This report argues that new weapons, sensors, and networks can dramatically improve the capabilities of the Navy's existing and planned platforms, such as the USS Churchill, the first in a series of improved Arleigh Burke Class destroyers, but it also assumes that those platforms will be procured in numbers sufficient to sustain a Navy of at least 300 ships.

The New, Access-Constrained Security Environment

Geopolitical and technical trends in both the near and the far term will make it harder for U.S. military forces to rapidly project power. The dominant geopolitical change in the new security environment has been the virtual elimination from a purely military perspective of the need for a continental commitment to the security of Western Europe by the United States. The dominant technical change in the new security environment has been the continued and even accelerating growth in the performance of sensors, weapons, and communication links, all broadly driven by the exponential advance in the speed and processing power of

microelectronic information processors. These changes in the external security environment will have two consequences for U.S. military planners, one of which the United States is already experiencing today, and one that it is likely to face in the coming decades.

The near-term consequence is that the U.S. military will generally find itself fighting in conflicts where the political stakes for the United States are dramatically lower than those of its adversaries, and where pre-existing military alliances are either absent or not directly relevant. In these conflicts, opponents will be unable to contest U.S. military superiority in direct, force-on-force engagements, but will seek instead to attack the political will of U.S. leaders by deploying their more limited military capabilities against specific points of U.S. military weakness in ways that maximize the threat of U.S. military casualties.

In general, these points of vulnerability will vary according to the degree to which U.S. military forces present opponents with large, fixed, surface targets such as air bases or ports close to the theater of battle; the degree to which U.S. forces must penetrate ground, sea, and air battlefields protected by modern defensive weapons with non-stealthy, manned platforms; and the degree to which opponents are able to focus their more limited exploitation of modern military technology at those points of maximum U.S. weakness or exposure. Under no circumstances will the resulting U.S. vulnerabilities be decisive in a traditional military sense: the goal for an opponent will be to use these vulnerabilities to drive up the political costs of an engagement, ideally in such a fashion as to deter the engagement altogether.

In the more distant term, the battlefields for which the U.S. military needs to prepare are, of course, less well defined, but a longer-term perspective does force consideration of the potential reemergence of one or even several regional “peer competitors” to upset what some are already calling today’s unipolar moment.[1] Should such a power or powers emerge, the issue of preserving a Eurasian balance of power might return as the main focus of U.S. military planning, and the chief means of balancing such a power will likely be sea power rather than land power. This is because the collapse of the former Soviet Union and the reunification of Germany have fundamentally altered the balance of power along Eurasia’s major land boundaries, making it unlikely in the extreme that a renewed continental commitment of U.S. ground and air forces on the scale which obtained during the Cold War will be necessary.[2]

Instead, strategically significant changes in the Eurasian balance of power are most likely should China continue to grow in power and ambition, intensifying the existing competition for security and prestige between China, Japan, and India, and threatening the many wealthy medium powers in the long littoral extending between Korea and the Persian Gulf. In this scenario, the United States might once again

need to commit a major element of its military forces to restore the balance. That commitment would be conditioned by two factors: the borders in need of protection will bisect seas rather than industrial heartlands like the North German plain, and the opponent will be sufficiently advanced to exploit modern military technology much more widely and deeply than today's opponents. This will result in a return to more traditional military planning, in which both sides have the highest national interests at stake and are willing to suffer substantial military losses in their pursuit, and in which victory will be determined by the result of relatively unlimited force-on-force struggles for control of the sea and the land alongside it, between opponents with more equal capabilities.

Strategy and the Near-Term Security Environment

In the near term, U.S. military strategy needs to account for the political and military asymmetries between the United States and its potential opponents, and the changed nature of U.S. alliance relationships. Taking these factors into account will make clear the importance of minimizing casualties, help identify the points of U.S. military weakness where casualties are most likely to be incurred, and demonstrate why allies will be likely to withhold or limit access to local bases on their territory in many crises.

Political leaders of strong powers fighting weak powers over less than vital interests will constrain their military forces in order to avoid casualties.

America's aversion to casualties in post Cold War conflicts has been much discussed. Fear of casualties measured in the thousands or even tens of thousands dominated the debate over whether to launch a ground war in Desert Storm, a conflict in which U.S. stakes were as high as they are likely to be in any future conflict. In the event, casualties during Desert Storm were orders of magnitude lower than expected, leaving the question of America's tolerance for casualties open for debate.[3] Then the events in Mogadishu, Somalia in October 1993 seemed to resolve the debate.[4] The death of a small number of Rangers and Delta Force troopers led the United States to abandon that operation abruptly. A growing consensus developed that the United States could be stopped in its tracks by the deaths of a few of its soldiers, leading some to question the viability of its enormous but seemingly unusable military power.

