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Renewed Great Power Competition: Implications for Defense—Issues for Congress

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Summary

World events in recent years have led observers, particularly since late 2013, to conclude that the international security environment in recent years has undergone a shift from the post-Cold War era that began in the late 1980s and early 1990s, also sometimes known as the unipolar moment (with the United States as the unipolar power), to a new and different situation that features, among other things, renewed great power competition with China and Russia and challenges by these two countries and others to elements of the U.S.-led international order that has operated since World War II.

The shift to renewed great power competition has become a major factor in the debate over future U.S. defense spending levels, and has led to new or renewed emphasis on the following in discussions of U.S. defense strategy, plans, and programs:

- grand strategy and geopolitics as part of the context for discussing U.S. defense budgets, plans, and programs;
- nuclear weapons and nuclear deterrence;
- new U.S. military service operational concepts;
- U.S. and NATO military capabilities in Europe;
- capabilities for conducting so-called high-end conventional warfare (i.e., large-scale, high-intensity, technologically sophisticated warfare) against countries such as China and Russia;
- maintaining U.S. technological superiority in conventional weapons;
- speed of weapon system development and deployment as a measure of merit in defense acquisition policy;
- mobilization capabilities for an extended-length large-scale conflict against an adversary such as China or Russia;
- minimizing reliance in U.S. military systems on components and materials from Russia and China; and
- capabilities for countering so-called hybrid warfare and gray-zone tactics employed by countries such as Russia and China.

The issue for Congress is how U.S. defense funding levels, strategy, plans, and programs should respond to the shift in the international security environment. Congress's decisions on these issues could have significant implications for U.S. defense capabilities and funding requirements.

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Introduction

This report provides a brief overview of implications for U.S. defense of the shift in the international security environment to a situation of renewed great power competition with China and Russia. The issue for Congress is how U.S. defense funding levels, strategy, plans, and programs should respond to this shift. Congress's decisions on these issues could have significant implications for U.S. defense capabilities and funding requirements.

This report focuses on defense-related issues and does not discuss potential implications of the shift to renewed great power competition for other policy areas, such as foreign policy and diplomacy, trade and finance, energy, and foreign assistance. A separate CRS report discusses the current debate over the future U.S. role in the world and the implications of this debate for both defense and other policy areas, particularly in light of the shift to renewed great power competition.[1]

Background

Shift to Renewed Great Power Competition

World events in recent years have led observers, particularly since late 2013, to conclude that the international security environment in recent years has undergone a shift from the post-Cold War era that began in the late 1980s and early 1990s, also sometimes known as the unipolar moment (with the United States as the unipolar power), to a new and different situation that features, among other things, renewed great power competition with China and Russia and challenges by these two countries and others to elements of the U.S.-led international order that has operated since World War II.[2]

The shift to a situation of renewed great power competition was acknowledged in the Obama Administration's June 2015 National Military Strategy,[3] and more fully in the Trump Administration's December 2017 National Security Strategy (NSS)[4] and the 11-page unclassified summary of its January 2018 National Defense Strategy (NDS),[5] which formally reorient U.S. national security strategy and U.S. defense strategy toward an explicit primary focus on great

[1] CRS Report R44891, *U.S. Role in the World: Background and Issues for Congress*, by Ronald O'Rourke and Michael Moodie.

[2] The term *international order* is generally used to refer to the collection of organizations, institutions, treaties, rules, and norms that are intended to organize, structure, and regulate international relations during a given historical period. Key features of the U.S.-led international order established at the end of World War II—also known as the liberal international order, postwar international order, or open international order, and often referred to as a rules-based order—are generally said to include the following: respect for the territorial integrity of countries, and the unacceptability of changing international borders by force or coercion; a preference for resolving disputes between countries peacefully, without the use or threat of use of force or coercion; strong international institutions; respect for international law and human rights; a preference for free markets and free trade; and the treatment of international waters, international air space, outer space, and (more recently) cyberspace as international commons. For additional discussion, see CRS Report R44891, *U.S. Role in the World: Background and Issues for Congress*, by Ronald O'Rourke and Michael Moodie.

[3] Department of Defense, *The National Military Strategy of the United States of America 2015, The United States Military's Contribution To National Security*, June 2015, pp. i, 1-4.

[4] Office of the President, *National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, December 2017, 55 pp.

[5] Department of Defense, *Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy of the United States of America: Sharpening the American Military's Competitive Edge*, undated but released January 2018, 11 pp.

power competition with China and Russia and on countering Chinese and Russian military capabilities.

For additional background information and a list of articles on this shift, see **Appendix A** and **Appendix B**.

Implications for Defense

The shift in the international security environment to a situation of renewed great power competition has several implications for U.S. defense, including those discussed in the sections below.

Defense Funding Levels

The shift in the international security environment to a situation of renewed great power competition has become a major factor in the debate over future U.S. defense spending levels, along with other factors such as U.S. grand strategy (see next section), the federal budget situation and national debt, and nondefense demands for federal funding. Supporters of higher levels of U.S. defense spending argue that such levels are needed to compete adequately with China and Russia in military terms, while supporters of lower levels of U.S. defense spending argue that military challenges posed by China and Russia are overestimated or exaggerated, or that U.S. allies or partner countries can and should do more to counter these challenges.

Grand Strategy and Geopolitics

Discussions of the shift to renewed great power competition have led to a renewed emphasis on grand strategy[6] and geopolitics[7] as part of the context for discussing U.S. defense budgets, plans, and programs. A November 2, 2015, press report, for example, stated the following:

> The resurgence of Russia and the continued rise of China have created a new period of great-power rivalry—and a corresponding need for a solid grand strategy, [then-]U.S. Deputy Defense Secretary Robert Work said Monday at the Defense One Summit in Washington, D.C.
>
> "The era of everything is the era of grand strategy," Work said, suggesting that the United States must carefully marshal and deploy its great yet limited resources.[8]

From a U.S. perspective on grand strategy and geopolitics, it can be noted that most of the world's people, resources, and economic activity are located not in the Western Hemisphere, but in the other hemisphere, particularly Eurasia. In response to this basic feature of world geography, U.S. policymakers for the last several decades—explicitly since World War II, and implicitly since the U.S. decision to become a belligerent in World War I—have chosen to pursue, as a key element of U.S. national strategy, a goal of preventing the emergence of a regional hegemon in

[6] The term *grand strategy* generally refers to a country's overall strategy for securing its interests and making its way in the world, using all the national tools at its disposal, including diplomatic, information, military, and economic tools (sometimes abbreviated in U.S. government parlance as DIME). For the United States, grand strategy can be viewed as strategy at a global or interregional level, as opposed to U.S. strategies for individual regions, countries, or issues.

[7] The term *geopolitics* is often used as a synonym for international politics or strategy relating to international politics. More specifically, it refers to the influence of basic geographic features on international relations, and to the analysis of international relations from a perspective that places a strong emphasis on the influence of such geographic features. Basic geographic features involved in geopolitical analysis include things such as the relative sizes and locations of countries or land masses; the locations of key resources such as oil or water; geographic barriers such as oceans, deserts, and mountain ranges; and key transportation links such as roads, railways, and waterways.

[8] Bradley Peniston, "Work: 'The Age of Everything Is the Era of Grand Strategy'," *Defense One*, November 2, 2015.

one part of Eurasia or another, on the grounds that such a hegemon could represent a concentration of power strong enough to threaten vital U.S. interests by, for example, denying the United States access to some of the other hemisphere's resources and economic activity. Although U.S. policymakers have not often stated this key national strategic goal explicitly in public, U.S. military (and diplomatic) operations in recent decades—both wartime operations and day-to-day operations—can be viewed as having been carried out in no small part in support of this key goal.

The U.S. goal of preventing the emergence of a regional hegemon in one part of Eurasia or another has been a major reason why the U.S. military is structured with force elements that enable it to cross broad expanses of ocean and air space and then conduct sustained, large-scale military operations upon arrival. Force elements associated with this goal include, among other things, an Air Force with significant numbers of long-range bombers, long-range surveillance aircraft, long-range airlift aircraft, and aerial refueling tankers, and a Navy with significant numbers of aircraft carriers, nuclear-powered attack submarines, large surface combatants, large amphibious ships, and underway replenishment ships.[9]

The U.S. goal of preventing the emergence of regional hegemons in Eurasia, though longstanding, is not written in stone—it is a policy choice reflecting two judgments: (1) that such a regional hegemon could represent a concentration of power strong enough to threaten vital U.S. interests, and (2) that Eurasia is not reliably self-regulating in terms of preventing the emergence of such regional hegemons—that is, that the countries of Eurasia are not necessarily capable or willing to act sufficiently on their own, without assistance from the United States, to prevent the emergence of such regional hegemons.

