

1 Introduction

To best meet today's asymmetric threat to U.S. and global security, government and industry should partner to develop a comprehensive and unified national strategy.

On May 8, 2008, the National Defense University (NDU) and CACI International Inc (CACI) co-sponsored a symposium on "Dealing with Today's Asymmetric Threats to U.S. and Global Security" (the Asymmetric Threat Symposium). Through this symposium, NDU and CACI sought to expand the dialogue between government, industry, academia, and foreign representatives, and foster the creation of an Integrated National Strategy to combat global asymmetric threats.

The Asymmetric Threat Symposium focused on four major functional areas of responsibility that NDU and CACI leaders believed would be integral to a global and national asymmetric threat response paradigm. Together, these areas would unite all relevant departments of government and other national resources, where appropriate, to build a consensus on a national strategy to address and defeat such asymmetrical threats. The four major areas on which the symposium focused were ***Global Diplomacy, Strategic Communications, Securing the Homeland, and Global Strategy to Counter Terrorism and Extremism.***

The symposium sought a broader, yet in-depth, understanding of the scope and complexity of these diverse challenges and how the U.S. must deal with them. This response would be based upon a formulation of national policies and strategies that address diplomatic and military responses and synergies, social and cultural initiatives to bolster the understanding and will of the American people, and other programs to directly counter the terrorist and extremist threats faced by the U.S. and our foreign partners. These policies and strategies implemented at the national level must be integrated and synchronized, considering the application of all elements of our national resources and power, including:

- Military capabilities;
- Economic capabilities;
- Diplomatic and political capabilities;
- Information and communications capabilities;
- Intelligence Community capabilities;
- Law enforcement capabilities;
- Legal frameworks;
- Scientific development;
- Educational and cultural resources; and
- All other branches of U.S. and local government.



The symposium recognized that asymmetrical threats are not uniquely military, but require the engagement of all elements of national power, including that applied by Congress, the judiciary, and the executive branch, as well as the private sector. Leaders in all sectors must work together if we are to be successful against a dedicated, capable, and multi-faceted threat.

This paper seeks to capture and reflect upon the ideas raised by the expert panelists and diverse attendees at the Asymmetric Threat Symposium, and thereby inspire current and future leaders to work together in developing a long-term vision and creative construct for addressing the asymmetric threat well into the future. The symposium panelists and speakers focused the majority of their discussions around issues related to terrorism and Islamic extremism; however, there are myriad asymmetric threats to U.S. and global security that must be examined further in developing a truly Integrated National Asymmetric Threat Strategy.

Figure 1 highlights the dangers that threaten our way of life – terrorism and nation-state aggression; economic decline and

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diminished U.S. credibility around the world; narco-terrorism and drug trafficking; nuclear proliferation; pandemic disease; insufficient natural, medical, and energy resources to meet world demand; and unpredictable actions of the disenfranchised and disadvantaged who may be swayed to support anti-Western (particularly anti-American) and anti-democratic agendas.



Graphic by Stan Poczek

Figure 1. Multiple complex elements must be considered in the development of an Integrated National Asymmetric Threat Strategy.

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A new Integrated National Asymmetric Threat Strategy response plan must incorporate this multitude of potential threats and remain flexible so that we may defend ourselves, our country, and our allies against future potential threats. There is consensus that asymmetric threats, including acts of terrorism, will be a prominent feature of the threat environment that the U.S. and our allies will face for at least the next several decades. (See Appendix A for an explanation of asymmetric threats.)

Recommendations from the symposium, this paper, and future symposia must involve the wide array of national assets and resources – in government and in the intelligence, counterterrorism, and law enforcement communities at large – to cover these diverse threats. To aid in developing a framework for the Integrated National Asymmetric Threat Strategy, this paper focuses on the ideas presented at the Asymmetric Threat Symposium, which highlight the current and future threats related to counterterrorism and Islamic extremism. Accordingly, the paper is organized into two segments:

- **The Security Environment** explores current and future threats to our security, capabilities, and weaknesses of the U.S., and opportunities.
- **The Way Forward** offers proposed next steps to aid U.S. leadership in implementing strategy, structural change, and reform.

Ultimately, NDU and CACI hope that readers will reflect upon the key concepts raised in the symposium and use them as catalysts to consider strategies to defeat and/or mitigate the risks posed by other asymmetric threats and encourage our national leaders to develop, organize, and implement an Integrated National Asymmetric Threat Strategy and measure its potential for success in defeating asymmetric threats.²

2 The Security Environment

2.1 Current and Future Threats

During the four-plus decades of the Cold War, U.S. political parties developed a shared consensus as to the Cold War threat, its extent, and the broad-based strategy of deterrence that ultimately prevailed without direct superpower-to-superpower engagement. In addition, most political and military leaders subscribed to a consistent paradigm of containment over this period.

As a result, there was general agreement on U.S. National Security Strategy, the basic structure and weapons systems required by the military, the requirement for a sizable active and reserve force, and the provision of resources adequate to meet a clearly understood threat. There was also a broad understanding of the roles of various government departments and agencies and how their efforts would work together to sustain the U.S. response to the threat. This ensured consistency and continuity of support over time as government leadership changed.

Apart from the clear advantages in preserving U.S. national security, our country realized an additional side benefit from this national strategy in which we saw:

- Unity of effort and commitment;
- Constancy of behavior; and
- Steadfastness of the U.S. as we faced a formidable threat.

These factors do not exist today, in a world where the threat to our way of life may be even more dangerous than that faced in the Cold War. The growing asymmetric threats are dramatically different from those of the twentieth century. Our adversaries and enemies today are not like the totalitarian communists of the Soviet Union or the politico-military dictatorships of Nazi Germany, Imperial Japan, and fascist Italy in World War II. In fact, very little about our current threat environment compares

² Passages adapted from NDU briefing and Jack London's welcome remarks, NDU-CACI symposium.