



# Foreign Policy 2014





## Introduction

The Foreign Policy Initiative (FPI), a non-partisan and non-profit 501(c)(3) organization in Washington, D.C., has developed **Foreign Policy 2014**, a resource that is publicly available online via FPI's website at [www.foreignpolicyi.org/foreignpolicy2014](http://www.foreignpolicyi.org/foreignpolicy2014). As you page through the book, you will see that it offers a useful overview of today's most pressing challenges to U.S. foreign policy, concisely pulling together key points, critical facts, and penetrating insights.

FPI also **offers policy briefings** to Members of Congress and federal candidates in the United States—regardless of political affiliation. These tailored briefings, which can run from a half-hour to a half-day, connect Washington's current and future decision-makers with America's leading thinkers on foreign policy.

**To schedule a policy briefing with FPI**, contact Caitlin Poling, FPI's Director of Government Relations, at [cpoling@foreignpolicyi.org](mailto:cpoling@foreignpolicyi.org) or (202) 296-3322.

## About the Foreign Policy Initiative

The Foreign Policy Initiative (FPI) is a **non-profit and non-partisan tax-exempt organization** under Section 501(c)(3) of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code that promotes:

- **continued U.S. engagement**—diplomatic, economic, and military—in the world and rejection of policies that would lead us down the path to isolationism;
- **robust support** for America's democratic allies and opposition to rogue regimes that threaten American interests;
- **the human rights** of those oppressed by their governments, and **U.S. leadership** in working to spread political and economic freedom;
- **a strong military** with the defense budget needed to ensure that America is ready to confront the threats of the 21st century; and
- **international economic engagement** as a key element of U.S. foreign policy in this time of great economic dislocation.

FPI looks forward to **working with all who share these objectives**, regardless of political party, so that the United States successfully confronts its challenges and make progress **toward a freer and more secure future**.





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## Executive Summary

### The Importance of American Leadership

**The United States remains the world's indispensable nation**—vital to global peace, security, and stability, and crucial to protecting and advancing America's ideals and principles. America cannot afford to turn its back on its international commitments, and should maintain robust engagement in the world—diplomatic, military, and economic—to promote universal principles of democracy, oppose the policies of authoritarian regimes, and stand against human rights abuses across the globe.

To uphold this engagement, the United States should ensure that its **defense budget** is commensurate to the task of global leadership. Unfortunately, current defense spending levels do not meet the federal government's constitutional requirement to provide for the common defense of the nation. **The Obama administration and Congress should work together to repeal defense cuts under the Budget Control Act, restore the military's required readiness and force size, and maintain robust intelligence programs.**

Similarly, the United States should work to reduce its **dependence on foreign oil**, advance a strong **foreign assistance program** that helps transform aid partners into security and trade partners, and expand **free trade** that advances America's economic prosperity.

### Challenges and Opportunities

#### *Afghanistan*

**The security and stability of Afghanistan require a continued long-term commitment by the United States** as the Afghan people continue their struggle against the Taliban and al-Qaeda. The Bilateral Security Agreement between the United States and Afghanistan ensures a role for U.S. forces in training, advising, and assisting the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) for as long as the next decade.

#### *China*

China's continued military build-up, fueled by its increasingly assertive foreign policy and years of rapid growth of its military budget, has raised concerns throughout the Asia-Pacific region and the world. **Washington must meet its commitments to allies and partners in the Asia-Pacific and support Chinese dissidents and ethnic and religious minorities in their continuing struggle for human rights and dignity.**

#### *Europe and NATO*

**Especially in the face of Vladimir Putin's efforts to redraw the borders of Eastern Europe, it remains vital that the United States and its European allies work together closely.** NATO—a transatlantic military alliance composed of democratic nations with shared values—has defended the free world and its values in locales as varied as Libya and Afghanistan. However, continued defense budget cuts by NATO members risk crippling the alliance's ability to confront the threats of tomorrow, and are already hampering current operations.

## *Iran*

The Islamic Republic of Iran—a revolutionary regime that the State Department first designated a “**state sponsor of terrorism**” in 1984—poses grave threats to the United States and its allies. It actively seeks a nuclear weapons capability, supports terrorist groups and terrorist regimes throughout the world, and oppresses its own people. In any negotiation with Iran, **the United States should seek an agreement that eliminates Tehran’s ability to acquire a nuclear weapons capability** and contains appropriate safeguards and verification measures that would prevent it from reneging on the deal.

## *ISIS, Iraq, and Syria*

The rising power of ISIS in Iraq and Syria directly threatens the United States. Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the group’s leader, has publicly stated that **ISIS seeks direct confrontation with the United States**. Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel describes ISIS as a force that is sophisticated, dynamic, strong, organized, and well-financed. To address this threat, the United States should adopt a three-pronged approach: (1) defeat and destroy ISIS as an organization; (2) restore stability to Iraq; and (3) bring about a post-Assad Syria that is free of terror.

## *Israel*

It is in America’s interest to help ensure that Israel remains safe, strong, and secure. **The U.S.-Israel relationship is mutually beneficial**, and vital to the preservation of a democratic ally that faces extraordinary security challenges.

## *Latin America*

America’s inattention to Latin America has allowed foreign influence and instability to grow in the region. Latin America is important to U.S. national security and economic growth. Many democracies in the region face pressure from autocratic rulers, Venezuelan petrodollars, and complex criminal organizations financed by international crime and illicit drug trade. It is critical for Washington to do more to **strengthen democratic institutions and deepen trade ties in the region**.

## *North Korea*

**North Korea is the most repressive state in the world and remains a significant threat to the United States and the international community**. For three generations, North Korea’s dictators have failed to honor their obligations under international law. The United States should increase its pressure to undermine and remove the regime in Pyongyang. Attempts at negotiating in good faith with the North Korean regime continue to fail. A comprehensive strategy of economic, political, and military pressure is required to enact change within North Korea.

## *Russia*

Russia’s actions in Ukraine and around the world profoundly undermine regional and global stability, and reflect **efforts by the Kremlin to dominate its neighbors**. Russia’s illegal annexation of Crimea in March 2014, like its 2008 invasion of Georgia, demonstrates Moscow’s willingness to use force in order to expand its sphere of influence. Russia is also actively challenging the role of the United States in Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East, and continues to oppress its own people. The United States should oppose such aggression and make tangible commitments to the defense of our allies in Eastern Europe in order to deter further Russian expansionism.



# **I. The Case for American Leadership**



# America's Role in the World

From World War II through the Cold War and into the 21st century, the United States has served as the indispensable pillar of the international order, working with allies and partners in a continuing struggle to advance security, prosperity, and human dignity in the world. Today, however, our nation faces grave new challenges to its global leadership.



**Americans cannot afford to turn their back on their international commitments**—in particular, on allies that helped America defeat fascism and communism, and on the new partnerships forged with nations like Afghanistan to advance freedom and strengthen security.

At home, Americans would undermine their own prosperity by pursuing a protectionist and isolationist retreat within our borders. Today, the challenges America faces require a vision and policies anchored not in the fatalism of U.S. decline, but rather in a renewed commitment to strong and enduring American global leadership. As Robert Kagan has written, “For all its flaws and its miseries, the world America made has been a remarkable anomaly in the history of humanity. Someday we may have no choice but to watch it drift away. Today we do have a choice.”