A renewal of great power competition does not axiomatically require an acceptance of both of these judgments as guideposts for U.S. defense in coming years—one might accept that there has been a renewal of great power competition, but nevertheless conclude that one of these judgments or the other, while perhaps valid in the past, is no longer valid. A conclusion that one of these judgments is no longer valid could lead to a potentially major change in U.S. grand strategy that could lead to large-scale changes in U.S. defense funding levels, strategy, plans, and programs. By the same token, a renewal of great power competition does not by itself suggest that these two judgements—and the consequent U.S. goal of preventing the emergence of regional hegemons in Eurasia—are not valid as guideposts for U.S. defense in coming years.

For a list of articles pertaining to the debate over U.S. grand strategy, see **Appendix C**.

Nuclear Weapons and Nuclear Deterrence

The renewal of great power competition has led to a renewed emphasis in discussions of U.S. defense on nuclear weapons and nuclear deterrence. Russia's reassertion of its status as a major world power has included, among other things, recurring references by Russian officials to Russia's nuclear weapons capabilities and Russia's status as a major nuclear weapon power. China's nuclear-weapon capabilities are more modest than Russia's, but China is modernizing its nuclear forces as part of its overall military modernization effort, and some observers believe that China may increase the size of its nuclear force in coming years.

The increased emphasis in discussions of U.S. defense and security on nuclear weapons and nuclear deterrence comes at a time when DOD is in the early stages of a multiyear plan to spend

[9] For additional discussion, see CRS In Focus IF10485, *Defense Primer: Geography, Strategy, and U.S. Force Design*, by Ronald O'Rourke.

scores of billions of dollars to modernize U.S. strategic nuclear deterrent forces.[10] DOD, for example, currently has plans to acquire a new class of ballistic missile submarines[11] and a next-generation long-range bomber.[12] The topic of nuclear weapons in a context of great power competition has also been a key factor in connection with the U.S. withdrawal from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty.[13]

Operational Concepts

The renewal of great power competition has led to a new focus by U.S. military services on the development of new operational concepts—that is, new ways of employing U.S. military forces—particularly for countering improving Chinese anti-access/area-denial (A2/AD) military forces in the Indo-Pacific region. These new operational concepts include Multi-Domain Operations (MDO) for the Army and Air Force, Expeditionary Advanced Base Operations (EABO) for the Marine Corps, and Distributed Maritime Operations (DMO) for the Navy. These new operational concepts focus on more fully integrating U.S. military capabilities across multiple domains (i.e., land, air sea, space, electromagnetic, information, and cyber), employing U.S. military forces that are less concentrated and more distributed in their architectures, making greater use of networking technologies to tie those distributed forces together into battle networks, and making greater use of unmanned vehicles as part of the overall force architecture.[14]

U.S. and NATO Military Capabilities in Europe

The renewal of great power competition with Russia, which was underscored by Russia's seizure and annexation of Ukraine in March 2014 and Russia's subsequent actions in eastern Ukraine and elsewhere in Eastern Europe, has led to a renewed focus in U.S. defense on bolstering U.S. and NATO military capabilities in Europe for the purpose of deterring future Russian aggression.[15] Some observers have expressed particular concern about the ability of the United States and its NATO allies to defend the Baltic members of NATO in the event of a fast-paced Russian military move into those countries.

As a result of this renewed focus, the United States has taken a number of steps in recent years to bolster the U.S. military presence and U.S. military operations in and around Europe. In mainland Europe, this has included steps to reinforce Army and Air Force capabilities and operations in central Europe, including discussions on whether to increase the U.S. military presence in countries such as Poland.[16] In northern Europe, U.S. actions have included presence operations and exercises by the Marine Corps in Norway and by the U.S. Navy in northern European waters. In southern Europe, the Mediterranean has re-emerged as an operating area of importance for the

[10] See CRS Report RL33640, *U.S. Strategic Nuclear Forces: Background, Developments, and Issues*, by Amy F. Woolf, and Congressional Budget Office, *Projected Costs of U.S. Nuclear Forces, 2015 to 2024*, January 2015, 7 pp.

[11] CRS Report R41129, *Navy Columbia (SSBN-826) Class Ballistic Missile Submarine Program: Background and Issues for Congress*, by Ronald O'Rourke.

[12] CRS Report RL34406, *Air Force Next-Generation Bomber: Background and Issues for Congress*, by Jeremiah Gertler.

[13] For additional discussion, see CRS Insight IN10985, *U.S. Withdrawal from the INF Treaty*, by Amy F. Woolf.

[14] For more on EABO and DMO, see CRS Report RL32665, *Navy Force Structure and Shipbuilding Plans: Background and Issues for Congress*, by Ronald O'Rourke.

[15] See, for example, CRS In Focus IF11130, *United States European Command: Overview and Key Issues*, by Kathleen J. McInnis.

[16] See, for example, CRS In Focus IF11280, *U.S. Military Presence in Poland*, by Andrew Feickert, Kathleen J. McInnis, and Derek E. Mix.

Navy. Some of these actions, particularly for mainland Europe, were assembled into an annually funded package within the overall DOD budget originally called the European Reassurance Initiative and now called the European Deterrence Initiative.[17]

Renewed concern over NATO capabilities for deterring potential Russian aggression in Europe beyond Crimea and eastern Ukraine has been a key factor in U.S. actions intended to encourage the NATO allies to increase their own defense spending levels. NATO leaders since 2014 have announced a series of initiatives for increasing their defense spending and refocusing NATO away from "out of area" (i.e., beyond-Europe) operations, and back toward a focus on territorial defense and deterrence in Europe itself.[18]

Capabilities for High-End Conventional Warfare

The renewal of great power competition has led to a renewed emphasis in U.S. defense plans and programs on capabilities for conducting so-called high-end conventional warfare, meaning large-scale, high-intensity, technologically sophisticated conventional warfare against adversaries with similarly sophisticated military capabilities. China's continuing military modernization effort and the effects it is having on the military balance in the Western Pacific[19] is a major factor in this emphasis. Russia's actions to modernize its own military and deploy it to places such as the Middle East is an additional factor.

Defense acquisition programs included in the renewed U.S. emphasis on high-end warfare include (to mention only a few examples) programs for procuring advanced aircraft such as the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter (JSF)[20] and the next-generation long-range bomber,[21] highly capable warships such as the Virginia-class attack submarine[22] and DDG-51 class Aegis destroyer,[23] ballistic missile defense (BMD) capabilities,[24] longer-ranged land-attack and antiship weapons, new types of weapons such as lasers, railguns, and hypervelocity projectiles,[25] new ISR (intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance) capabilities, military space capabilities,[26] electronic warfare capabilities, military cyber capabilities, hypersonic weapons, and the military

[17] For further discussion, see CRS In Focus IF10946, *The European Deterrence Initiative: A Budgetary Overview*, by Pat Towell and Aras D. Kazlauskas.

[18] For additional discussion, see CRS Report R45652, *Assessing NATO's Value*, by Paul Belkin. See also CRS Insight IN10926, *NATO's 2018 Brussels Summit*, by Paul Belkin.

[19] For more on China's military modernization effort, see CRS Report RL33153, *China Naval Modernization: Implications for U.S. Navy Capabilities—Background and Issues for Congress*, by Ronald O'Rourke; and CRS Report R44196, *The Chinese Military: Overview and Issues for Congress*, by Ian E. Rinehart.

[20] For more on the F-35 program, see CRS Report RL30563, *F-35 Joint Strike Fighter (JSF) Program*, by Jeremiah Gertler.

[21] CRS Report RL34406, *Air Force Next-Generation Bomber: Background and Issues for Congress*, by Jeremiah Gertler.

[22] For more on the Virginia-class program, see CRS Report RL32418, *Navy Virginia (SSN-774) Class Attack Submarine Procurement: Background and Issues for Congress*, by Ronald O'Rourke.

[23] For more on the DDG-51 program, see, *Navy DDG-51and DDG-1000 Destroyer Programs: Background and Issues for Congress*, by Ronald O'Rourke.