The recent experience in Kosovo certainly provides evidence that U. S. political and military leaders are casualty-averse. NATO air crews were ordered to remain above 15,000–20,000 feet throughout the entire conflict because it was only at that altitude that they remained immune from Serbian air defenses, while of course, ground forces were foresworn from the outset. This reduced nearly to nil NATO's ability to

stop or limit the ethnic cleansing being conducted by Serbian army and police units in Kosovo, and drove NATO political and military leaders to adopt a gradual strategic bombing campaign designed to coerce Serbian compliance which took months to succeed.

The evidence supporting the proposition that the U.S. political and military leadership has become casualty-averse is overwhelming, but the explanation for this aversion has more to do with the strength of the U.S. position in the world, rather than the weakness of its leaders or its people. As Stephen Walt has argued, the United States is the most secure country the world has ever seen:

> [which] leads to something of a paradox: Although solving many global problems requires active U.S. involvement, Americans do not see them as vital to their own interests and they are unwilling to expend much effort addressing them…. Americans would like to coerce others to do what they want, but they aren't willing to risk much blood or treasure to make sure they do.[5]

In this view, America's aversion to casualties, and the degree to which U.S. leaders will constrain how the U.S. military fights in order to reduce their exposure, will depend on the stakes the United States has in the conflict. Because of the great superiority of U.S. power in today's security environment, and because of the United States' basic security, few if any conflicts are likely to engage its vital interests, and many conflicts, like Kosovo, will be fought over much lesser interests.

This structural paradox sets the bar very high for the U.S. military, because it must win while keeping its exposure to losses extremely low by historical standards. Certainly, the degree of acceptable exposure will vary, depending on whether a conflict is a major contingency on the Korean peninsula or in the Persian Gulf, as opposed to a humanitarian intervention in Latin America or Central Africa. Yet because there is little prospect of war with a great power, there is little prospect that the U.S. military will be ordered to fight without restraint, as great powers have traditionally fought their wars in the twentieth century.

The main military consequence of this new strategic reality will be a growing demand for weapons that can stand off at a distance from enemy defenses and avoid direct fire engagements with their targets at short ranges. In many cases, such as attacks from the air against high-profile, fixed targets on the ground, long range, precision weapons such as Tomahawk already address this problem for a large subset of the fixed target set. In other cases, such as in attacks from the air against mobile or hidden targets, the problem of combining effectiveness with protection from opposing defenses is far from solved, but it is at least imaginable how to get there. However, there are still other contingencies, such as urban counter-insurgency

operations by a regular army against local guerillas, where it is difficult even to imagine a low-casualty, standoff solution when the opponent is highly motivated and the United States is not.

The push to provide standoff solutions to battlefield problems will not address all military problems, but it will be ubiquitous as long as asymmetric advantages in new military technology give U.S. forces the ability to stand off, and as long as asymmetric political stakes favor weaker powers in a contest of wills. Both the asymmetry in political stakes favoring the United States' likely opponents in future conflicts, and the asymmetry in the ability to exploit modern military technology favoring the United States are likely to endure for some time.

Compared to the United States, lesser powers must focus their investments in modern military technology in only a few mission areas. Because they spend so little on defense compared to the United States, lesser powers must focus their military investments more narrowly, and the U.S. military must not let its pursuit of a much broader set of capabilities blind it to the threats it will face where opponents focus their military investments.

Desert Storm was a major contingency in which important U.S. interests were clearly at stake. On its eve, the U.S. Senate voted narrowly to support a ground invasion to liberate Kuwait in which thousands of U.S. casualties were expected. Yet the opponent in this case — Iraq — had a defense budget that was less than 5 percent the size of the U.S. defense budget. In the near term, it is difficult to imagine the United States getting into a conflict with a state whose military capability would even match Iraq's 1991 capabilities.