## Key Points

- **Founded on the universal cause of freedom, the United States holds a special place in world history.** America's Founding Fathers and Presidents have frequently highlighted America's unique role in the world. As Benjamin Franklin proclaimed, “Our cause is the cause of all mankind.” President Clinton said, “America stands alone as the world's indispensable nation.” President Reagan called America “the last best hope on earth.”
- **The United States should maintain robust engagement in the world—diplomatic, military, and economic—to ensure a more secure and prosperous future.** As the misguided isolationism of the 1930s demonstrated, America has suffered when it embraced the path of diminished U.S. global leadership and protectionism. Such a course only weakens U.S. national security and diminishes economic opportunities for America's citizens.
- **The United States should maintain vigorous support for democratic allies and oppose regimes that threaten American interests and subvert the cause of freedom.** America should pursue policies that promote political freedom, stand against human rights abuses across the globe, strengthen ties with allies through better trade relations to increase U.S. exports, achieve greater diplomatic and military coordination with our allies, and encourage all nations—particularly China and Russia—to act responsibly.
- **The United States should maintain a robust defense budget that would enable it to uphold a system of international peace and prosperity, prevent major foreign aggression, and keep open the flow of global trade and commerce.** Even if recent budget cuts were reversed, defense spending would still amount to just 4 percent of America's gross domestic product (GDP)—an investment America can afford to make. The United States should resist efforts to enact further cuts to the defense budget that would inhibit its global leadership role.



# Defense: Policy and Budget

In the dangerous post-9/11 world, the United States should ensure that the men and women of the U.S. military have the weapons, equipment, and other resources needed to carry out any mission. However, unless the President and Congress change current law, the U.S. armed forces will face \$1 trillion in across-the-board cuts over the next decade. On its present course, the United States will not have the capacity to meet its stated military commitments, and American national security will be significantly weakened.



## Key Points

### *Spending*

- **The Constitution makes clear that it is the exclusive and mandatory responsibility of the federal government “to provide for the common defense.”** Whereas most federal powers are discretionary, defense is mandatory, and the Constitution lists numerous defense-related authorities for both Congress and the President. As such, a failure to provide the armed forces with the resources they need violates both a core function of government and a constitutional imperative.
- **Under the law called the Budget Control Act of 2011, our armed forces are suffering catastrophic cuts.** The law included both \$487 billion in cuts to defense spending and, after the failure of a bipartisan deficit committee to reach a budget deal, an additional \$500 million in “sequestration” cuts. As a result, the percentage of GDP America spends on defense is slated to fall to under 3 percent—the lowest total in the post-World War II era.
- **A bipartisan commission of defense experts recently concluded that these budget cuts “constitute a serious strategic misstep” that have “prompted our current and potential allies and adversaries to question our commitment and resolve.”** Co-chaired by General John B. Abizaid, the George W. Bush-era commander of U.S. Central Command, and Clinton-era Secretary of Defense William Perry, the 2014 National Defense Review Panel urged Congress and the President to end these needless cuts.
- **Congress and the Obama administration should repeal BCA defense cuts and fully restore the defense budget in proportion to its needs.** Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel called sequestration cuts “devastating” for America’s armed services. The Obama administration should oppose continued cuts to the defense budget, and work with Congress to repeal sequestration and devise a plan that ensures the armed services can continue to play its historic role of global leadership in the 21st century. The National Defense Panel recommended adopting then-Secretary of Defense Robert Gates’ defense budget request for FY12 as the minimum increase—which would amount to a near \$100 billion increase in FY15.

### *Readiness*

- **Defense spending cuts have left our military at the precipice of a readiness catastrophe, jeopardizing the commitment that America will never send its military personnel into combat unprepared.** In late 2013, the Army had only two—out of 42—Brigade Combat Teams that were combat ready, the Navy had cancelled five ship deployments, and the Air Force had grounded 31 squadrons. In response, the National Defense Panel warned, “The U.S. military’s dangerous and growing budget driven readiness challenges demand immediate action. ...

Unless reversed, these shortfalls will lead to greater risk to our forces, posture, and security in the near future.”

#### *Force Size*

- **The American military faces a large and growing gap between the forces it requires and the forces it has, with the Army falling to pre-World War II levels, the Navy falling to pre-World War I levels, and the Air Force fielding the smallest force in its history.** The Navy has 285 ships, the fewest number since America's entry into World War I. This is well below the 313-ship level that the Chief of Naval Operations has called a “floor.” In addition to other critical investments, the United States should restore production of the F-22 fighter jet maintain funding for the Navy's 313-ship plan, including 12 aircraft carriers, and restore the pre-BCA size of the Army and Marine Corps.

#### *Missile Defense and Strategic Forces*

- **The United States should support robust missile defenses to protect the homeland, America's friends and allies, and our forces when they are deployed.** Budget cuts and aging infrastructure are hampering America's ability to respond to the newest missile threats. With rogue nations like North Korea and Iran acquiring more sophisticated, longer-range missile systems, the importance of U.S. missile defense has grown exponentially. Moreover, the Obama administration has yet to build a missile defense system on the East Coast to supplement sites in Alaska and Hawaii, leaving the United States open to attack. The President should act quickly to develop such a site and continue robust support for missile defense in order to defend America and our allies against new and emerging threats.
- **The Departments of Defense and Energy have laid out plans to modernize and replace U.S. strategic nuclear forces, but they lack the funds to do so.** Consistent with recommendations of the 2009 Nuclear Posture Review and the congressionally mandated Strategic Posture Commission, the National Defense Panel has reaffirmed that “[n]uclear force modernization is essential.” The United States today relies upon weapons, the triad of delivery systems (intercontinental ballistic missiles, submarine-launched ballistic missiles, and bombers), and a nuclear enterprise that are operating well beyond their original service lives. Replacing and modernizing these forces will require significantly greater funding in the coming years.

# Democracy and Human Rights

**Founded on the universal cause of freedom, America holds a special place in the world.** As Benjamin Franklin observed, “Our cause is the cause of all mankind.” President John F. Kennedy said, “The cost of freedom is always high, but Americans have always paid it.” Today, America remains the world’s indispensable nation—to international peace, security, and stability, and to safeguarding and advancing the ideals and principles we hold dear. As such, America should provide global leadership to help spread political freedom and defend the human rights of those oppressed by their rulers.



## Key Points

- **The United States should pursue policies that promote political freedom and stand against human rights abuses across the globe—abuses that mock the universal principles we hold dear.** To that end, Washington should work with our democratic allies to promote democracy and respect for human rights, challenge regimes that subvert the cause of freedom, and leverage the visibility of international institutions to aim a brighter spotlight on crimes against humanity. Those fighting for their freedom should never have cause to question whether America is on their side.
- **Freedom is not merely an American cause, but a universal one.** “Freedom is not America’s gift to the world,” said President George W. Bush. “It is the Almighty God’s gift to every man and woman in this world.” At the heart of the American experiment lies the conviction that the individual has inalienable rights, and that the government rules by the consent of the governed. Americans are thus deeply concerned when they see authoritarian regimes blatantly spurn these principles and oppress their own people.
- **The remarkable surge of democracies in recent decades demonstrates that people around the globe yearn to be free.** As Robert Kagan has observed, while there were only a dozen democracies around the world in 1941, there are more than 100 today. The spread of democracy has been made possible by American leadership and security commitments, but as the late political scientist Samuel Huntington noted, two previous waves of democratization (from 1828 to 1926 and from 1943 to 1962) faced significant reversals at the hands of resurgent authoritarian regimes. The United States today should vigorously champion the cause of democracy if it hopes to avert the reversals that vitiated the previous two waves.
- **The United States should elevate its call for Russian and Chinese leaders to respect the human rights of its citizens and neighbors, and embrace democratic values anchored in the rule of law.** China and Russia suppress open political discussion, threaten their neighbors, harass political opponents, and oppose democracy. The United States should speak out at every available opportunity about such abuses, support burgeoning protest movements in those countries, and recognize that the best long-term solution for these problems lies in democratization. Such a policy constitutes not merely a moral imperative but also a U.S. strategic interest, since the authoritarian practices of both countries are increasingly leading them to threaten their neighbors and undermine regional stability.
- **The examples of South Korea and Taiwan demonstrate the potential for success when nations embrace democracy.** The remarkable economic growth and political liberalization of

Taiwan and South Korea have brought historically unprecedented prosperity and freedom to both nations. By providing robust economic aid and encouraging democratic growth, the United States played a key role in facilitating these developments. Moreover, America's relationship with these democracies has been symbiotic, accounting for a highly beneficial economic partnership that is now decades old.