[24] See, for example, CRS Report R43116, *Ballistic Missile Defense in the Asia-Pacific Region: Cooperation and Opposition*, by Ian E. Rinehart, Steven A. Hildreth, and Susan V. Lawrence, and CRS Report RL33745, *Navy Aegis Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD) Program: Background and Issues for Congress*, by Ronald O'Rourke.

[25] See, for example, CRS Report R44175, *Navy Lasers, Railgun, and Gun-Launched Guided Projectile: Background and Issues for Congress*, by Ronald O'Rourke.

[26] See, for example, CRS In Focus IF10337, *Challenges to the United States in Space*, by Steven A. Hildreth and Clark Groves.

uses of robotics and autonomous unmanned vehicles, quantum technology, and artificial intelligence (AI).[27]

Maintaining Technological Superiority in Conventional Weapons

As part of the renewed emphasis on capabilities for high-end conventional warfare, DOD officials have expressed concern that the technological and qualitative edge that U.S. military forces have had relative to the military forces of other countries is being narrowed or in some cases even eliminated by improving military capabilities in other countries, particularly China and (in some respects) Russia. In response, DOD has taken a number of actions in recent years that are intended to help maintain U.S. military superiority over improving military capabilities of other countries, including funding for developing new militarily applicable technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), lethal autonomous weapons, hypersonic weapons, directed-energy weapons, biotechnology, and quantum technology,[28] as well as actions intended to shorten acquisition timelines, meaning the time needed to develop and procure new weapons and equipment (see next section).

Speed of Weapon System Development and Deployment

As part of the concern over maintaining a technological and qualitative edge over opposing military forces, DOD officials and other observers have argued that U.S. defense acquisition policy will need to be adjusted to place a greater emphasis on speed of development and deployment as a measure of merit in defense acquisition policy (alongside other measures of merit, such as minimizing cost growth). As a consequence, they have stated, defense acquisition should feature more experimentation, risk-taking, and tolerance of failure during development.[29] Efforts within individual military services to move toward more-rapid acquisition of new capabilities form parts of this effort. DOD officials have also requested greater flexibility in how they are permitted to use funds for prototyping and experimentation. The 2018 NDS places a strong emphasis on achieving greater speed in developing and deploying new weapons and military technologies:

> *Deliver performance at the speed of relevance.* Success no longer goes to the country that develops a new technology first, but rather to the one that better integrates it and adapts its way of fighting. Current processes are not responsive to need; the Department is over-optimized for exceptional performance at the expense of providing timely decisions, policies, and capabilities to the warfighter. Our response will be to prioritize speed of delivery, continuous adaptation, and frequent modular upgrades. We must not accept cumbersome approval chains, wasteful applications of resources in uncompetitive space, or overly risk-averse thinking that impedes change. Delivering performance means we will shed outdated management practices and structures while integrating insights from business innovation.[30]

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[27] See, for example, CRS Report R43848, *Cyber Operations in DOD Policy and Plans: Issues for Congress*, by Catherine A. Theohary.

[28] For additional discussion, see CRS In Focus IF11105, *Defense Primer: Emerging Technologies*, by Kelley M. Sayler, CRS Report R45178, *Artificial Intelligence and National Security*, by Kelley M. Sayler, CRS In Focus IF11150, *Defense Primer: U.S. Policy on Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems*, by Kelley M. Sayler, and CRS Report R45811, *Hypersonic Weapons: Background and Issues for Congress*, by Kelley M. Sayler. See also "The Pentagon Changes Its Focus to Russia and China," Economist, February 28, 2019.

[29] See, for example, Sydney J. Freedberg Jr., "Stop Wasting Time So We Can Beat China: DoD R&D Boss, Griffin," *Breaking Defense*, August 9, 2018.

[30] Department of Defense, *Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy of the United States of America:*

Mobilization Capabilities

The renewal of great power competition has led to an increased emphasis in discussions of U.S. defense on U.S. mobilization capabilities, meaning capabilities for supporting U.S. military operations in an extended-length large-scale conflict against an adversary such as China or Russia. Such capabilities include but are not limited to those for producing new weapons to replace those expended in the earlier stages of a conflict, for repairing battle damage to ships, aircraft, and vehicles, for replacing satellites or other support assets that are lost in combat, for manufacturing spare parts and consumable items, and for inducting and training additional military personnel to expand the size of the force or replace personnel who are killed or wounded. Some observers have expressed concern about the adequacy of U.S. mobilization capabilities, particularly since this was not a major defense-planning concern during the 20 to 25 years of the post-Cold War era.[31]

Minimizing Reliance on Components and Materials from Russia and China

Increased tensions with Russia and China have led to an interest in eliminating or at least minimizing instances of being dependent on Russian-made military systems and components for U.S. military systems, and Chinese-origin components and materials for U.S. military systems. An earlier case in point concerned the Russian-made RD-180 rocket engine, which was incorporated into certain U.S. space launch rockets, including rockets used by DOD to put military payloads into orbit.[32] Concerns over Chinese cyber activities or potential Chinese actions to limit exports of certain materials (such as rare earth elements) have similarly led to concerns over the use of certain Chinese-made components (such as electronic components) or Chinese-origin materials (such as rare earth elements) for U.S. military systems.[33]

Countering Hybrid Warfare and Gray-Zone Tactics

Russia's seizure and annexation of Crimea, as well as subsequent Russian actions in eastern Ukraine and elsewhere in Eastern Europe and Russia's information operations, have led to a focus among policymakers on how to counter Russia's so-called hybrid warfare or ambiguous warfare tactics. China's actions in the South and East China Seas have similarly prompted a focus

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Sharpening the American Military's Competitive Edge, undated but released January 2018, p. 10. See also Larrie D. Ferreiro, "Outperforming With Doctrine, Not Science," Defense Acquisition University, November 1, 2018.

[31] See, for example, Elsa B. Kania and Emma Moore, "The US Is Unprepared to Mobilize for Great Power Conflict," *Defense One*, July 21, 2019.

[32] See CRS Report R44498, *National Security Space Launch at a Crossroads*, by Steven A. Hildreth.

[33] See Department of Defense, *Assessing and Strengthening the Manufacturing and Defense Industrial Base and Supply Chain Resiliency of the United States, Report to President Donald J. Trump by the Interagency Task Force in Fulfillment of Executive Order 13806*, September 2018, 139 pp. See also Peter Navarro, "America's Military-Industrial Base Is at Risk," *New York Times*, October 4, 2018; Robert Metzger, "Federal Supply-Chain Threats Quietly Growing," *Federal Times*, August 13, 2018; Department of Defense, Inspector General, *Air Force Space Command Supply Chain Risk Management of Strategic Capabilities*, DODIG-2018-143, August 13, 2018, 36 pp.

For additional discussion, see the section entitled "National Security Concerns" in CRS Report R44544, *U.S. Semiconductor Manufacturing: Industry Trends, Global Competition, Federal Policy*, by Michaela D. Platzer and John F. Sargent Jr. For more on China and rare earth elements, see CRS Report R43864, *China's Mineral Industry and U.S. Access to Strategic and Critical Minerals: Issues for Congress*, by Marc Humphries. See also Michael Peck, "The U.S. Military's Greatest Weakness? China 'Builds' a Huge Chunk of It," *National Interest*, May 26, 2018.

among policymakers on how to counter China's so-called salami-slicing or gray-zone tactics in those areas.[34] For a list of articles discussing this issue, see **Appendix D**.[35]

Issues for Congress

Potential policy and oversight issues for Congress include the following:

- **December 2017 NSS and January 2018 NDS.** Do the December 2017 NSS and the January 2018 NDS correctly describe or diagnose the shift in the international security environment to a situation of renewed great power competition? As strategy documents, do they lay out an appropriate U.S. national security strategy and national defense strategy for responding to this shift?
- **Defense funding levels.** In response to the shift to a situation of renewed great power competition, should defense funding levels in coming years be increased, reduced, or maintained at about the current level?
- **U.S. grand strategy.** Should the United States continue to include, as a key element of U.S. grand strategy, a goal of preventing the emergence of a regional hegemon in one part of Eurasia or another?[36] If not, what grand strategy should the United States pursue? What is the Trump Administration's position on this issue?[37]
- **Nuclear weapons and nuclear deterrence.** Are current DOD plans for modernizing U.S. strategic nuclear weapons, and for numbers and basing of nonstrategic (i.e., theater-range) nuclear weapons, aligned with the needs of the new situation of renewed great power competition?
- **Operational Concepts.** Are U.S. military services moving too slowly, too quickly, or at about the right speed in their efforts to develop new operational concepts in response to renewed great power competition, particularly against improving Chinese anti-access/area-denial (A2/AD) forces? What are the potential merits of these new operational concepts, and what steps are the services taking in terms of experiments and exercises to test and refine these

[34] See CRS Report R42784, *China's Actions in South and East China Seas: Implications for U.S. Interests—Background and Issues for Congress*, by Ronald O'Rourke.

