well as Southeast Asian countries such as Indonesia, Vietnam, and Singapore. It views ASEAN, the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), and the East Asia Summit (EAS) as important regional frameworks regarding diplomatic and security affairs, a role that APEC performs regarding economic affairs, and it is actively strengthening its engagement with each of these forums. As it expands its participation in East Asia, the United States views it as important for such participation to make substantive contributions to the solution of regional issues, seeking to enhance the ability of the countries of the region to resolve such problems. The Obama administration has made clear that it seeks to combine the maintenance and enhancement of its relations with its allies and partners with building stable relations with the emerging states and positive participation in regional forums, thereby providing active support to the countries of the region so that they themselves can deal effectively not only with conventional issues such as the prevention of conflicts but also with new multilateral security issues and the many other types of problems that may arise.

## **(2) Relations with the Countries of East Asia**

The year 2010 marked the 50th anniversary of the Japan-US Security Treaty, and

the Obama administration not only views the US-Japan alliance as the cornerstone of its strategic relations with East Asia, it also highly appreciates the essential role the alliance plays not only in the safety and prosperity of the two states, but also in ensuring peace and stability for the entire region. The administration has sought to strengthen the relationship by emphasizing close bilateral ties with the Kan administration to deal with the regional and global security issues.

The Obama administration appreciates the efforts to review defense postures begun in December 2002 by the Defense Policy Review Initiative (DPRI), and at the Japan-US Security Consultative Committee (“2+2” Meeting) held on May 28, the United States indicated that it viewed steady implementation of the realignment described in the May 2006 final report, *The United States-Japan Roadmap for Realignment Implementation*, as important not only to create an environment for a more sustainable US presence in the region but also to enhance the ability of the Japan-US alliance to respond flexibly to common security issues. Regarding the relocation of Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) Futenma, the United States and Japan agreed to make efforts both toward relocation of the air base within Okinawa Prefecture and toward a reduction in the economic burden of maintaining the base in Okinawa. In addition, the United States and Japan agreed to conduct an early study by specialists from both countries regarding the location, configuration, and construction method for a replacement facility, and the report of the Futenma Replacement Facility Bilateral Experts Study Group was released on August 31, 2010. The Obama administration indicated that it was aware of the Japanese domestic political situation and would continue its close cooperation toward carrying out the US-Japan agreement.

The Obama administration is also placing great importance on US-Japanese cooperation regarding strategic issues such as the situation on the Korean Peninsula, where tension continues due to the series of provocations by North Korea, and on building a constructive relationship with an ascendant China. Regarding the September 7 incident in which a Chinese fishing boat rammed into a patrol vessel of the Japan Coast Guard in Japanese territorial waters near the Senkaku Islands, Secretary Clinton made clear the US position that Article 5 of the Japan-US Defense Treaty also applies to these islands at the Japan-US foreign ministerial meeting held on September 23. In addition, on November 23, North Korea shelled the South Korean island of Yeonpyeong and nearby waters. Following the incident, the foreign ministers of the United States, the ROK, and

Japan met in Washington on December 7, and the three countries indicated they were working toward tripartite policy coordination and strengthening their strategic dialogue. The conference delegates strongly criticized North Korea over the Yeonpyeong bombardment, and agreed that their three countries would act in unity to deal with the incident, strengthening diplomatic efforts including coordination with China and Russia in their purview.

The United States also views Japan as playing a very important role in dealing with global security issues. It has a high appreciation of Japanese efforts in areas such as counterterrorism, nuclear nonproliferation, and climate change and the variety of forms of support Japan has provided to the civilian populations of Afghanistan and Pakistan. The United States indicated that it intended to enhance US-Japan coordination in dealing with such issues in the future. Regarding Iran's nuclear development in particular, President Obama spoke at the bilateral summit conference on September 23 and expressed his thanks for Japan's support for adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1929.