# Energy Security

**For decades, U. S. dependence on foreign oil has undermined national security priorities, constrained foreign policy options, and held back economic growth.** Since the United States is the world's largest consumer of oil and our nation's transportation sector—the engine behind America's economy—is 92 percent dependent on oil, price spikes and volatility in the oil market cause significant economic damage. This economic vulnerability has too often required the United States to accommodate authoritarian regimes in major oil-producing regions, weakening America's ability to more effectively pursue its national security interests.



**America's recent energy boom, triggered by technological advances, has had significant economic benefits, including job creation and improving the balance of trade.** However, despite increased domestic production, oil prices continue to be high and volatile because the global oil market is manipulated by a sellers' cartel—the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). Indeed, every U.S. recession since 1970 has been preceded by, or occurred concurrently with, an oil price spike. As such, policies should be pursued to enhance domestic production of oil and gas and reduce the nation's dependence on oil.

## Key Points

- **The price of oil is set in a global market and a disruption of oil supplies anywhere makes oil prices spike everywhere.** Since the U.S. is the world's largest oil consumer, particularly for transportation needs, guarding against oil supply disruptions and price spikes places enormous strains on U.S. national security resources while distorting foreign and defense policy priorities.
- **High oil prices bolster authoritarian regimes.** In recent years, the U.S. has been spending over \$300 billion on oil imports annually, much of which goes to countries that do not share our values or interests. In the case of Russia, its vast oil and gas export revenues have enabled Vladimir Putin to carry out an aggressive and expansionist foreign policy.
- **Maintaining continued access to oil supplies is vital because the global oil market is likely to remain highly volatile.** Several reasons account for this phenomenon, including manipulation of the oil market by OPEC and other state-run national oil companies (NOCs); instability in major oil-producing countries, especially in the Middle East and North Africa; and an increase in oil demand in the developing world, predominantly China and India.
- **The United States should not assume that the recent oil and gas revolution provides an opportunity to withdraw from the Middle East and other oil-producing regions.** U.S. engagement is necessary due to its reliance on the global economy, which in turn relies on Middle Eastern oil. In addition, we have other interests in the region that are important regardless of oil, including nuclear nonproliferation, terrorism, security of our allies, and a strong stake in the region's stability. Even if we no longer import any oil, our economy will still be vulnerable to high and volatile oil prices, which are set in the global market.
- **The United States should increase domestic energy production and help our security partners develop alternatives to authoritarian oil producers.** In particular, the United States should lift restrictions on U.S. oil and gas exports, export our fracking technologies and expertise in protecting production facilities to other countries, and strengthen energy cooperation between Canada and Mexico by drawing upon North America's abundant energy resources.



# Foreign Assistance

**U.S. foreign assistance plays a key role in advancing America's core national interests and values.** From major programs like the Marshall Plan, which helped rebuild post-World War II Europe and stem the rise of Cold War-era communism, to modern development initiatives like the Millennium Challenge Corporation, which is providing a new model for providing effective international aid, foreign assistance is enabling the United States to promote security, prosperity, and human dignity across the globe. U.S. foreign assistance can help transform aid partners into security and trade partners.



## Key Points

- **The United States has a core national interest in advancing transparent and targeted foreign assistance.** For example, the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) is an independent U.S. agency that awards grants to nations that can measurably demonstrate a commitment to good governance and economic freedom. These grants have supported water supply and sanitation projects, finance and enterprise growth, and democracy promotion in developing nations. MCC assistance helps not only to strengthen America's current partners, but also to develop new ones at a time when China and other emerging powers have become more active in foreign assistance and economic diplomacy across the globe.
- **U.S. foreign assistance has helped to empower hundreds of millions of people in need, and reflects the generous character of the American people.** No doubt, U.S. policymakers and lawmakers should make every effort to ensure that every foreign aid dollar is spent as effectively as possible. Yet it is important to remember that foreign assistance has helped save countless men, women, and children from starvation and disease, particularly in African nations, and helped to transition countries once ruled by oppressive dictators into representative governments that respect the rule of law, human rights, and basic freedoms.
- **Foreign aid is an affordable investment, representing roughly 1 percent of total federal outlays.** Funding for democracy and human rights programs in particular currently makes up less than one-tenth of one percent of the total budget.
- **U.S. foreign assistance is essential in areas where the United States is at war.** As General David Petraeus, then-commander of U.S. and NATO forces in Afghanistan, told Congress in 2011, "Inadequate resourcing of our civilian partners could, in fact, jeopardize accomplishment of the overall mission."
- **U.S. foreign assistance promotes good governance, health, education, infrastructure, and economic growth.** For example, U.S. aid programs have helped to cut incidents of malaria by more than 50 percent in 43 countries in Africa, and enabled 42 million Africans to start attending schools. U.S. foreign assistance has also helped to increase prosperity in many nations, creating new export markets for America's goods and services in Europe, Asia and beyond.

## *Foreign Assistance Success Stories*

- **The U.S. Marshall Plan helped rebuild war-torn Europe into a democratic bulwark against the forces of tyranny.** As Europe lay devastated after World War II, the United States filled the vacuum with a major economic assistance program that succeeded in revitalizing the continent. Named after renowned general George Marshall, the plan allocated \$17 billion,

or \$160 billion in today's dollars, to rebuild Europe, leading former enemy regimes like Germany to become close allies of the United States with robust economic ties.

- **Thanks to U.S. efforts, South Korea is now a major donor of foreign aid and one of the top ten markets for U.S. exports.** Whereas Washington provided post-war South Korea with \$35 billion of foreign assistance in inflation-adjusted dollars in the last century, the United States now exports American goods and services worth nearly twice that amount on an annual basis.
- **U.S. economic and security aid has played a key role in bolstering Colombia's ability to combat the insurgent groups that threatened the existence of the government as recently as 2001.** Colombia's growing security and stability has helped turn the country into a market for American goods: Annual U.S. exports to Colombia have grown from roughly \$3.6 billion in 2000 to over \$18.6 billion in 2013. The United States invested some \$8 billion in combined economic and military assistance dollars to achieve this outcome.

# Intelligence

**The post-9/11 world requires robust U.S. intelligence programs that can respond effectively to the national security threats America faces.**

In 2013, former NSA contractor Edward Snowden leaked millions of documents that exposed key National Security Agency (NSA) surveillance programs aimed at fighting terrorism. Yet these programs, contrary to claims that they violate civil liberties, provide appropriate safeguards to protect Americans' privacy, and play a vital role in preventing terror attacks. Along with other key initiatives enacted after 9/11, they constitute the front line of America's defense.