[35] See also CRS In Focus IF10771, *Defense Primer: Information Operations*, by Catherine A. Theohary.

[36] One observer states that this question was reviewed in 1992, at the beginning of the post-Cold War era:

> As a Pentagon planner in 1992, my colleagues and I considered seriously the idea of conceding to great powers like Russia and China their own spheres of influence, which would potentially allow the United States to collect a bigger "peace dividend" and spend it on domestic priorities.
>
> Ultimately, however, we concluded that the United States has a strong interest in precluding the emergence of another bipolar world—as in the Cold War—or a world of many great powers, as existed before the two world wars. Multipolarity led to two world wars and bipolarity resulted in a protracted worldwide struggle with the risk of nuclear annihilation. To avoid a return such circumstances, Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney ultimately agreed that our objective must be to prevent a hostile power to dominate a "critical region," which would give it the resources, industrial capabilities and population to pose a global challenge. This insight has guided U.S. defense policy throughout the post–Cold War era.
>
> (Zalmay Khalilzad, "4 Lessons about America's Role in the World," *National Interest*, March 23, 2016.)

[37] For additional discussion of this issue, see CRS Report R44891, *U.S. Role in the World: Background and Issues for Congress*, by Ronald O'Rourke and Michael Moodie.

concepts? To what degree are the services working to coordinate and integrate their new operational concepts on a cross-service basis?

- **U.S. and NATO military capabilities in Europe.** Are the United States and its NATO allies taking appropriate and sufficient steps regarding U.S. and NATO military capabilities and operations in Europe? What potential impacts would a strengthened U.S. military presence in Europe have on total U.S. military force structure requirements? What impact would it have on DOD's ability to implement the military component of the U.S. strategic rebalancing toward the Asia-Pacific region? To what degree can or should the NATO allies in Europe take actions to strengthen deterrence against potential Russian aggression in Europe?
- **Capabilities for high-end conventional warfare.** Are DOD's plans for acquiring capabilities for high-end conventional warfare appropriate and sufficient? In a situation of constraints on defense funding, how should trade-offs be made in balancing capabilities for high-end conventional warfare against other DOD priorities?
- **Maintaining technological superiority in conventional weapons.** Are DOD's steps for maintaining U.S. technological superiority in conventional weapons appropriate and sufficient? What are the potential timelines for deploying some of the advanced weapon technologies that DOD is now developing? What impact will funding these technologies have on funding available for nearer-term DOD priorities, such as redressing deficiencies in force readiness?
- **Speed in defense acquisition policy.** To what degree should defense acquisition policy be adjusted to place greater emphasis on speed of development and deployment, and on experimentation, risk taking, and greater tolerance of failure during development? Are DOD's steps for doing this appropriate? What new legislative authorities, if any, might be required (or what existing provisions, if any, might need to be amended or repealed) to achieve greater speed in defense acquisition? What implications might placing a greater emphasis on speed of acquisition have on familiar congressional paradigms for conducting oversight and judging the success of defense acquisition programs?
- **Mobilization capabilities.** What actions is DOD taking regarding mobilization capabilities for an extended-length conflict against an adversary such as China or Russia, and are these actions appropriate? How much funding is being devoted to mobilization capabilities, and how are mobilization capabilities projected to change as a result of these actions in coming years?
- **Reliance on Russian and Chinese components and materials.** Aside from the Russian-made RD-180 rocket engine, what Russian or Chinese components or materials are incorporated into DOD equipment? What are DOD's plans regarding reliance on Russian- or Chinese-made components and materials for DOD equipment?
- **Hybrid warfare and gray-zone tactics.** Do the United States and its allies and partners have adequate strategies for countering Russia's so-called hybrid warfare in eastern Ukraine, Russia's information operations, and China's so-called salami-slicing tactics in the South and East China Seas?

Appendix A. Background on Shift to Renewed Great Power Competition

This appendix presents additional background information on the shift in the international security environment to a situation of renewed great power competition. For a list of articles on this shift, see **Appendix B**.

Previous International Security Environments

Cold War Era

The Cold War era, which is generally viewed as lasting from the late 1940s until the late 1980s or early 1990s, was generally viewed as a strongly bipolar situation featuring two superpowers—the United States and the Soviet Union—engaged in a political, ideological, and military competition for influence across multiple geographic regions. The military component of that competition was often most acutely visible in Europe, where the U.S.-led NATO alliance and the Soviet-led Warsaw Pact alliance faced off against one another with large numbers of conventional forces and theater nuclear weapons, backed by longer-ranged strategic nuclear weapons.

Post-Cold War Era

The post-Cold War era is generally viewed as having begun in the late 1980s and early 1990s, following the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989, the disbanding of the Soviet-led Warsaw Pact military alliance in March 1991, and the dissolution of the Soviet Union into Russia and the former Soviet republics in December 1991, which were key events marking the ending of the Cold War. Compared to the Cold War, the post-Cold War era generally featured reduced levels of overt political, ideological, and military competition among major states.

The post-Cold War era is generally viewed as having tended toward a unipolar situation, with the United States as the world's sole superpower. Neither Russia, China, nor any other country was viewed as posing a significant challenge to either the United States' status as the world's sole superpower or the U.S.-led international order. Following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 (aka 9/11), the post-Cold War era was additionally characterized by a strong focus (at least from a U.S. perspective) on countering transnational terrorist organizations that had emerged as significant nonstate actors, particularly Al Qaeda.

Era of Renewed Great Power Competition

Overview

World events in recent years—including Chinese actions in the South and East China Seas[38] and Russia's seizure and annexation of Crimea in March 2014[39]—led observers, particularly since late 2013, to conclude that the international security environment in recent years had undergone a

[38] For discussions of these actions, see CRS Report R42784, *China's Actions in South and East China Seas: Implications for U.S. Interests—Background and Issues for Congress*, by Ronald O'Rourke , and CRS Report R42930, *Maritime Territorial Disputes in East Asia: Issues for Congress*, by Ben Dolven, Mark E. Manyin, and Shirley A. Kan.

[39] For discussion Russia's seizure and annexation of Crimea, see CRS Report R45008, *Ukraine: Background and U.S. Policy*, by Cory Welt, and CRS In Focus IF10552, *U.S. Sanctions on Russia Related to the Ukraine Conflict*, by Cory Welt, Rebecca M. Nelson, and Dianne E. Rennack.

shift from the post-Cold War era that began in the late 1980s and early 1990s, also sometimes known as the unipolar moment (with the United States as the unipolar power), to a new and different situation that features, among other things, renewed great power competition with China and Russia and challenges by these two countries and others to elements of the U.S.-led international order that has operated since World War II.

Some Key Features

Observers view the new international security environment not as a bipolar situation (like the Cold War) or a unipolar situation (like the post-Cold War era), but as a situation characterized in part by renewed competition among three major world powers—the United States, China, and Russia. Key features of the current situation of renewed great power competition include but are not necessarily limited to the following:

- renewed ideological competition, this time against 21st-century forms of authoritarianism and illiberal democracy in Russia, China, and other countries;[40]
- the promotion by China and Russia through their state-controlled media of nationalistic historical narratives emphasizing assertions of prior humiliation or victimization by Western powers, and the use of those narratives to support revanchist or irredentist foreign policy aims;
- the use by Russia and China of new forms of aggressive or assertive military, paramilitary, information, and cyber operations—sometimes called hybrid warfare, gray-zone operations, ambiguous warfare, among other terms, in the case of Russia's actions, and salami-slicing tactics or gray-zone warfare, among other terms, in the case of China's actions;
- challenges by Russia and China to key elements of the U.S.-led international order, including the principle that force or threat of force should not be used as a