A defense budget of $10–15 billion a year, which is as much as any so-called "rogue state" spends on defense, can by definition buy only a small portion of the capabilities provided by a budget of some $300 billion a year. Public descriptions of the threat posed by these rogue states often mask this reality. This is especially apparent when one looks at the air forces and navies of these states, which cede enormous sanctuaries of control to their opponents compared to the efforts, say, of the former Soviet Union. Thus, the U.S. Navy faces almost no threat to its deep-water operations, because smaller states cannot even begin to afford long-range sea-denial assets such as nuclear attack submarines. Likewise, the U.S. Air Force is able to gain total control of the airspace over friendly forces quickly, and to penetrate hostile airspace, because very few states can afford even to attempt to defend their own airspace fully. Such a defense would not only require a modern tactical air force but equally important and even more expensive, supporting assets such as sophisticated Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) aircraft.

Only when a country can afford such assets in their requisite numbers, and when it has the skill to operate them effectively, can it aspire to secure its own airspace and launch offensive operations from within it using traditional methods. Instead, future opponents will likely focus their investments on tactical ballistic missiles (TBMs) for offensive attacks against airfields and ports of debarkation used by U.S. forces, and on shorter range, defensive weapons such as anti-ship cruise missiles (ASCMs) and surface-to-air missiles (SAMs).

This more limited, asymmetrical approach to future battlefields will present serious challenges. TBMs with INS/GPS guidance and sub-munition payloads will be lethal in attacks against local airfields and ports.[6] In some cases, TBMs with nuclear, chemical, or biological payloads will also threaten potential regional allies of the United States with attacks by weapons of mass destruction (WMD), possibly deterring them from even allowing U.S. forces access to local bases.

Complementing these offensive weapons will be defensive weapons. Within their engagement envelopes, modern ASCMs and SAMs have formidable capabilities and the capabilities of the U.S. forces that must operate directly in the face of these threats in the air and on the surface will be stressed. It is within the engagement envelopes of such weapons that the most expensive U.S. instruments of rapid power projection, such as manned bombers and aircraft carriers, face their most serious threats.

For example, take the case of penetrating ground-based air defense networks based on mobile SAM systems. In reference to the experience in Kosovo, where Serbian air defenses were based on mobile SAMs dating from the early 1970s, the U.S. Air Force has acknowledged that it "needs to find and kill non-cooperative defensive systems much more effectively than it can today."[7] In describing a scenario in which more modern mobile SAMs had been introduced into the conflict, General John Jumper, then Commander of Allied Air Forces in Europe, has acknowledged that the U.S. Air Force "would have had to fight [its] way in with brute force because we don't have the techniques to adequately defend ourselves against SAM-10s and 12s."[8]

The first quotation is an acknowledgment that while current defense suppression techniques are designed to destroy a "cooperative" target, they can only hope to suppress a target that is "non-cooperative." A cooperative target is one that seeks to complete a SAM engagement against a package of strike aircraft, and in doing so creates a continuous radar signal that defense suppression escorts can locate within hundreds or thousands of feet; the escorts can then jam the signal to reduce its range and attack it with a short-range, high-speed antiradiation missile (HARM). If the SAM operator stays on the air in an effort to complete the engagement, the HARM has a good chance of destroying the engagement radar before the engagement is completed and the SAM missile will lose its guidance, or in the military vernacular,

“go silly.” If, on the other hand, the SAM operator shuts down - i.e., if it is non-cooperative - both the SAM missile and the HARM go silly, and both the SAM radar and the aircraft it is shooting at survive. In the first case, the defense system is destroyed; in the second it is only temporarily suppressed.

Iraqi SAM operators during the early days of Desert Storm were, by and large, cooperative, meaning that early in the war their engagement radars were essentially destroyed, and after that allied air operated freely at medium altitude without need for close SAM-suppression escorts. In contrast, during Allied Force, Serbian SAM operators were non-cooperative, meaning that every Allied strike package needed the full panoply of SAM-suppression escorts. Because those escorts are scarce, or so-called high demand/low density (HD/LD) assets, this put an upper bound on the rate at which the campaign could be prosecuted.

The Serb air defense system was based on the SAM-6, the first Soviet mobile radar-guided SAM, which first saw action in the 1973 Yom Kippur war. The quotation from General Jumper, above, indicates that the more modern mobile SAM-10s and SAM-12s first deployed in the 1980s, which the United States has yet to encounter, can defeat current U.S. defense suppression assets. This is because their phased-array engagement radar and 80–100 mile range missiles (as opposed to 25 miles for the SAM-6) can complete an engagement well before HARM-carrying aircraft would come into range to launch their missiles.

