



Executive Summary

Strategic Studies Institute and U.S. Army War College Press



A HARD LOOK AT HARD POWER: ASSESSING THE DEFENSE CAPABILITIES OF KEY U.S. ALLIES AND SECURITY PARTNERS

Gary J. Schmitt
Editor

Over the past 6-plus decades, U.S. foreign and defense policy has involved, both in planning and in actual conflicts, a global network of allies and strategic partners. However, contemporary policy analysis has failed to examine adequately the hard power of those nations – pulling together not just defense budgets and troop strength, but also deployable capabilities, procurement programs, research and development efforts, doctrinal updates, and strategic guidance documents. Failing to account for these elements of hard power obscures the ability and, indirectly, the will of U.S. allies and partners to use force independently or in concert with the United States and other allies. To address this shortfall, the American Enterprise Institute’s Marilyn Ware Center for Security Studies, under the direction of Dr. Gary Schmitt, commissioned a series of essays assessing the defense capabilities of America’s partners. This edited volume presents a selection of those essays.

The volume proceeds in the order in which the essays were commissioned, beginning with an analysis by Dr. Schmitt of Italy’s ability to execute its military modernization plans, as well as achieve its past regional and global ambitions in the midst of a tight fiscal environment. Although capable of ensuring its own defense, Italy will find itself constrained by stagnant defense budgets and will struggle to project forces to address immediate security concerns in the Horn of Africa and the

Mediterranean Basin. Also constrained by cuts to defense spending, Australia finds its long-standing technological advantage over other states in the region to be dwindling. Andrew Shearer writes that Australia must commit sufficient resources to its modernization agenda or risk losing its ability to help shape the Asia-Pacific security environment or fulfill its role as a key partner in America’s pivot to Asia.

Shrinking fleet sizes among the navies of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) member nations illuminate, in clear terms, the damage caused by defense budgets cuts enacted by America’s strategic allies and partners, as Bryan McGrath explains. Possessing a general desire to field a broad spectrum of naval capabilities, America’s major European allies have sacrificed fleet size in the name of procuring sophisticated platforms. Germany, which possesses no such naval aspirations, has, since the end of the Cold War, oscillated between a reluctance to use hard power and a desire to support American and European allies. Recent trends, Patrick Keller argues, show a country intent upon reforming its forces to make them more deployable and flexible, but limited defense expenditures have made reaching those objectives a distant goal at best. However, as Europe’s leading economic power and central political actor, Germany could certainly lead the way toward reversing the precipitous decline in European power.

Across the globe, another economic powerhouse and thriving democracy, South Korea, faces an ominous and imminent threat on its border, unlike that of almost any other democracy. However, as Bruce Bechtol explains, South Korea's efforts to improve its deterrence and defense capabilities have been uneven, in part due to changes in Korean governments and uneven history in finalizing decisions in the areas of missile defenses, tactical fighter aircraft, and command-and-control arrangements. Also facing what it perceives to be an immediate threat, Poland's defense planners are working to address Russian revanchism and America's growing disengagement from European security matters. Andrew Michta details Poland's desire to expand its defense industrial capabilities and increase defense spending as Warsaw feels increasingly compelled to look to its own resources and to neighboring capitals as security partners.

Examining French strategic goals, Dorothee Fouchaux depicts a major U.S. ally living on the strategic edge. In its most recent white paper, Paris defense planners laid out a program to maintain France's "strategic autonomy" through a combination of nuclear deterrence, enhanced intelligence, and discrete power-projection capabilities. However, it is unclear whether the recently diminished French force will have sufficient resources to fulfill this strategy while addressing existing readiness and capabilities shortfalls. Taiwan similarly needs to address a number of obstacles to enacting its stated strategy. Facing an increasingly modern and robust Chinese force across the Strait, Michael Mazza explains Taiwan must not only address concerns about its defense budget and all-volunteer force, but also reconcile its increasingly friendly relationship with mainland China with its dependence upon American security assistance.

Reviewing the effectiveness of NATO land forces, Dr. Guillaume Lasconjarias concludes that allied forces have undergone a remarkable transformation since the end of the Cold War, but, looking forward, serious questions remain. Focusing on maintaining combat capabilities, NATO nations have drained their armies of equipment necessary to support full operations

in the absence of overriding American support. Paul Cornish argues that one of the core NATO leaders, the United Kingdom (UK), suffers today from a form of strategic ambivalence; although national strategy documents have adopted an "expeditionary" tone, the downward trend of UK military capabilities exposes a disconnect in London. Will the UK government resolve its wavering strategic vision and reinforce the "special relationship" between the United States and the UK?

As NATO nations decrease financial support for their militaries and their capabilities decline, pooling and sharing efforts have assumed a primary position in NATO planning. W. Bruce Weinrod examines the history of these efforts and the prospects for increased pooling and sharing of allied defense efforts. Defense cooperation has been met with success, but sustaining that success will depend upon a broad commitment to develop cooperatively necessary technologies and weapons systems, while addressing ever present, if unstated, concerns about maintaining national sovereignty and control over this essential element of statehood. Just as NATO's pooling and sharing efforts will require bold new policy judgments, so too does Japan's security future rest upon sound strategy. Realigning its forces toward its southern borders, Toshi Yoshihara argues, is a necessary first step for Japan. Tokyo must also ensure each branch of the Self-Defense Force (SDF) has powerful capabilities and interservice cooperation if it wishes to confront the Chinese challenge effectively.

Finally, the volume concludes with an analysis of NATO air power, excluding the United States. Craig Franklin presents a picture of an allied air effort that has core strengths, including tactical-fighters and excellent basing, and plans for addressing shortfalls in areas such as munitions, stealth, intelligence surveillance, and reconnaissance. However, tight or declining defense budgets will challenge the alliance's ability to carry out these plans. With a number of key NATO allied air forces facing significant shortfalls in training and readiness, there should be even more urgency on the part of NATO to address its resource woes.

More information about the programs of the Strategic Studies Institute (SSI) and U.S. Army War College (USAWC) Press may be found on the Institute's homepage at www.StrategicStudiesInstitute.army.mil.

Organizations interested in reprinting this or other SSI and USAWC Press executive summaries should contact the Editor for Production via email at SSI_Publishing@conus.army.mil. All organizations granted this right must include the following statement: "Reprinted with permission of the Strategic Studies Institute and U.S. Army War College Press, U.S. Army War College."



This Publication



SSI Website



USAWC Website