[40] See, for example, Gideon Rachman, "The West Has Lost Intellectual Self-Confidence," *Financial Times*, January 5, 2015; Garry Kasparov, "The Global War on Modernity," *Wall Street Journal*, January 20, 2015; Anna Borshchevskaya, "Moral Clarity Is Needed In Countering Anti-Western Propaganda," *Forbes*, March 14, 2015; Ellen Bork, "Democracy in Retreat," *World Affairs Journal*, May 11, 2015; Christopher Walker, "The New Containment: Undermining Democracy," *World Affairs Journal*, May/June 2015; Michael J. Boyle, "The Coming Illiberal Order," *Survival*, Vol. 58, April-May 2016: 35-66; Larry Diamond, "Democracy in Decline," *Foreign Affairs*, June 13, 2016; Sohrab Ahmari, "Illiberalism: The Worldwide Crisis," *Commentary*, June 16, 2016; Larry Diamond, "Russia and the Threat to Liberal Democracy," *Atlantic*, December 9, 2016; Alexander Cooley, "How the Democratic Tide Rolled Back," *Real Clear World*, January 17, 2017; John Pomfret, "Xi Jinping's Quest to Revive Stalin's Communist Ideology," Washington Post, October 16, 2017; Li Laifang, "Enlightened Chinese Democracy Puts the West in the Shade," *China Daily*, October 17, 2017; Curtis Stone, "Op-Ed: Yep, the World Has a New Role Model for Political and Economic Development," *People's Daily Online*, November 2, 2017; James Traub, "American Can't Win Great-Power Hardball; As Other Countries Rise, Global Stability Depends on the United States Holding Onto Its Moralism." *Foreign Policy*, November 16, 2017; Christopher Walker and Jessica Ludwig, "The Meaning of Sharp Power," *Foreign Affairs*, November 16, 2017; Thomas Barker, "The Real Source of China's Soft Power; Chinese Soft Power Is Not Measured by Blockbuster Films, But By the Appeal of Its Development Model," Diplomat, November 18, 2017; "Government Shutdown Exposes System Flaws," China Daily, January 22, 2018; "US Divisions Threaten Leadership Role," *Global Times*, January 13, 2018; Brendon Hong, "The Shutdown Drama in D.C. Was Beijing's Cup of Tea," *Daily Beast*, January 22, 2018; Zheping Huang, "Xi Jinping Says China's Authoritarian System Can Be a Model for the World," *Quartz*, March 9, 2018; Zhong Sheng, "Op-ed: China's New Type of Party System Enlightens World," *People's Daily Online*, March 12, 2018; Curtis Stone, "Op-Ed: The Western Model of Democracy Is No Longer the Only Game in Town," *People's Daily Online*, March 20, 2018; "Western Political Elections Degraded to Taking Power Instead of Actions: Experts," *People's Daily Online*, April 3, 2018; David Runciman, "China's Challenge to Democracy," *Wall Street Journal*, April 26, 2018; Martin Wolf, "How the Beijing Elite Sees the World, The Charms of Democracy and Free Markets Have Withered for China's Leaders," *Financial Times*, May 1, 2018.

routine or first-resort measure for settling disputes between countries, and the principle of freedom of the seas (i.e., that the world's oceans are to be treated as an international commons); and

- additional features alongside those listed above, including
  - continued regional security challenges from countries such as Iran and North Korea;
  - a continued focus (at least from a U.S. perspective) on countering transnational terrorist organizations that have emerged as significant nonstate actors (now including the Islamic State organization, among other groups); and
  - weak or failed states, and resulting weakly governed or ungoverned areas that can contribute to the emergence of (or serve as base areas or sanctuaries for) nonstate actors, and become potential locations of intervention by stronger states, including major powers.

The shift to a situation of renewed great power competition was acknowledged in the Obama Administration's June 2015 National Military Strategy,[41] and more fully in the Trump Administration's December 2017 National Security Strategy (NSS)[42] and the 11-page unclassified summary of its January 2018 National Defense Strategy (NDS),[43] which formally reorient U.S. national security strategy and U.S. defense strategy toward an explicit primary focus on great power competition with China and Russia and on countering Chinese and Russian military capabilities. The new U.S. strategy orientation set forth in the 2017 NSS and 2018 NDS is sometimes referred to as a "2+3" strategy, meaning a strategy for countering two primary challenges (China and Russia) and three additional challenges (North Korea, Iran, and terrorist groups).[44]

The December 2017 NSS states the following:

> Following the remarkable victory of free nations in the Cold War, America emerged as the lone superpower with enormous advantages and momentum in the world. Success, however, bred complacency.... As we took our political, economic, and military advantages for granted, other actors steadily implemented their long-term plans to challenge America and to advance agendas opposed to the United States, our allies, and our partners....
>
> The United States will respond to the growing political, economic, and military competitions we face around the world.
>
> China and Russia challenge American power, influence, and interests, attempting to erode American security and prosperity. They are determined to make economies less free and less fair, to grow their militaries, and to control information and data to repress their societies and expand their influence. At the same time, the dictatorships of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the Islamic Republic of Iran are determined to destabilize regions, threaten Americans and our allies, and brutalize their own people. Transnational threat groups, from jihadist terrorists to transnational criminal organizations, are actively

[41] Department of Defense, *The National Military Strategy of the United States of America 2015, The United States Military's Contribution To National Security*, June 2015, pp. i, 1-4.

[42] Office of the President, *National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, December 2017, 55 pp.

[43] Department of Defense, *Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy of the United States of America: Sharpening the American Military's Competitive Edge*, undated but released January 2018, 11 pp.

[44] For more on the 2017 NSS and 2018 NDS, see CRS Insight IN10842, *The 2017 National Security Strategy: Issues for Congress*, by Kathleen J. McInnis, and CRS Insight IN10855, *The 2018 National Defense Strategy*, by Kathleen J. McInnis.

> trying to harm Americans. While these challenges differ in nature and magnitude, they are fundamentally contests between those who value human dignity and freedom and those who oppress individuals and enforce uniformity.
>
> These competitions require the United States to rethink the policies of the past two decades—policies based on the assumption that engagement with rivals and their inclusion in international institutions and global commerce would turn them into benign actors and trustworthy partners. For the most part, this premise turned out to be false....
>
> Three main sets of challengers—the revisionist powers of China and Russia, the rogue states of Iran and North Korea, and transnational threat organizations, particularly jihadist terrorist groups—are actively competing against the United States and our allies and partners. Although differing in nature and magnitude, these rivals compete across political, economic, and military arenas, and use technology and information to accelerate these contests in order to shift regional balances of power in their favor. These are fundamentally political contests between those who favor repressive systems and those who favor free societies.
>
> China and Russia want to shape a world antithetical to U.S. values and interests. China seeks to displace the United States in the Indo-Pacific region, expand the reaches of its state-driven economic model, and reorder the region in its favor. Russia seeks to restore its great power status and establish spheres of influence near its borders. The intentions of both nations are not necessarily fixed. The United States stands ready to cooperate across areas of mutual interest with both countries....
>
> The United States must consider what is enduring about the problems we face, and what is new. The contests over influence are timeless. They have existed in varying degrees and levels of intensity, for millennia. Geopolitics is the interplay of these contests across the globe. But some conditions are new, and have changed how these competitions are unfolding. We face simultaneous threats from different actors across multiple arenas—all accelerated by technology. The United States must develop new concepts and capabilities to protect our homeland, advance our prosperity, and preserve peace....
>
> Since the 1990s, the United States displayed a great degree of strategic complacency. We assumed that our military superiority was guaranteed and that a democratic peace was inevitable. We believed that liberal-democratic enlargement and inclusion would fundamentally alter the nature of international relations and that competition would give way to peaceful cooperation....
>
> In addition, after being dismissed as a phenomenon of an earlier century, great power competition returned. China and Russia began to reassert their influence regionally and globally. Today, they are fielding military capabilities designed to deny America access in times of crisis and to contest our ability to operate freely in critical commercial zones during peacetime. In short, they are contesting our geopolitical advantages and trying to change the international order in their favor.[45]

The unclassified summary of the January 2018 NDS states the following:

> Today, we are emerging from a period of strategic atrophy, aware that our competitive military advantage has been eroding. We are facing increased global disorder, characterized by decline in the long-standing rules-based international order—creating a security environment more complex and volatile than any we have experienced in recent memory. Inter-state strategic competition, not terrorism, is now the primary concern in U.S. national security.

[45] Office of the President, *National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, December 2017, pp. 2-3, 25, 26-27.

China is a strategic competitor using predatory economics to intimidate its neighbors while militarizing features in the South China Sea. Russia has violated the borders of nearby nations and pursues veto power over the economic, diplomatic, and security decisions of its neighbors. As well, North Korea's outlaw actions and reckless rhetoric continue despite United Nation's censure and sanctions. Iran continues to sow violence and remains the most significant challenge to Middle East stability. Despite the defeat of ISIS's physical caliphate, threats to stability remain as terrorist groups with long reach continue to murder the innocent and threaten peace more broadly....