## Key Points

- **Threats to U.S. national security throughout the world make robust intelligence programs more vital than ever.** The United States today faces new, emerging and longstanding challenges and threats that show no sign of abating, including violent extremism in the Middle East and North Africa, the rising imperialist powers of Russia and China, nuclear proliferation in Iran and North Korea, and human and narcotic trafficking from Latin America. Intelligence programs play a decisive role in ensuring that policymakers possess the information they need to respond to such threats.
- **The United States should stop subjecting the intelligence budget to devastating cuts.** "We're cutting real capability and accepting greater risk," Director of National Intelligence James Clapper said in April 2013. "For intelligence, this is not quite like shorter hours for public parks or longer lines at the airports. For intelligence, it's insidious." After the shock of 9/11 and the passage of the PATRIOT Act, the United States invested heavily in intelligence programs to help avert future attacks. Yet the absence of another attack since then hardly means the threats have diminished.
- **The NSA's use of telephone metadata to track terrorists is an essential counterterrorism measure that has saved countless lives.** Contrary to popular belief, the NSA's telephone surveillance program includes a wide range of oversight measures to protect the privacy of Americans, and has operated under intensive scrutiny from the legislative, executive and judicial branches since its inception in 2006. Authorized under Section 215 of the PATRIOT Act, the program has disrupted 12 terror attacks inside the United States, including the plot of Najibullah Zazi, a Colorado man who planned to attack the New York City subway in collaboration with Pakistani-based extremists.
- **The NSA's PRISM surveillance program, which provides access to the data of leading U.S. Internet companies, including Google and Facebook, has provided key insights into terrorist networks.** Like the telephone metadata program, PRISM receives significant oversight from the three branches of government to prevent potential abuse. The program, initiated in 2008 under the authorization of Section 702 of the FISA Amendments Act, has yielded vital information about the actions and communications of terrorist groups and proliferators of weapons of mass destruction.



# Trade

**Free trade is integral to sustaining and growing America's economic prosperity.** By opening foreign markets for U.S. goods and services, free trade also helps the United States advance its core national security interests and its values by strengthening ties with traditional democratic allies and emerging strategic partners. Protectionist policies ultimately hurt U.S. interests, particularly given that 95 percent of the world's consumers live outside U.S. borders.



## **Key Points**

- **Free trade is essential for the success of the U.S. economy.** More than 50 million Americans work for companies that engage in international trade, according to the Department of Treasury. Moreover, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce notes that international markets represent 80 percent of the world's purchasing power, 92 percent of its economic growth, and 95 percent of its consumers.
- **Congress should reauthorize Trade Promotion Authority (TPA), or "fast-track" authority as it is frequently called, to help advance job-creating trade agreements.** Previous "fast-track" authority—which expired in 2007—had authorized the President to enter into trade agreements with foreign nations and required lawmakers to vote on those agreements, without amendments, within 90 days of being submitted to Congress.
- **Trade agreements with the Asia-Pacific and Europe will create new export opportunities and jobs for U.S. companies by reducing foreign trade and investment barriers.** The Asia-Pacific region is home to some of the world's most dynamic economies. The Department of State noted in September 2013: "Over the next two decades, it is forecast that nearly 50 percent of world growth will be generated in the Asia-Pacific region, yielding almost one billion new middle class consumers."
- **The United States should successfully conclude negotiations for the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade agreement, which would eliminate barriers to foreign trade and investment among certain countries in the Americas and the Asia-Pacific.** The TPP is a proposed trade pact among 12 countries—the United States, Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Chile, Canada, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, and Vietnam—that would eliminate tariff and non-tariff barriers against member states. The accord would promote the economic growth of partner countries while strengthening America's trade presence in the region. The Peterson Institute, a nonpartisan research group, estimates that the U.S. economy could gain \$78 billion annually under the TPP.
- **The United States should successfully conclude negotiations for the proposed Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) agreement, which would reduce tariffs and streamline regulations in the United States and European Union.** Already, the United States and the 28-member European Union (EU) have the largest bilateral trade relationship in the world, accounting for 54 percent of global GDP in terms of value and 40 percent of GDP in terms of purchasing power. Indeed, the United States ships more than \$730 million in goods to European markets every day. A 2013 report published by the Atlantic Council, Bertelsmann Foundation, and the British Embassy in Washington estimates TTIP could create thousands of U.S. jobs and add billions to the U.S. economy annually.





## **II. Challenges and Opportunities**



# Afghanistan

**Terrorist and insurgent groups in and around Afghanistan continue to pose a direct threat to U.S. security interests in the region.** It is U.S. policy in

Afghanistan to deny al-Qaeda a safe haven and to prevent the Taliban from gaining the ability to overthrow the Afghan government. Although peaceful elections occurred in 2014 and Afghan forces have taken the lead role in securing the country, there are still challenges that need to be addressed. Taliban fighters can still wage fierce offensives, while al-Qaeda is still present in the country and along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border. The re-emergence of these militants can disrupt the progress the U.S. has made so far and threaten our troops and interests in the region.



**The security and stability of Afghanistan require a continued long-term commitment by the United States as the Afghan people continue their struggle against the Taliban and al-Qaeda.** The U.S. needs to keep supporting the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) through combat training and providing military equipment as America's drawdown continues through 2015. In addition, the U.S. should cooperate with its allies and partners to ensure that a democratic transition of power occurs.

## Key Points

- **The United States has a vital national security interest in ensuring that Afghanistan never again becomes a safe haven for terrorists like those who perpetrated the 9/11 attacks.** International disengagement from Afghanistan in the 1990s contributed to the country becoming a “failed state”—one that eventually became a Taliban-dominated safe haven for al-Qaeda. Today, failure to assist Afghanistan in its gradual assumption of sole responsibility for its security will only increase the danger of attacks on America's homeland.
- **The formation of a national unity government in September 2014 provides a new opportunity for improved U.S.-Afghan relations after the contentious leadership of former President Hamid Karzai.** The new leaders, President Ashraf Ghani and chief executive Abdullah Abdullah, have signed a Bilateral Security Agreement with the United States—opposed by Karzai—that will allow 9,800 American forces to stay in Afghanistan past 2014. The United States should now pursue active diplomatic engagement with the unity government in order to advance their mutual interests, including defeating the Taliban, improving the Afghan economy, and ensuring that Afghanistan does not become a failed state.
- **The Afghan National Security Forces are now successfully protecting its own people and maintaining the gains made by the U.S. and other countries represented in the International Security Assistance Force. However, challenges remain.** The United States and its allies have been training and funding the Afghan forces for years to allow for a successful exchange of responsibility in protecting the Afghan people. The progress made thus far in Afghanistan should not be rolled back due to a feckless drawdown, but instead will require U.S. assistance well beyond 2014 to prevent insurgents from reclaiming large amounts of territory.
- **Ensuring success in Afghanistan by thwarting the resilience of the Taliban requires the assistance of the Pakistani government.** Members of the Taliban hide out in neighboring Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATAs), where there is little initiative by the Pakistani government to take action against them. Pakistan's assistance in disrupting the Taliban's activities through counterinsurgency operations is necessary for America's strategy in Afghanistan.



# China

**China's military build-up, fueled by years of double-digit percentage increases to its budget and its increasingly obstructionist and destabilizing foreign policy, has raised concerns throughout the Asia-Pacific region and the world.** It is clear that the United States and China differ on a wide range of economic, diplomatic, security, and human rights issues. A strategy of engagement, by itself, cannot completely bridge these differences. Instead, Washington should articulate, clearly and publicly, an integrated long-term strategy toward China that advances America's core values and interests—one that not only emphasizes U.S. commitment to its allies and partners in the Asia-Pacific, but also supports Chinese dissidents, Christians, Tibetans, and Uighurs in their continuing struggle for human rights and dignity.