Alternative approaches to the defense suppression mission that would be effective against non-cooperative opponents will depend on networks of standoff sensors that can instantaneously locate a SAM radar with precision sufficient to target it with a GPS-guided standoff weapon. Such an approach separates the sensor that finds the target from the shooter that launches a weapon against it, and therefore eliminates the need for these two functions to be combined in a manned combat aircraft such as the F-22.[9]

Therefore, future opponents are likely to focus their efforts on the development or purchase of much more accurate TBMs, with and without WMD payloads, and on weapons such as the Russian SAM-10 air defense system or submarine-launched, anti-ship cruise missiles.[10] Higher profile but inherently more expensive purchases, such as a squadron or wing of modern tactical fighters or several major naval surface combatants, buy only a “shopfront” capability that can be quickly destroyed or rendered irrelevant at the outset of a conflict, as was, for example, the Serbian Air Force in Allied Force.

The U.S. military strategy must adapt itself to this new strategic reality. Many of the most important tactical and operational challenges that dominated Cold War military planning and procurement will not exist on future battlefields, while others will remain, in some cases in more advanced form. A continued focus on the former, especially in a time of reduced defense spending, will come at the expense of the

latter. This would be dangerous because future U.S. opponents will find these points of weakness and exploit them.

U.S. alliance relationships and access to overseas bases will be less formal and more unpredictable than those that obtained during the Cold War.

The main Cold War alliance relationships between the United States and NATO and Japan benefited from a basic agreement among the parties to each alliance on the threats that justified it, the tools needed to oppose those threats, and the essential equality of national interests and thermonuclear risks at stake for all its members. Although the United States dominated each alliance, it also committed itself to the most binding of security guarantees: the promise to use U.S. nuclear weapons, if necessary, to defend allied territory from attack, whether conventional or nuclear. In return for this commitment, U.S. allies granted unprecedented access to bases within their territory and allowed the United States to station hundreds of thousands of troops. The rights of access and operational activity granted by each host nation were codified in formal status-of-forces agreements and were therefore predictable and reliable enough to be assumed as a given in Cold War military planning.

Both alliances were a response to the Soviet threat, and both continue after its demise, but neither, with the important exceptions of Japan in a Korean war and Turkey in Iraq, provides the United States access to local bases near or along the long littoral from the Mediterranean to the Sea of Japan. There, a better model for the alliance relationships that will provide such access, when it is granted, is the U.S.-Saudi relationship.

Originally formed early in the Cold War, the relationship grew in importance to both the United States and Saudi Arabia after the fall of the Shah appeared to eliminate Iran as a buffer between the Soviet Union and Persian Gulf oil. Yet the United States gained only limited access to Saudi bases in support of its Rapid Deployment Force (RDF), mostly in the form of port visits and pre-positioning of ammunition and other supplies. Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait resulted in a decision by the Saudi monarchy to allow U.S. forces unlimited access, but that decision was not made until four days after the invasion began, when Iraqi forces were already poised on the Saudi border.[11] After the war, the Saudis allowed U.S. combat aircraft to remain deployed, but refused U.S. requests to pre-position a brigade set of heavy armor.[12] Those deployed air forces are not always available for use in a crisis, as during Operation Desert Fox in December 1998, when the Saudis refused permission for strike aircraft to fly from their bases.[13]

Many factors explain this Saudi reluctance. The Saudi regime is a Sunni feudal monarchy that sits across a narrow sea from Iran, a Shia fundamentalist theocracy; it is an Arab state that enjoys good

relations with Israel's largest supporter; it is a wealthy state with a small population that abuts several poorer states with large and growing populations. The United States can solve only some of the Saudis' security problems, and in fact creates or exacerbates others. For example, there is no question that the Saudi regime's greatest domestic threat comes from fundamentalist Islamists, and the U.S. military presence serves as a lightning rod for their claims that the current regime has failed to protect the holy cities of Mecca and Medinah from the infidel.

Both the 1997 Report of the National Defense Panel and the more recent Hart-Rudman Commission report New World Coming have discussed other reasons why access to local bases in future conflicts will remain uncertain. For example, the latter noted that:

> In dealing with security crises, the 21st century will be characterized more by episodic "posses of the willing" than the traditional World War II–style alliance systems. The United States will increasingly find itself wishing to form coalitions but increasingly unable to find partners willing and able to carry out combined military operations.[14]

When the alliances that produce base access are episodic and temporary, the access they produce will be as well.