The central challenge to U.S. prosperity and security is the *reemergence of long-term, strategic competition* by what the National Security Strategy classifies as revisionist powers. It is increasingly clear that China and Russia want to shape a world consistent with their authoritarian model—gaining veto authority over other nations' economic, diplomatic, and security decisions....

Another change to the strategic environment is a *resilient, but weakening, post-WWII international order*.... China and Russia are now undermining the international order from within the system by exploiting its benefits while simultaneously undercutting its principles and "rules of the road."

Rogue regimes such as North Korea and Iran are destabilizing regions through their pursuit of nuclear weapons or sponsorship of terrorism....

Challenges to the U.S. military advantage represent another shift in the global security environment. For decades the United States has enjoyed uncontested or dominant superiority in every operating domain. We could generally deploy our forces when we wanted, assemble them where we wanted, and operate how we wanted. Today, every domain is contested—air, land, sea, space, and cyberspace....

The security environment is also affected by *rapid technological advancements and the changing character of war*....

States are the principal actors on the global stage, but *non-state actors* also threaten the security environment with increasingly sophisticated capabilities. Terrorists, trans-national criminal organizations, cyber hackers and other malicious non-state actors have transformed global affairs with increased capabilities of mass disruption. There is a positive side to this as well, as our partners in sustaining security are also more than just nation-states: multilateral organizations, non-governmental organizations, corporations, and strategic influencers provide opportunities for collaboration and partnership. Terrorism remains a persistent condition driven by ideology and unstable political and economic structures, despite the defeat of ISIS's physical caliphate.

It is now undeniable that the *homeland is no longer a sanctuary*. America is a target, whether from terrorists seeking to attack our citizens; malicious cyber activity against personal, commercial, or government infrastructure; or political and information subversion....

Long-term strategic competitions with China and Russia are the principal priorities for the Department, and require both increased and sustained investment, because of the magnitude of the threats they pose to U.S. security and prosperity today, and the potential for those threats to increase in the future. Concurrently, the Department will sustain its efforts to deter and counter rogue regimes such as North Korea and Iran, defeat terrorist threats to the United States, and consolidate our gains in Iraq and Afghanistan while moving to a more resource-sustainable approach.[46]

[46] Department of Defense, *Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy of the United States of America: Sharpening the American Military's Competitive Edge*, undated but released January 2018, pp. 1-4. Emphasis as in

In addition to a focus on China and Russia, the Trump Administration has highlighted the concept of a free and open Indo-Pacific (FOIP), with the term Indo-Pacific referring to the area extending from the west coast of the United States to the west cost of India, aka "Hollywood to Bollywood." The FOIP concept is still being fleshed out by the Trump Administration.[47] The discussion in the December 2017 NSS of regions of interest to the United States begins with a section on the Indo-Pacific,[48] and the unclassified summary of the January 2018 NDS mentions the Indo-Pacific at several points.[49]

Markers of Shift to Renewed Great Power Competition

The sharpest single marker of the shift in the international security environment to a situation of renewed great power competition arguably was Russia's seizure and annexation of Crimea in March 2014, which represented the first forcible seizure and annexation of one country's territory by another country in Europe since World War II. Other markers of the shift—such as Russia's actions in eastern Ukraine and elsewhere in Eastern Europe since March 2014, China's economic growth and military modernization over the last several years, and China's actions in the South and East China Seas over the last several years—have been more gradual and cumulative.

Some observers trace the beginnings of the shift to renewed great power competition to the period 2006-2008:

- Freedom House's annual report on freedom in the world for 2018 states, by the organization's own analysis, that countries experiencing net declines in freedom have outnumbered countries experiencing net increases in freedom for 12 years in a row, starting in 2006.[50]

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original.

[47] See, White House, "President Donald J. Trump's Administration is Advancing a Free and Open Indo-Pacific," July 20, 2018, accessed August 21, 2018, at https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/president-donald-j-trumps-administration-advancing-free-open-indo-pacific/; Department of State, "Advancing a Free and Open Indo-Pacific," July 30, 2018, accessed August 21, 2018, at https://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2018/07/284829.htm; Department of State, "Briefing on The Indo-Pacific Strategy," April 2, 2018, accessed August 21, 2018, at https://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2018/04/280134.htm; U.S. Department of State, "Remarks on 'America's Indo-Pacific Economic Vision,'" remarks by Secretary of State Michael R. Pompeo, Indo-Pacific Business Forum, U.S. Chamber of Commerce, Washington, DC, July 30, 2018.

See also Dave Majumdar, "Trump Has Big Plans for Asia. Well, More Like the 'Indo-Pacific' Region," National Interest, April 3, 2018; Jeff M. Smith, "Unpacking the Free and Open Indo-Pacific," War on the Rocks, March 14, 2018; Peter Martin, Justin Sink, and Iain Marlow, "Trump Discovers 'Indo-Pacific' on Asia Tour in Boost for India," Bloomberg, November 14, 2017; Rush Doshi, "Trump's 'Indo-Pacific Dream' Stumbles—But China Alone Won't Fill the Void," War on the Rocks, November 15, 2017; Nikhil Sonnad, "'Indo-Pacific' Is the Trump Administration's New Name for Asia," Defense One, November 8, 2017; Nirmal Ghosh, "Asia-Pacific? Think Indo-Pacific, Says the US, As It Pursues a Wider Asian Strategy," Straits Times, November 7, 2017; Louis Nelson, "In Asia, Trump Keeps Talking About Indo-Pacific," Politico, November 7, 2017.

For more on the Indo-Pacific, see CRS Insight IN10888, *Australia, China, and the Indo-Pacific*, by Bruce Vaughn; CRS In Focus IF10726, *China-India Rivalry in the Indian Ocean*, by Bruce Vaughn; and CRS In Focus IF10199, *U.S.-Japan Relations*, coordinated by Emma Chanlett-Avery.

[48] Office of the President, *National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, December 2017, pp. 45-47.

[49] Department of Defense, *Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy of the United States of America: Sharpening the American Military's Competitive Edge*, undated but released January 2018, pp. 2, 4, 6, 9. See also Eric Sayers, "15 Big Ideas to Operationalize America's Indo-Pacific Strategy," *War on the Rocks*, April 6, 2018; Lindsey Ford, "Promise vs. Experience: How to Fix the 'Free & Open Indo-Pacific," *War on the Rocks*, April 10, 2018.

[50] Michael J. Abramowitz, *Freedom in the World 2018, Democracy in Crisis*, Freedom House, undated but released January 2018, p. 8.

- In February 2007, in a speech at an international security conference in Munich, Russian President Vladimir Putin criticized and rejected the concept of a unipolar power, predicted a shift to multipolar order, and affirmed an active Russian role in international affairs. Some observers view the speech in retrospect as prefiguring a more assertive and competitive Russian foreign policy.[51]
- In 2008, Russia invaded and occupied part of the former Soviet republic of Georgia without provoking a strong cost-imposing response from the United States and its allies.[52] Also in that year, the financial crisis and resulting deep recessions in the United States and Europe, combined with China's ability to weather that crisis and its successful staging of the 2008 Summer Olympics, are seen by observers as having contributed to a perception in China of the United States as a declining power, and to a Chinese sense of self-confidence or triumphalism.[53] China's assertive actions in the South and East China Seas can be viewed as having begun (or accelerated) soon thereafter.

Other observers trace the roots of the shift to renewed great power competition further, to years prior to 2006-2008.[54]

Comparisons to Past International Security Environments

Some observers seek to better understand the current situation of renewed great power competition in part by comparing it to past international security environments. Each international security environment features its own combination of major actors, dimensions of competition and cooperation among those actors, and military and other technologies available to them. A given international security environment can have some similarities to previous ones, but it will also have differences, including, potentially, one or more features not present in any other international security environment. In the early years of a new international security environment, some of its features may be unclear, in dispute, not yet apparent, or subject to evolution. In attempting to understand an international security environment, comparisons to other ones are potentially helpful in identifying avenues of investigation. If applied too rigidly, however, such comparisons can act as intellectual straightjackets, making it more difficult to achieve a full understanding of a given international security environment's characteristic features, particularly those that differentiate it from previous ones.