## **Key Points**

- **China's increasingly assertive foreign policy has raised concerns throughout the region and the world.** Beijing has blocked U.N. Security Council action against Iran's nuclear activities and Syria's atrocities against its own people. It has refused to exert significant pressure on North Korea, even when Pyongyang takes provocative actions regarding its nuclear weapons and missile programs. Beijing targets Taiwan with missiles, and is embroiled with neighbors in territorial disputes in the Western Pacific and South China Sea.
- **China has waged an increasingly aggressive cyber espionage campaign against the U.S. government and U.S. businesses.** Whereas most nations conduct cyber espionage campaigns for national security reasons, Beijing also wages economic cyber espionage to benefit Chinese businesses. "No one is doing it on the scale that the Chinese are doing it," said General Michael Hayden, former director of the Central Intelligence Agency and the National Security Agency, in March 2014. "As a professional intelligence officer, I just stand back in awe at the depth, breadth and persistence of the Chinese espionage effort against the West and the United States."
- **The Obama administration's so-called "pivot" or "rebalance" to the Asia-Pacific should be accompanied by policies that reassure Asian allies about America's ability to deter potential Chinese aggression.** Washington should now bolster economic and diplomatic ties with longstanding regional allies, engage emerging partners, and expand both security dialogues and military exercises with like-minded partners. The United States should also ensure that its defense budget allocates the necessary resources for a robust presence in the region.
- **The United States should continue its long-standing support for Taiwan.** The Obama administration's decision not to sell Taiwan new model F-16 C/Ds fighters raised doubts about America's commitment to its longtime ally. Because the Chinese military is rapidly overshadowing Taiwanese capabilities, Washington should immediately begin discussions regarding selling Taiwan the F-35—an advanced 5th generation U.S.-built fighter—and explore other means to bolster the island nation's defensive capabilities.
- **U.S. policy also should seek to help Japan and other Asian allies balance against China's increasingly assertive foreign policy and growing military might.** Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said in May 2014 that China has attempted "to change the status quo through force and coercion," and that the reaffirmation of the U.S.-Japanese alliance was the

“cornerstone for regional peace and stability.” To deter this threat, the United States should pursue increased arms sales to Japan as well as Taiwan, South Korea, Australia, and India.

- **The United States should elevate its call for Chinese leaders to respect the human rights of all of its citizens and embrace democratic values anchored in the rule of law.** In China today, open political discussion is repressed and freedom of religion stifled. In response, the U.S. should: (1) speak out against Chinese human rights abuses in every available forum; (2) establish linkage between U.S. policy toward China and its human rights behavior; (3) recognize that the best solution to Chinese behavior is China's eventual democratization; and (4) expose the connection between the nature of China's communist regime and its behavior at home and abroad.
- **The United States and India, which feels increasingly threatened by China's aggressive posture in the region, should reinvigorate their partnership on a wide range of strategic issues.** Both democracies are bound together by increasingly shared values, face major terrorist threats, and stand to reap great benefits from deeper cooperation on economic, diplomatic, and security fronts. Since 2000, the United States and India have maintained a landmark civil nuclear cooperation agreement, broadened bilateral relations, and expanded security cooperation and defense trade. Most notably, free flows of trade and investment reached unprecedented levels.
- **As appropriate, the United States should seek solutions to major international issues without China.** For example, multiparty talks that included China (and Russia) in theory seemed like a promising method to deal with Iran, North Korea, and Syria. In practice, however, they have served as another mechanism by which China (and Russia) continues to resist efforts to compel their client states. The United States, working with democratic allies, should seek other avenues, including multilateral arrangements without Beijing, to impair these rogue regimes' capabilities.
- **The fact that the United States and China are tied together economically should not hinder efforts to ensure that American businesses are treated fairly.** China's economic growth and huge population offer tremendous opportunity for U.S. businesses. At the same time, Chinese companies should operate in a transparent fashion and Beijing should allow its currency to float and reflect its market value. Beijing should also enforce the intellectual property rights of U.S. firms. However, it would be a mistake to impose U.S. tariffs on Chinese imports. President Obama has rightly refused to support such a policy, given the likelihood that it could lead to a trade war.

# Democracy in the Middle East

**After decades of authoritarian rule in the Middle East and North Africa, the region's waves of mass protest movements beginning in 2010 gave hope to populations choked by political repression, economic stagnation, and widespread corruption.**

The Arab Spring offered the region an opportunity to establish democratic governments anchored in the rule of law and respect for human rights, though recent events in Iraq, Syria, Egypt, Yemen, and Libya raise questions whether its great promise will be fulfilled. The United States should support the Arab countries in political transition, and encourage and incentivize reform in others. Although there will be further challenges and setbacks as these nations evolve at different paces, the United States should aid and empower the democratization process as much as possible as the best guarantor of long-term regional stability.



## **Key Points**

- **From its beginnings in Tunisia, the Arab Spring rapidly spread throughout the region.** When a Tunisian street vendor set himself on fire to protest harassment from authorities and the unlawful seizure of his cart, he triggered a wave of demonstrations throughout the region, leading to the fall of regimes in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Yemen, as well as significant instability and violence in Morocco, Algeria, Jordan, Bahrain and Syria. The monarchs of Jordan and Morocco have responded with limited political reforms, while other leaders have sought to retain their grip on power by force and brutally crushed dissent.
- **Decades of authoritarian rule in the Middle East and North Africa have produced a stagnant political and economic culture characterized by rampant corruption, political oppression, high unemployment, and anti-Americanism.** Islamic extremists have exploited this environment to gain support, particularly among the region's disaffected youth. Rampant unemployment and the lack of peaceful political outlets combine to provide fertile ground for extremists, who promote a message of violence against authoritarian regimes and their international supporters—including the United States.
- **The long-term success of democratic and economic reform is a key antidote to Islamic extremism.** Indeed, the bipartisan *9/11 Commission Report* noted the importance of broader cultural change in the region in countering Islamic extremism: "Tolerance, the rule of law, political and economic openness, the extension of greater opportunities to women—these cures must come from within Muslim societies themselves. The United States must support such developments."
- **Elections alone do not produce a democracy.** While multiple countries in the Middle East and North Africa have held elections since 2010, it is important to remember that elections—by themselves—do not produce democracy. As President Obama said in his 2009 speech in Cairo, "No matter where it takes hold, government of the people and by the people sets a single standard for all who hold power: you must maintain your power through consent, not coercion; you must respect the rights of minorities, and participate with a spirit of tolerance and compromise; you must place the interests of your people and the legitimate workings of the political process above your party. Without these ingredients, elections alone do not make true democracy."