Finally and perhaps most importantly, those like the Saudis who today grant access to U.S. forces do so without the security guarantees that the United States gave its important Cold War allies. This makes it harder for them to determine whether giving U.S. forces access will increase or decrease their long-term security. For example, as the National Defense Panel argued, this might lead to limits on access for U.S. forces when potential allies face regional rivals armed with weapons of mass destruction.[15] During the Cold War, the United States made commitments to its major allies that use of such weapons against their territory would be met by retaliation in kind by the United States, but such guarantees are absent in alliance relationships with countries such as Saudi Arabia.

This is not to argue that U.S. forces will gain no access to bases abroad. When faced with clear threats to their sovereignty, many states will ask for help, and when it is in the interests of the United States to respond, its forces will be given access. But this access will often come late, after a conflict has already begun; it will often be austere, in that few preparations will have been made in advance; and it will often be withdrawn or sharply limited after the particular conflict that generated it is resolved.

Strategy and the Longer-term Security Environment

The longer-term security environment is inherently less predictable than the near term, and it is therefore more difficult to make specific assumptions about its likely characteristics. But two assumptions seem credible: first, it is unlikely that the United States will have to make a major continental commitment in order to preserve a balance of power in Eurasia; and second, the battlefields on the Indo-Pacific littoral where the United States might need to make military commitments will be much more lethal than they are today, because likely opponents will be able to exploit the most modern military technology. One specific distinction between these future battlefields and today's will be that opponents in the more distant term will be space-capable; they will have the ability to deploy and operate sensors in space.

Major continental commitments on the Eurasian land mass will not be necessary.

The unification of Germany and the collapse of the Soviet Union made Germany and Russia much more equal in basic power potential, and also established a number of medium-size buffer states between them. Today, Germany's non-nuclear status is compensated by continuing NATO nuclear guarantees, and NATO and the EU also serve to enmesh Germany in a series of multilateral relationships that limit the potential for insecurity among other European powers like France and Poland. All of these functions can endure without a major U.S. commitment of ground forces.[16]

The land border separating Russia and China has also acquired buffer states such as Kazakhstan and Mongolia, so that the two larger countries abut only in China's upper Xinjiang province and more extensively along the border between Manchuria and the Russian maritime provinces. Both of these borders could become future sources of instability, but these instabilities should be constrained both by the fact that China and Russia are likely to remain major nuclear powers, and by the fact that the vulnerabilities along their land borders should tend to cancel each other out. That is, China is vulnerable to separatism in Xinjiang province, which is near the base of Russian land power, and Russia is vulnerable to separatism in its maritime provinces, which are near the base of Chinese land power.

Finally, India is likely to become and remain at least a medium nuclear power, and its geography gives it a powerful buffer against invasion along the entire Indo-Chinese land border. Central Asia and the Indian subcontinent are likely to be enormous sources of instability, but geography and nuclear weapons make it unlikely that that instability will provoke a major ground war between India and China.

The most likely venue of great power competition and even war will, instead, have a more maritime focus. China and Japan is one obvious

potential conflict dyad, and China and India is another. A triangular competition among all three powers over control of the energy flows from the Middle East and Central Asia is also possible. The medium powers that sit astride the key sea routes, such as Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines, Korea, and of course, Taiwan, will all have stakes in the outcome of such a competition, and will all face competing pressures to balance or bandwagon against different perceived threats to their own interests.

The United States will be the balancer of last resort in these competitions, and the power that will determine the balance in these competitions will be seaborne.[17] This will put a premium on forces that can independently survive in and gain control over contested sea and littoral battle spaces against all comers, and when necessary, can project power rapidly ashore. The requirements for power projection ashore will stop short of an independent ability to wrest control of significant land areas from another great power, and will be focused instead on two capabilities: the ability to deploy long-range fires rapidly as an equalizer in land conflicts between medium powers and larger powers, and the ability to deploy both long-range fires and ground forces rapidly to a weak power threatened by a medium power in those rare instances when the former's survival and autonomy are an important U.S. interest.

The latter type of conflict has been relatively ubiquitous in the immediate post–Cold War era, and were today's "unipolar" moment to last forever, it would probably be the only type of conflict for which the U.S. military needed to prepare. But the unipolar moment is likely to be replaced by a more multipolar world in which the United States will face the prospect of conflict with great powers that spend $150 billion rather than $15 billion on defense.

Thus, the United States should plan on dominating other great powers at sea without allied assistance, but it should only plan on fighting other great powers on land with the assistance of another medium power. In both cases, the battlefields of the longer-term security environment will be much more lethal because the asymmetry in wealth and technological prowess that favors the United States today will be gone or significantly reduced.

Battles between great powers for control of the sea and land will be decided in prior battles for control of the undersea and space.