Some observers have stated that the world has entered a new Cold War (or Cold War II or 2.0). That term may have some utility in referring specifically to U.S.-Russian or U.S.-Chinese relations, because the era of renewed great power competition features competition and tension with Russia and China. Considered more broadly, however, the Cold War was a bipolar situation with the United States and Russia, while the era of renewed great power competition is a situation that also includes China as a major competing power. The bipolarity of the Cold War, moreover, was reinforced by the opposing NATO and Warsaw Pact alliances, whereas in contrast, Russia

[51] For an English-language transcript of the speech, see "Putin's Prepared Remarks at 43rd Munich Conference on Security Policy," Washington Post, accessed April 26, 2018m, at http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/02/12/AR2007021200555.html.

[52] See, for example, Robert Kagan, "Believe It or Not, Trump's Following a Familiar Script on Russia," *Washington Post,* August 7, 2018. For a response, see Condoleezza Rice, "Russia Invaded Georgia 10 Years Ago. Don't Say America Didn't Respond." *Washington Post,* August 8, 2018. See also Mikheil Saakashvili, "When Russia Invaded Georgia," *Wall Street Journal,* August 7, 2018.

[53] See, for example, Howard W. French, "China's Dangerous Game," *Atlantic,* October 13, 2014.

[54] See, for example, Walter Russell Mead, "Who's to Blame for a World in Flames?" *The American Interest,* October 6, 2014; Robert Kagan, "End of Dreams, Return of History," *Policy Review (Hoover Institution),* July 17, 2007.

and China today do not lead an equivalent of the Warsaw Pact. And while terrorists were a concern during the Cold War, the U.S. focus on countering transnational terrorist groups was not nearly as significant during the Cold War as it has been since 9/11.

Other observers, viewing the renewal of great power competition, have drawn comparisons to the multipolar situation that existed in the 19th century and the years prior to World War I. Still others, observing the promotion in China and Russia of nationalistic historical narratives supporting revanchist or irredentist foreign policy aims, have drawn comparisons to the 1930s. Those two earlier situations, however, did not feature a strong focus on countering globally significant transnational terrorist groups, and the military and other technologies available then differ vastly from those available today. The current period of rewned great power competition may be similar in some respects to previous situations, but it also differs from previous situations in certain respects, and might be best understood by direct observation and identification of its key features.

Naming the Current Situation

Observers viewing the international security environment have given it various names, but names using some various of great power competition or renewed great power competition appear to have become to most commonly used in public policy discussion. As noted earlier, some observers have also used the term Cold War (or Cold War II or 2.0). Other terms that have been used include competitive world order, multipolar era, tripolar era, and disorderly world (or era).

Congress and the Previous Shift

The previous major change in the international security environment—the shift in the late 1980s and early 1990s from the Cold War to the post-Cold War era—prompted a broad reassessment by the Department of Defense (DOD) and Congress of defense funding levels, strategy, and missions that led to numerous changes in DOD plans and programs. Many of these changes were articulated in the 1993 Bottom-Up Review (BUR),[55] a reassessment of U.S. defense plans and programs whose very name conveyed the fundamental nature of the reexamination that had occurred.[56] In general, the BUR reshaped the U.S. military into a force that was smaller than the Cold War U.S. military, and oriented toward a planning scenario being able to conduct two major regional contingencies (MRCs) rather than the Cold War planning scenario of a NATO-Warsaw Pact conflict.[57] For additional discussion of Congress's response to the shift from the Cold War to the post-Cold War era, see **Appendix E**.

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[55] See Department of Defense, *Report on the Bottom-Up Review*, Les Aspin, Secretary of Defense, October 1993, 109 pp.

[56] Secretary of Defense Les Aspin's introduction to DOD's report on the 1993 BUR states the following:

> In March 1993, I initiated a comprehensive review of the nation's defense strategy, force structure, modernization, infrastructure, and foundations. I felt that a department-wide review needed to be conducted "from the bottom up" because of the dramatic changes that have occurred in the world as a result of the end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the Soviet Union. These changes in the international security environment have fundamentally altered America's security needs. Thus, the underlying premise of the Bottom-Up Review was that we needed to reassess all of our defense concepts, plans, and programs from the ground up.
>
> (Department of Defense, *Report on the Bottom-Up Review*, Les Aspin, Secretary of Defense, October 1993, p. iii.)

[57] For additional discussion of the results of the BUR, see CRS Report 93-839 F, *Defense Department Bottom-Up Review: Results and Issues*, October 6, 1993, 6 pp., by Edward F. Bruner, and CRS Report 93-627 F, *Defense Department Bottom-Up Review: The Process*, July 2, 1993, 9 pp., by Cedric W. Tarr Jr. (both nondistributable and available to congressional clients from the author of this report).

Appendix B. Articles on Shift to Renewed Great Power Competition

This appendix presents citations to articles by or about observers who have concluded that the international security environment has undergone a shift from the post-Cold War era to a new and different situation.

Citation from 2007

Robert Kagan, "End of Dreams, Return of History," *Policy Review (Hoover Institution)*, July 17, 2007.

Citations from Late-2013 and 2014

Walter Russell Mead, "The End of History Ends," *The American Interest*, December 2, 2013.

Paul David Miller, "Crimea Proves That Great Power Rivalry Never Left Us," *Foreign Policy*, March 21, 2014.

Stephen M. Walt, "The Bad Old Days Are Back," *Foreign Policy*, May 2, 2014.

Walter Russell Mead, "The Return of Geopolitics," *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2014.

Robert Kagan, "Superpowers Don't Get to Retire," *New Republic*, May 26, 2014.

James Kitfield, "The New Great Power Triangle Tilt: China, Russia Vs. U.S.," *Breaking Defense*, June 19, 2014.

Lilia Shevtsova, "Putin Ends the Interregnum," *The American Interest*, August 28, 2014.

David E. Sanger, "Commitments on Three Fronts Test Obama's Foreign Policy," *New York Times*, September 3, 2014.

Steven Erlanger, "NATO's Hopes for Russia Have Turned to Dismay," *New York Times*, September 12, 2014.

Richard N. Haass, "The Era of Disorder," *Project Syndicate*, October 27, 2014.

Citations from January through June 2015

Bruce Jones, "What Strategic Environment Does the Transatlantic Community Confront?" German Marshall Fund of the United States, Policy Brief, January 15, 2015, 5 pp.

Chester A Crocker, "The Strategic Dilemma of a World Adrift," *Survival*, February-March 2015: 7-30.

Robert Kagan, "The United States Must Resist A Return to Spheres of Interest in in the International System," Brookings Institution, February 19, 2015.

Richard Fontaine, "Salvaging Global Order," *The National Interest*, March 10, 2015.

Barry Pavel and Peter Engelke with Alex Ward, *Dynamic Stability, US Strategy for a World in Transition*, Washington, Atlantic Council, April 2015, 57 pp.

Stewart Patrick and Isabella Bennett, "Geopolitics Is Back—and Global Governance Is Out," *The National Interest*, May 12, 2015.

"Rise of the Regional Hegemons," *Wall Street Journal*, May 25, 2015.

Frank G. Hoffman and Ryan Neuhard, "Is the World Getting Safer—or Not?" *Foreign Policy Research Institute*, June 2015.

Citations from July through December 2015

James Kitfield, "Requiem For The Obama Doctrine," *Breaking Defense*, July 6, 2015.

Mathew Burrows and Robert A. Manning, "America's Worst Nightmare: Russia and China Are Getting Closer," *National Interest*, August 24, 2015.

Robert Farley, "Yes, America's Military Supremacy Is Fading (And We Should Not Panic)," *National Interest*, September 21, 2015.

John McLaughlin, "The Geopolitical Rules You Didn't Know About Are Under Siege," *Ozy*, November 10, 2015.

Citations from January through June 2016

John E. McLaughlin, "US Strategy and Strategic Culture from 2017," *Global Brief*, February 19, 2016.

H.R. McMaster, "Probing for Weakness," *Wall Street Journal*, March 23, 2016.

Zbigniew Brzezinski, "Toward a Global Realignment," *The American Interest*, April 17, 2016.

Michael J. Boyle, "The Coming Illiberal Order," *Survival*, Vol. 58, April-May 2016: 35-66.

Kurt Campbell, et al., *Extending American Power*, Center for a New American Security, May 2016, 18 pp.

Michael Mandelbaum, "America in a New World," *The American Interest*, May 23, 2016.

Citations from July through December 2016

Michael Lind, "Can America Share Its Superpower Status?" *National Interest*, August 21, 2016.

Bret Stephens, "The New Dictators' Club," *Wall Street Journal*, August 22, 2016.