- **Tunisia has made historic political progress since 2010, passing the most liberal constitution in the Arab world in early 2014 and implementing one of the first peaceful transfers of power in an Arab democracy.** The United States can reward this progress and sustain it by increasing bilateral and international economic and security assistance to Tunisia, announcing its intent to sign a bilateral Free Trade Agreement, and working with the Tunisian government to build democratic and accountable institutions.
- **In Egypt, President Abdul Fattah al-Sisi's repressive rule has ended hopes for a democratic transition.** Al-Sisi, the former head of Egypt's armed forces, played a key role in ousting the Muslim Brotherhood from power, and the Egyptian security services since then have killed more than 2,000 of its citizens and imprisoned tens of thousands more. Al-Sisi has also restricted basic political freedoms, including freedom of the press, assembly, and association, while attacking the ability of civil society organizations to operate.
- **In Bahrain, a minority Sunni regime continues to deny basic political rights to a majority Shiite population.** Three years after the popular uprising began against the government, frustration with the lack of progress has led to the emergence of violent groups that attack government security forces. The regime, meanwhile, has imprisoned even more peaceful dissidents and failed to implement the majority of reforms mandated by the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry (BICI). While the government has announced dialogue with members of the opposition on several occasions, the effort has yet to produce meaningful reform.
- **Washington's effective abandonment of Libya after NATO successfully overthrew the Qaddafi regime in 2011 has led to chaos.** Three years after Qaddafi's ouster, the country has gradually slid toward civil war as fragmented militias seek to seize control by force. In one notable sign of Libya's anarchy, a group of Islamic radicals stormed the U.S. Consulate in Benghazi in September 2012 and murdered U.S. Ambassador Christopher Stevens and three other Americans. The subsequent withdrawal of U.S. and international diplomats from Libya left the international community unable to adequately support the country's political transition.
- **It is unfortunate that President Obama has "led from behind" and repeatedly failed to grasp the opportunities presented by democratic movements in the Middle East.** Reformers in the Middle East and North Africa should be able to rely on U.S. support in their struggle against authoritarianism.

# Europe and NATO

**As rogue states continue to pursue dangerous weapons, terrorists seek to disrupt our way of life, and America is confronted by new and resurgent powers, it remains vital that the United States and its European allies work together closely.** NATO—a

transatlantic military alliance composed of democratic nations with shared values—has defended the free world and its values in locales as varied as Libya and Afghanistan. While U.S. allies continue to provide crucially important support for critical NATO missions, the overall low level of

defense contributions by NATO members undermine the alliance's ability to confront the threats of tomorrow, and are already hampering current operations.



## **Key Points**

- **A strong NATO alliance strengthens U.S. security.** Europe's periphery is immediately surrounded by areas of instability and emerging threats—namely, the Middle East and North Africa. A unified and highly capable NATO is more likely to deter aggressors and deal successfully with future security challenges than a NATO that is politically divided and militarily weak.
- **The recent commitment by NATO members to increase their defense expenditures marks an important step in strengthening the alliance's ability to confront threats.** At the 2014 NATO summit in Wales, NATO members pledged to halt declines in defense expenditures, commit at least 2 percent of GDP to defense, and increase defense expenditures over time in accordance with GDP growth. Such steps would help counterbalance the U.S. contribution, which amounts to 73 percent today—up from 50 percent a mere decade ago.
- **The United States and NATO members in Europe should restore appropriate funding levels to their respective defense budgets.** Hostile regimes did not disappear after the Cold War but rather fragmented into new dangers. Thus, strategic thinking and budgetary decisions should focus on rebuilding air, land, and sea forces to meet current and future threats.
- **President Obama's attempt to “reset” relations with Russia in his first term alienated American allies in Europe.** By moving strategically closer to Russia, a step President Obama complemented by abandoning the Bush administration's plan for a missile defense program in Europe, the United States harmed its relations with European allies. Many of these countries—including Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Bulgaria and Georgia—had contributed significantly to the missions in Iraq and Afghanistan.
- **America should voice support for European democrats as they continue to fight against authoritarianism.** For example, Alexander Lukashenko's regime in Belarus—Europe's last dictatorship—continues to crack down on dissent, human rights, and freedom of the press. The United States and the European Union should continue to embrace a vision of a Europe whole and free, and pursue policies that draw Minsk and Kiev into the West.
- **U.S. forces stationed in Europe train and build the military capacity of allies—which, in turn, are better able to cooperate with America in military operations and other collective actions.** As a result of military-to-military cooperation, America's European allies are continuing to play key roles in meeting regional and global security challenges. For example, some 90 percent of the 40,000 non-American troops serving in Afghanistan come from Europe.



# Global War on Terror

**Terror groups continue to pose serious threats to America's national security and international interests.** Al-Qaeda's surprise terror attacks on 9/11 overturned America's state-centric view of the global threat environment. 9/11 showed how a small yet fanatically determined group of terrorists can ruthlessly exploit a democracy's openness and infrastructure to kill civilians and inflict disastrous levels of damage. Since then, the United States has thwarted some 60 attempted terror attacks on the homeland.



**The threat of terrorism in the 21st century requires America not only to strengthen its homeland defense, but also to stay on the offense internationally.** The United States needs to keep disrupting, degrading, and destroying terror networks in Afghanistan and Pakistan, in the Middle East and Africa, in Southeast Asia and elsewhere, while at the same time globally promoting human rights, representative democracy, accountable governance, and economic development to isolate terrorists and deny them safe haven.

*For information about ISIS, please see page 33.*

## Key Points

- **While al-Qaeda's "core" has suffered serious setbacks in recent years—including the killing of Osama bin Laden in Pakistan by U.S. Navy SEALs in May 2011—it is premature to say that al-Qaeda is defeated.** Al-Qaeda's terror threat has morphed from a core group of terrorists into a complex network of terrorist affiliates and associated movements all over the world. As terrorism expert Katherine Zimmerman of the American Enterprise Institute warned in a September 2013 study: "Al Qaeda affiliates have evolved and now threaten the United States as much as (if not more than) the core group; they can no longer be dismissed as mere local al Qaeda franchises."
- **A major threat in the new terror network is al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), a Sunni Islamist terror affiliate that operates from a safe haven in Yemen.** U.S. Director of National Intelligence James R. Clapper warned Congress in January 2014 that AQAP "has attempted several times to attack the U.S. Homeland." As the U.S. National Counterterrorism Center elaborates: "One of the most notable of these operations occurred when AQAP dispatched Nigerian-born Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, who attempted to detonate an explosive device aboard a Northwest Airlines flight on 25 December 2009—the first attack inside the United States by an al-Qa'ida affiliate since 11 September 2001. That was followed by an attempted attack in which explosive-laden packages were sent to the United States on 27 October 2010."
- **Al-Qaeda-affiliated terrorists in Syria pose growing threats to U.S. homeland security.** The recent air strikes on the "Khorasan Group" of al-Qaeda veterans in Syria demonstrate that terrorists in that conflict intend to strike the United States. In February 2014, Secretary of Homeland Security Jeh Johnson warned, "Syria has become a matter of homeland security." In May 2014, FBI Director James Comey cautioned that the potential terror threat from Syria is "an order of magnitude worse" than Afghanistan in the 1980s and 1990s, and could lead to another attack on the U.S. homeland.
- **In Africa, al-Qaeda terror affiliates are seizing opportunities to destabilize weak governments and to create safe havens, and could pose greater threats to U.S. national security and**

**international interests.** As Army General David M. Rodriguez, who heads the U.S. military's Africa Command (USAFRICOM), recently told Congress: "Al-Qa'ida affiliate al-Shabaab remains a persistent threat in Somalia and East Africa." He added: "Al-Qa'ida affiliates and adherents operating in North and West Africa include al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Magreb (AQIM), Ansar al-Shari'a in Benghazi, Ansar al-Shari'a in Darnah, Ansar al-Shari'a in Tunisia, and Moktar Belmoktur's al-Mulatheameem Brigade, which has morphed into al-Murabitum." In a February 2014 speech, General James Amos, Commandant of the Marine Corps, stressed the necessity of combating the rise of terrorism in Africa: "You could turn your back on that part of the world, but you would rue the day you had. ... Those kinds of threats will find their way around the world, and in some major cities of the world."