In 2010, the 60th anniversary of the outbreak of the Korean War, the Obama administration ranked the US-ROK alliance, alongside the US-Japan alliance, as central to peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region. As was confirmed in the "Joint Vision for the Alliance of the United States of America and the Republic of Korea" released in June 2009, the two states will make even greater efforts to strengthen their relationship. President Obama met on June 26, 2010, with ROK President Lee Myung-bak, and the two presidents agreed that the transition of wartime operational control on the Korean Peninsula, which during the term of

former President Roh was originally scheduled for April 2012, would be extended to December 2015. The first ministerial meeting between the United States and the ROK in charge of foreign affairs and defense ("2+2"), held in Seoul on July 21, discussed the adoption of "Strategic Alliance 2015," which would serve as an implementation plan for this transition of wartime operational control, and it was confirmed that the two countries would move forward in

close cooperation to promote the maintenance and enhancement of the alliance's joint defensive posture and capabilities.

At the 42nd US-ROK Security Consultative Meeting in Washington, DC, on October 8, 2010, ROK Defense Minister Kim Tae-young and Secretary of Defense Gates conferred concerning the threats, military force conditions, reform of the ongoing alliance and similar topics being faced today by the US-ROK alliance. Based on these consultations, the allies signed: the "Strategic Alliance 2015" mentioned earlier; a set of "strategic planning guidelines" aimed at formulating new strategic plans that could respond comprehensively to threats from North Korea and changes in strategy; and the "Defense Cooperation Guidelines" as a long-term plan for the US-ROK alliance. At that meeting, Secretary Gates stated, "We are committed to providing extended deterrence [to the ROK] using the full range of American military might: from our nuclear umbrella to conventional strike and ballistic missile defense," confirming anew the intention to provide the ROK with extended deterrence. It was agreed to form a new "extended deterrence policy committee" to discuss specific policies for this purpose.

Regarding North Korea, the United States and the ROK continue to seek concrete measures to promote the complete, verifiable, and irreversible dismantlement of North Korea's nuclear program, believing that if North Korea ceases its provocative behavior, improves its relations with neighboring states, and fulfills its international responsibilities, this will contribute to the security of the ROK. The consultative meeting gave its full support to the ROK position that the March 26 sinking of the ROK patrol vessel *Cheonan* was caused by the underwater detonation of a North Korean torpedo; in response to the sinking, the United States and the ROK conducted large-scale antisubmarine exercises in July and September. Before the "2+2" Meeting, Secretary of State Clinton and Secretary of Defense Gates also visited the Demilitarized Zone, the military dividing line between North and South Korea, along with ROK Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade Yu Myung-hwan and Defense Minister Kim Tae-young to display the resolute US-ROK alliance against North Korea. The two states have continued to strengthen their posture toward North Korea: on October 13, Japan and Australia also joined in naval interdiction training conducted under the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI), and beginning on October 15, the US and ROK air forces conducted joint exercises. Further, in response to the November artillery bombardment of

Yeonpyeong Island by North Korea, the Obama administration vigorously condemned North Korea and indicated that the United States was resolved to do “everything in its power to defend the ROK.” On November 28, the US-ROK joint military exercises announced at the “2+2” Meeting began on schedule in the Yellow Sea. In addition, at the US-ROK-Japan foreign ministers conference in Washington during early December, Secretary of State Clinton, Foreign Minister Maehara, and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade Kim Sung-hwan issued a joint communiqué that criticized North Korea for its newly-announced construction of uranium enrichment facilities, which not only violated UN Security Council resolutions 1718 and 1874 but also violated North Korean commitments under the September 2005 joint communiqué of the Six-Party Talks; the Washington joint communiqué also noted that it would be necessary for North Korea to improve its relations with the ROK and take concrete steps toward denuclearization in order to permit the Six-Party Talks to be resumed.

Regarding US relations with China, the Obama administration is continuing to seek to build a “positive, cooperative, and comprehensive” relationship. In other words, the US recognizes that there are competitive elements to the US-China relationship where opinions naturally may differ, but while keeping this in mind, the United States seeks to expand cooperation in such wide-ranging areas as economics, diplomacy, and defense, not just on the regional level but globally as well. President Obama’s November 2009 visit to China was marked by a mood of cooperation, but in contrast, with the start of 2010, friction clearly began to appear in the bilateral relationship, including US arms sales to Taiwan, Google’s decision to withdraw from China in reaction to Chinese censorship, and issues with

raising the exchange rate on the Chinese renminbi. Amidst such circumstances, Hu Jintao, president of the People’s Republic of China (and general secretary of the Communist Party of China), attended the April “Nuclear Security Summit” convened by President Obama. In May, a US delegation of some 200 members, including Secretary of State Clinton and Secretary of the Treasury Timothy Geithner, visited Beijing and