Technology has already made fixed land targets essentially indefensible from conventional attack by U.S. forces, and both the fiscal and human costs of mounting such attacks should drop even further should U.S. forces fully embrace standoff weapons with guidance that integrates signals from Global Positioning System (GPS) satellites and miniaturized inertial navigation systems (INS).[18] Technology will also soon greatly increase, from today's low level, the ability of U.S.

forces to attack a variety of moving or mobile targets such as SAM radars, tactical ballistic missiles (TBMs), and armored vehicles, using long-range fires.[19] These long-range fires will be cued by wide-area sensors which will initially be air-based, but which may also eventually migrate to space-based platforms in low earth orbit for some applications. This growing arsenal of capability to use long-range fires to attack fixed and mobile land targets takes advantage of the enormous asymmetries in technological prowess that now favor the United States over its likely opponents.

Capabilities analogous to this were developed by the U.S. Navy in its Cold War struggle with the Soviet Navy, and particularly with the Soviet submarine force. The latter posed the greatest conventional threat to allied sea lines of communication, and as early as the late 1950s, the Navy was using undersea-based acoustic sensors to detect and track Soviet submarines on an ocean-wide basis, and to cue long-range anti-submarine warfare (ASW) platforms to prosecute them. This capability was also based on an asymmetry in technological prowess, in this case the ability to understand the significance of and exploit narrow-band low-frequency acoustic signal processing, but that asymmetry was eventually reduced by the Soviet Union, albeit too late to influence the course of the Cold War.

Major asymmetries in technological prowess are rare in major power conflicts, and usually evanescent when they do occur. The dominant technological characteristic of the longer-term security environment is that America’s current advantage over the rest of the world would be greatly reduced if one or several new regional powers arise in Eurasia. In prospective battles with such a power, the United States will once again have to assume the golden rule of war between more equal powers: that which it can do unto others, they are likely to be able to do unto it.

U.S. military planners faced with an increasingly lethal environment on or near the surface along the Eurasian littoral will still need to operate so as to gain information and project power. But in a competition with a major regional power, no operating medium will remain a sanctuary for long, and battles for control of those mediums will be much more intense than they would be in today’s security environment.

Fixed targets on the surface will be indefensible if within range of an opponent’s arsenal of precision TBMs and cruise missiles, for as long as the supply of those weapons lasts. Even mobile targets on the surface will be at greater risk if the opponent retains access to wide-area battlefield surveillance assets. The anti-access capabilities of future opponents will depend most specifically on their ability to detect, locate, and target U.S. power projection assets, and their ability to use space-based sensor networks will be a key determinant of these capabilities.

For example, the United States will likely face space-based sensor networks that can support time urgent strikes against fixed targets before it will face networks that can detect, identify, and track mobile targets on the surface. Also, of the uncontested sanctuaries in space and under the seas which U.S. forces now enjoy, satellites in low earth orbit are likely to become vulnerable to future opponents before quiet nuclear submarines.

This will put a premium on systems able to spoof these surveillance networks, and on attacks against the network's space-borne sensors, or on the ground-based command, control, and processing infrastructure that such space-based networks always depend upon.

One main conclusion that should inform current defense planning therefore concerns the issue of access to overseas bases. Where such access is uncertain and episodic in the near-term security environment for essentially political reasons, it is likely to remain problematic in the longer term for both political and military reasons. Potential allies will have to decide whether to join forces with the United States to oppose regional aggressors that will often be armed with WMD. Even in cases where potential allies decide to join forces with the United States to oppose such a regional aggressor, significant conventional military access constraints will remain. Local bases are likely to be indefensible as long as the opponent has a supply of standoff weapons with sufficient range to attack them.

Forces that nevertheless must operate on land and close with the enemy will be able to do so only if they operate in such a way as not to present large, predictable, fixed targets to that opponent. This will be very difficult, because many measures taken to avoid military constraints on access will exacerbate political constraints. For example, instead of operating from a single base, air expeditionary forces might attempt to create uncertainty for the opponent as to their position by shifting their operations on a daily basis among several local bases. This tactic might succeed in a military sense, especially against an opponent lacking access to rapid readout overhead imagery. On the other hand, such a concept also assumes unlimited political access to several rather than one airbase for each wing-sized unit deployed, doubling or tripling the amount of access needed compared to traditional concepts of operations. Such a concept also assumes several times the amount of pre-postioned fuel, ammunition, and spare parts or, in the likely absence of such pre-postioning, enough airlift to compensate.