- **While the broader al-Qaeda network poses the most immediate set of threats to the United States and its overseas interests, U.S. officials still worry that al-Qaeda's "core" could someday try to mount a comeback.** U.S. Director of National Intelligence James R. Clapper recently told Congress in a prepared statement, "Sustained counterterrorism (CT) pressure, key organizational setbacks, and the emergence of other power centers of the global violent extremist movement have put core al-Qa'ida on a downward trajectory since 2008." However, he warned that al-Qaeda's core "probably hopes for a resurgence following the drawdown of US troops in Afghanistan in 2014."
- **The United States should stay on the offensive against terrorists and use all instruments of national power—including defense, diplomacy, and global development—to combat them.** The continuing goal should be to isolate, disrupt, and defeat terrorists who seek to attack America's homeland and international interests. The United States should use a broad array of tools, including diplomatic and economic initiatives, the PATRIOT Act, National Security Agency (NSA) terrorist surveillance programs, and overt and covert military operations. The United States should hold accountable foreign governments that give terrorists safe havens or other support.
- **The United States also should focus on the vast majority of Muslims who are peaceful and seek a better future for themselves and their families.** America should work with reformers in the Muslim world who want to build free, pluralistic, and prosperous societies, and marginalize the message and appeal of extremist Islamist ideologies. As the bipartisan *9/11 Commission Report* noted: "Tolerance, the rule of law, political and economic openness, the extension of greater opportunities to women—these cures must come from within Muslim societies themselves. The United States must support such developments."

# Iran

**The Islamic Republic of Iran—a revolutionary regime that the U.S. State Department first designated a “state sponsor of terrorism” in 1984—poses grave threats to the United States and its allies.**

## Key Points

### *Iran's Growing Nuclear Threat*

- **Iran, in violation of its international obligations, is pursuing the capability to make nuclear weapons on short notice.** In August 2002, international inspectors first learned that Iran secretly had pursued weapons-relevant nuclear activities for nearly two decades. Although the U.N. Security Council has passed six legally binding resolutions since 2006 demanding that Iran verifiably halt uranium enrichment and other sensitive nuclear activities, Iran has refused to comply. With nearly 20,000 enrichment centrifuges and large inventories of enriched uranium, Iran now has the potential to make high-enriched uranium for a nuclear weapon in as few as six-to-eight weeks.
- **The United States and its partners have repeatedly tried using diplomacy to persuade Iran to abandon its dangerous nuclear ambitions.** In 2005, the European Union offered to give Iran supplies of nuclear fuel and cooperation on a variety of political, economic and security issues in exchange for Iran's commitment not to pursue its nuclear activities for 10 years. In June 2006, the U.N. Security Council's five permanent members proposed a long-term agreement that mirrored the EU's earlier deal, but also offered to jointly build light water reactors in Iran and give Tehran strong economic cooperation in civil aviation, telecommunications, and other sectors. Iran, however, rejected all of these diplomatic offers.
- **In response to Iran's repeated refusal to comply with U.N. Security Council resolutions, the U.S. and its partners have used economic sanctions to pressure Iran to reverse its nuclear drive.** By late 2013, U.S.-led international sanctions had cut Iran's exports of crude oil from roughly 2.5 million barrels per day in 2012 to as low as 750,000 barrels per day. The sanctions had also reduced Iran's foreign exchange reserves to as low as \$80 billion. Moreover, they helped boost Iran's annual inflation rate to 40 percent, while also shrinking Iran's economy by roughly 5 percent in 2012 and again in 2013.
- **While U.S.-led international sanctions forced Iran back to the negotiating table, the United States and its partners agreed to an interim deal with Iran that will expire in November 2014.** While the interim deal requires America and the EU to begin dismantling sanctions against Iran, it does not require Iran to dismantle a single centrifuge, ship abroad a single kilogram of partially enriched uranium, or begin dismantling the Arak heavy water reactor, which a former Obama administration official called a “plutonium bomb factory.” Rather, the interim deal requires Iran only to reversibly convert some of its enriched uranium into an oxide form that creates minor technical hurdles to further enrichment, while still allowing Iran to enrich uranium at lower levels of purity and retain Arak.
- **No deal with Iran is better than a bad deal that fails to credibly roll back Iran's growing nuclear threat.** If a final nuclear agreement allows Iran to retain a nuclear weapons-making capability, it will likely weaken U.S. alliances and partnerships in the Middle East. For example, Saudi Arabia and other partners in the Gulf may move to acquire their own rapid nuclear weapons-making capabilities, or Israel may feel compelled to use military force to roll back Iran's nuclear weapons capability.



## *Iran's Support to Terrorists and Other Terror-Sponsoring Regimes*

- **The elite Qods Force of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC-QF) trains, arms, and assists extremists in the Middle East and other regions.** As the U.S. Treasury Department reported: "The IRGC-QF is the Government of Iran's primary arm for executing its policy of supporting terrorist and insurgent groups." In another report, Treasury elaborated: "The Qods Force ... provides material support to the Taliban, Lebanese Hizballah, Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command."
- **Iranian government forces continue to plan and orchestrate international acts of terrorism.** In October 2011, U.S. officials uncovered an Iranian terror plot to kill the ambassador of Saudi Arabia to the United States. In May 2012, Azerbaijan officials disrupted an alleged Iranian plot to attack U.S. and Israeli officials on their soil. In July 2012, Israel accused Iran and terrorist proxy Hezbollah of orchestrating an attack against Israeli tourists in Bulgaria that killed five and wounded dozens. In December 2013, Hezbollah was suspected to be behind a powerful car bomb that killed former Lebanese finance minister Mohamad Chatah.
- **Iran and Hezbollah, along with Russia, continue to provide financial and military support to the regime of Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad.** Like Iran, the Assad regime is a U.S.-designated state sponsor of terrorism. As Secretary of State John Kerry said last year: "Iranians are on the ground, and Iran is actively helping to support Hezbollah, which, as we all know, is a surrogate working with Iran, and they are contributing significantly to this violence. ... There are several thousands of Hezbollah militia forces on the ground in Syria who are contributing to this violence."

## *Iran's Internal Oppression*

- **Iran's widespread violations of human rights have not slowed under President Hassan Rouhani.** The U.S. State Department noted in 2013: "The most egregious human rights problems were the government's severe limitations on citizens' right to peacefully change their government through free and fair elections; restrictions on civil liberties, including the freedoms of assembly, speech, and press; and the government's disregard for the physical integrity of persons whom it arbitrarily and unlawfully killed, tortured, and imprisoned."
- **Freedom House's 2014 report *Freedom in the World* rated Iran "not free."** The report states: "Freedom of expression is severely limited. The government directly controls all television and radio broadcasting. ... Censorship, both official and self-imposed, is widespread, and cooperation with Persian-language satellite news channels based abroad is banned. ... The Press Supervisory Board has extensive power to prosecute journalists for such vaguely worded offenses as 'mutiny against Islam,' 'insulting legal or real persons who are lawfully respected,' and 'propaganda against the regime.'"

# Iraq

**U.S. strategic interests in Iraq remain as vital as ever, and a failure to address them could prove disastrous.**

Though major combat operations in Iraq concluded three years ago, U.S. interests in the country have not declined. With the rapid growth of ISIS, Iraq is a key strategic nexus in the global war on terror whose internal strife poses a threat to the region and global stability. Moreover, with continued tensions between its Sunni, Shiite, and Kurdish populations, and the election of new Prime Minister Haider Al-Abadi, Iraq also remains an important test for democracy in the region and of America's commitment to its defense. U.S. failure to address these problems would prove disastrous for America, Iraq and the wider region.