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Appendix E. Congress and the Previous Shift

This appendix provides additional background information on the role of Congress in responding to the previous change in the international security environment—the shift in the late 1980s and early 1990s from the Cold War to the post-Cold War era.

As noted earlier, this shift prompted a broad reassessment by the Department of Defense (DOD) and Congress of defense funding levels, strategy, and missions that led to numerous changes in DOD plans and programs. Many of these changes were articulated in the 1993 Bottom-Up Review (BUR),[58] a reassessment of U.S. defense plans and programs whose very name conveyed the fundamental nature of the reexamination that had occurred.[59] In general, the BUR reshaped the U.S. military into a force that was smaller than the Cold War U.S. military, and oriented toward a planning scenario being able to conduct two major regional contingencies (MRCs) rather than the Cold War planning scenario of a NATO-Warsaw Pact conflict.[60]

Through both committee activities and the efforts of individual Members, Congress played a significant role in the reassessment of defense funding levels, strategy, plans, and programs that was prompted by the end of the Cold War. In terms of committee activities, the question of how to change U.S. defense plans and programs in response to the end of the Cold War was, for example, a major focus for the House and Senate Armed Services Committees in holding hearings and marking up annual national defense authorization acts in the early 1990s.[61]

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[58] See Department of Defense, *Report on the Bottom-Up Review*, Les Aspin, Secretary of Defense, October 1993, 109 pp.

[59] Secretary of Defense Les Aspin's introduction to DOD's report on the 1993 BUR states

> In March 1993, I initiated a comprehensive review of the nation's defense strategy, force structure, modernization, infrastructure, and foundations. I felt that a department-wide review needed to be conducted "from the bottom up" because of the dramatic changes that have occurred in the world as a result of the end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the Soviet Union. These changes in the international security environment have fundamentally altered America's security needs. Thus, the underlying premise of the Bottom-Up Review was that we needed to reassess all of our defense concepts, plans, and programs from the ground up.
>
> (Department of Defense, *Report on the Bottom-Up Review*, Les Aspin, Secretary of Defense, October 1993, p. iii.)

[60] For additional discussion of the results of the BUR, see CRS Report 93-839 F, *Defense Department Bottom-Up Review: Results and Issues*, October 6, 1993, 6 pp., by Edward F. Bruner, and CRS Report 93-627 F, *Defense Department Bottom-Up Review: The Process*, July 2, 1993, 9 pp., by Cedric W. Tarr Jr. (both nondistributable and available to congressional clients from the author of this report).

[61] See, for example, the following:

> the House Armed Services Committee's report on the FY1991 National Defense Authorization Act (H.Rept. 101-665 of August 3, 1990, on H.R. 4739), pp. 7-14;
>
> the Senate Armed Services Committee's report on the FY1991 National Defense Authorization Act (S.Rept. 101-384 of July 20 (legislative day, July 10), 1990, on S. 2884), pp. 8-36;
>
> the House Armed Services Committee's report on the FY1992 and FY1993 National Defense Authorization Act (H.Rept. 102-60 of May 13, 1991, on H.R. 2100), pp. 8 and 13;
>
> the Senate Armed Services Committee's report on the FY1992 and FY1993 National Defense Authorization Act (S.Rept. 102-113 of July 19 (legislative day, July 8), 1991, on S. 1507), pp. 8-9;
>
> the House Armed Services Committee's report on the FY1993 National Defense Authorization Act (H.Rept. 102-527 of May 19, 1992, on H.R. 5006), pp. 8-10, 14-15, and 22;
>
> the Senate Armed Services Committee's report on the FY1993 National Defense Authorization Act (S.Rept. 102-352 of July 31 (legislative day, July 23), 1992, on S. 3114), pp. 7-12;
>
> the House Armed Services Committee's report on the FY1994 National Defense Authorization Act

In terms of efforts by individual Members, some Members put forth their own proposals for how much to reduce defense spending from the levels of the final years of the Cold War,[62] while others put forth detailed proposals for future U.S. defense strategy, plans, programs, and spending. Senator John McCain, for example, issued a detailed, 32-page policy paper in November 1991 presenting his proposals for defense spending, missions, force structure, and weapon acquisition programs.[63]

Perhaps the most extensive individual effort by a Member to participate in the reassessment of U.S. defense following the end of the Cold War was the one carried out by Representative Les Aspin, the chairman of the House Armed Services Committee. In early 1992, Aspin, supported by members of the committee's staff, devised a force-sizing construct and potential force levels and associated defense spending levels U.S. defense for the new post-Cold War era. A principal aim of Aspin's effort was to create an alternative to the "Base Force" plan for U.S. defense in the post-Cold War era that had been developed by the George H. W. Bush Administration.[64] Aspin's effort included a series of policy papers in January and February 1992[65] that were augmented by press releases and speeches. Aspin's policy paper of February 25, 1992, served as the basis for his testimony that same day at a hearing on future defense spending before the House Budget Committee. Although DOD and some other observers (including some Members of Congress)

(H.Rept. 103-200 of July 30, 1993, on H.R. 2401), pp. 8-9 and 18-19;

the House Armed Services Committee's report on the FY1995 National Defense Authorization Act (H.Rept. 103-499 of May 10, 1994, on H.R. 4301), pp. 7 and 9;

the Senate Armed Services Committee's report on the FY1995 National Defense Authorization Act (S.Rept. 103-282 of June 14 (legislative day, June 7), 1994, on S. 2182), pp. 8-9; and

the House Armed Services Committee's report on the FY1996 National Defense Authorization Act (H.Rept. 104-131 of June 1, 1995, on H.R. 1530), pp. 6-7 and 11-12.

[62] See, for example, Clifford Krauss, "New Proposal for Military Cut," *New York Times*, January 7, 1992: A11 (discussing a proposal by Senator Phil Gramm for reducing defense spending by a certain amount); "Sen. Mitchell Proposes $100 Billion Cut in Defense," *Aerospace Daily*, January 17, 1992: 87; John Lancaster, "Nunn Proposes 5-Year Defense Cut of $85 Billion," *Washington Post*, March 25, 1992: A4.

[63] Senator John McCain, Matching A Peace Dividend With National Security, A New Strategy For The 1990s, November 1991, 32 pp.

[64] See, for example, "Arms Panel Chief Challenges Ending Use of Threat Analysis," *Aviation Week & Space Technology*, January 13, 1992: 28; Patrick E. Tyler, "Top Congressman Seeks Deeper Cuts in Military Budget," *New York Times*, February 23, 1991: 1; Barton Gellman, "Debate on Military's Future Crystallizes Around 'Enemies List,'" *Washington Post*, February 26, 1992: A20; Pat Towell, "Planning the Nation's Defense," *CQ*, February 29, 1992: 479. For more on the Base Force, see CRS Report 92-493 S, *National Military Strategy, The DoD Base Force, and U.S. Unified Command Plan*, June 11, 1992, 68 pp., by John M. Collins (nondistributable and available to congressional clients from the author of this report).

[65] These policy papers included the following:

- National Security in the 1990s: Defining a New Basis for U.S. Military Forces, Rep. Les Aspin, Chairman, House Armed Services Committee, Before the Atlantic Council of the United States, January 6, 1992, 23 pp.;
- An Approach to Sizing American Conventional Forces For the Post-Soviet Era, Rep. Les Aspin, Chairman, House Armed Services Committee, January 24, 2991, 20 pp.;
- Tomorrow's Defense From Today's Industrial Base: Finding the Right Resource Strategy For A New Era, by Rep. Les Aspin, Chairman, House Armed Services Committee, Before the American Defense Preparedness Association, February 12, 1992, 20 pp.; and
- An Approach to Sizing American Conventional Forces For the Post-Soviet Era, Four Illustrative Options, Rep. Les Aspin, Chairman, House Armed Services Committee, February 25, 1992, 27 pp.

criticized Aspin's analysis and proposals on various grounds,[66] the effort arguably proved consequential the following year, when Aspin became Secretary of Defense in the new Clinton

[66] See, for example, "Aspin Defense Budget Plans Rebuffed By Committee," *Defense Daily*, February 24, 1992: 289; "Pentagon Spurns Aspin's Budget Cuts as 'Political,'" *Washington Post*, February 28, 1992: A14.

Administration. Aspin's 1992 effort helped inform his participation in DOD's 1993 BUR. The 1993 BUR in turn created a precedent for the subsequent Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) process (renamed Defense Strategy Review in 2015) that remained in place until 2016.

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