**Secretary of Defense Gates and Secretary of State Clinton looking toward North Korea from the Demilitarized Zone (July 21, 2010)** (DOD photo by Cherie Cullen)

took part in a “US-China Security and Economic Dialogue,” the second such dialogue following talks held at the end of July 2009 in Washington. In addition, President Hu was invited to Washington for US-China summit talks on January 19, 2011, where the leaders displayed a common understanding of the importance of broadening and deepening the two states’ cooperative relationship in a wide range of areas including economics and security.

At the same time, however, attention has been directed to the Chinese military’s growing capabilities regarding anti-access and area denial as well as in space and cyberspace. The United States is also increasingly wary regarding remaining territorial conflicts in the South China Sea and higher levels of activity on the part of the Chinese military. Secretary of State Clinton, attending the ARF held in Hanoi, Vietnam, on July 23, stated that “The United States...has a national interest in freedom of navigation, open access to Asia’s maritime commons, and respect for international law in the South China Sea,” and she indicated that the United States would contribute positively toward peaceful resolution of territorial conflicts. US-Chinese military-to-military relationships, which had seen considerable development during 2009, were cut off as part of the Chinese reaction to the January 2010 US decision to sell arms to Taiwan. At the Asia Security Summit (the “Shangri-La Dialogue”) in Singapore in early June, Secretary of Defense Gates responded by stressing the importance of stable, ongoing military exchanges which were not influenced by the political relations between the United States and China, and he strongly urged China to resume the exchanges at an early date. Later, Secretary Gates attended the expanded ASEAN conference of defense ministers (the ADMM-Plus meeting) in early October, where he met with Chinese Minister of National Defense Liang Guanglie and reached an agreement to normalize military exchanges. After the agreement, a meeting of US and Chinese naval officials responsible for ensuring safety was held in Hawaii on October 17 under the Military Maritime Consultative Agreement (MMCA) concluded in 1998. The United States places great importance on military exchanges with China as a means of improving mutual understanding between the two militaries and encouraging an accurate communication of ideas, and in January 2011 Secretary Gates was able to visit China.

The Obama administration is also building up its engagement with the countries of Southeast Asia. Thailand and the Philippines are US allies in Southeast Asia, and the US cooperates closely with them in addressing a wide range of issues

such as politics, economics, and security. It has concluded a new “Creative Partnership Agreement” with Thailand and held the first “2+2” strategic dialogue with the Philippines in late January 2011. Military exchanges with Indonesia had halted since 1998, but agreement was reached to resume the exchanges, and a “Comprehensive Partnership” agreement was signed in November.

The United States also recognizes the importance of multilateral frameworks in Southeast Asia, in particular the central role played by ASEAN in deliberating political, economic, and strategic affairs within the region. Secretary of State Clinton attended the ARF in July, and a second US-ASEAN summit conference was held in New York in September, following on the first summit that met in Singapore in 2009. In addition, Secretary of Defense Gates’ attendance at the ADMM-Plus meeting in Hanoi in early October also strengthened US engagement. The United States also appreciates the importance of the EAS as a body that can promote regional cooperation in Southeast Asia, and both the United States and Russia are to participate in the EAS starting in 2011. While attending the EAS held in Vietnam in late October, Secretary Clinton expressed US expectations of the EAS function when she called it “a forum where leaders can have intimate and informal discussions on important political and strategic issues.” She stated that the EAS should take up such important topics as nuclear proliferation, military balance, maritime security, and climate change.

The Obama administration’s policy toward Southeast Asia takes as its foundation the building of multilayered networks, including bilateral relationships with both allies and emerging states and with regional frameworks as well, aiming to further economic development, maintenance of stable security, and expansion of democracy and protection of human rights within the region. As China is increasingly making its presence felt economically and militarily, it will most likely be important for the future to create regional mechanisms that can contribute to the peaceful resolution of wide-ranging problems including territorial disputes.