**The establishment of a new government under Prime Minister Haidar al-Abadi provides the United States with a new opportunity to engage Iraq and support a political agreement that restores stability and reduces Iran's influence in the country.**

## **KEY POINTS**

### *A Growing Crisis*

- **The level of violence in Iraq has increased significantly since the United States withdrew troops in 2011.** There was widespread understanding among U.S. military and administration officials, as well as with their Iraqi counterparts, that an American military presence in Iraq beyond 2011 would be required to maintain the security achievements. Instead, security in the country deteriorated as then-Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki purged Sunni leaders from the government and military, while extremists exploited grievances in the Sunni community. As a result, June 2014 was the deadliest month in Iraq since 2007, with some 2,500 civilians killed.
- **ISIS seeks the overthrow of the Iraqi government.** Brett McGurk, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Iran and Iraq, finds that the ISIS attacks on Iraq are "calculated, coordinated, and part of a strategic campaign led by its Syria-based leader" with a "stated objective to cause the collapse of the Iraqi state and carve out a zone of governing control in the western regions of Iraq and eastern Syria."
- **Iran is exploiting the ISIS insurgency to expand its influence in Iraq.** Iran has spent much of the post-2003 reconstruction period attempting to influence or intimidate Baghdad by arming and aiding Shia sectarian militias. Qassem Suleimani, the head of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps' elite Qods Force, has been seen in Iraq over the summer of 2014 coordinating with Shiite militias. This Iranian role is poisonous to reconciliation between Baghdad and Iraq's Sunni population, and Tehran views this conflict as an opportunity to further its goal of dominating the Middle East.

### *A Weak Iraqi Government*

- **Strong doubts remain about the capability and resolve of the Iraqi military to combat ISIS and other extremists.** In June 2014, Iraqi forces, trained and outfitted over the previous decade by the U.S. military, reportedly abandoned their posts and equipment as ISIS advanced on cities such as Mosul. To date, the Kurdish *peshmerga* remains one of the few forces fighting in Iraq that is both effective and friendly to U.S. interests.
- **New Iraqi Prime Minister Haidar al-Abadi will need to overcome the legacy of former Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki in order to succeed.** General Martin Dempsey, Chairman of the U.S.

Joint Chiefs of Staff, said that Iraqi military and police personnel had “simply lost faith that the central government in Iraq [under al-Maliki] was dealing with the entire population in a fair, equitable way that provided hope for all of them.” This legacy greatly reduces the fighting capability of Iraq’s military, which the United States is relying upon to win the war against ISIS.

- **Sunni minorities in particular have been repeatedly alienated by the policies of the central Iraqi government.** Reports suggest that former Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki has largely excluded Sunni Iraqis from participating within the Iraqi Security Forces. Al-Maliki also promoted sectarian loyalists over capable and apolitical military officers, a legacy that still undermines the credibility of the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF).
- **The fall of the Iraqi government would threaten the American economy.** According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration, “Tensions in Iraq were the primary driver of the crude oil price increase in mid-June.” At 3.3 million barrels of crude oil per day, Iraq is the third-largest producer of the OPEC nations, and the *Financial Times* estimates that if Baghdad were to fall to ISIS, then crude oil could rise by as much as \$50 per barrel. The Congressional Budget Office has estimated that a sustained price of \$150 per barrel would result in a 0.5-1 percent reduction in GDP.

# ISIS

**The rising power of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) directly threatens the United States.** Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the ISIS leader, has publicly stated that ISIS seeks direct confrontation with America. Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel describes ISIS as a force that is sophisticated, dynamic, strong, organized, and well-financed. To defeat this threat, the United States should adopt a three-pronged approach: (1) defeat and destroy ISIS as an organization; (2) restore stability to Iraq; and, (3) bring about a post-Assad Syria that is free of terror.



## KEY POINTS

### *U.S. Strategy*

- **President Obama's strategy for combating ISIS relies on the use of airstrikes and rules out any ground troops, which military leaders say are critical to defeating the organization.** Obama has stated that the United States "will not get dragged into another ground war in Iraq." But many military leaders, including General Ray Odierno, the Army Chief of Staff, and General Lloyd Austin, the Commander of U.S. forces in the Middle East, have stated that ground forces will be necessary to destroy ISIS. The Obama administration cannot expect to achieve its objectives in Iraq and Syria if it fails to devote the necessary resources.
- **The United States should provide robust military support to the moderate Syrian opposition to advance its fight against ISIS and the Assad regime.** Former U.S. Ambassador to Syria Robert Ford said in June 2014: "We need and we have long needed to help moderates in the Syrian opposition with both weapons and other nonlethal assistance. Had we done that a couple of years ago, had we ramped it up, frankly, the al-Qaeda groups that have been winning adherents would have been unable to compete with the moderates."
- **ISIS is not merely a terrorist group, but has many attributes of a state.** Secretary of State John Kerry has categorized the U.S. mission in Iraq and Syria as a "counterterrorism operation of a significant order." However, as Jessica Lewis of the Institute for the Study of War has found, "ISIS is no longer a mere terrorist organization, but one that operates like an army. ... This is no longer a war of ideas against an extremist group with sparse networks, flashy strategic messaging, and limited technical offensive capability. It is necessary to avoid framing a U.S. counter-terrorism strategy to defeat ISIS as if it were."

### *The Threat*

- **ISIS and other extremist groups are training American and European citizens to bring the war to the U.S. homeland.** FBI Director James Comey called ISIS a "top threat," adding that American citizens are travelling to Syria to radicalize before "coming home." American intelligence officials believe there are already more than 100 American citizens fighting in Syria. The CIA estimates that as of September 2014, anywhere between 20,000 and 31,500 fighters from throughout the world have joined ISIS. House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Ed Royce stated last year, "ISIS has reportedly been actively recruiting individuals capable of traveling to the U.S. to carry-out attacks."
- **ISIS has created a self-sustaining financial system that relies on the sale of oil and local taxation instead of outside donations.** After taking oilfields in Iraq and Syria, ISIS is capable of producing approximately 80,000 barrels of oil per day. This oil is sold for an estimated \$3.2

million on a daily basis. ISIS also seized approximately \$425 million from a bank in Mosul, where they now allow Iraqi citizens to make withdrawals in exchange for a percentage of the transaction. Analysts at the RAND Corporation estimate that ISIS daily revenue consists of \$1-2 million, and may reap a surplus of \$200-300 million annually.

- **After capturing Mosul, ISIS has gained access to conventional military weapons, some of which were supplied to the Iraqi army by the United States.** Unlike other terrorist organizations, ISIS has approximately 40 Soviet-era battle tanks. ISIS is using captured Iraqi Humvees and heavy mortars in their campaign of terror, such as in the July 2014 assault on the Iraqi city of Tel Afar.
- **ISIS may have access to advanced artillery pieces and significant surface-to-air capabilities.** Recent military advances may provide ISIS with access to artillery systems with ranges up to 17 miles. The anti-aircraft capabilities of ISIS are similarly increased by the capture of cannons and missile systems that have the ability to shoot down American aircraft.

# Israel

**It is in America's interest to help ensure that Israel remains safe, strong, and secure.** The U.S.-Israel relationship is mutually beneficial, and vital to the preservation of a democratic ally facing extraordinary security challenges.

Israel faces threats not only from Hamas and Hezbollah, but also from Iran and Syria. In particular, Tehran continues to sponsor terrorism, and concerns over its nuclear program remain. Moreover, another resurgence of violence engulfed Israel and Hamas in the summer of 2014, and peace talks have collapsed.



## **Key Points**

- **U.S.-led peace talks in 2014 were unsuccessful.** A provision of the talks was the release of 104 Palestinian prisoners held by Israel in exchange for a halt in international recognition by the Palestinian Authority (PA) and their promise to maintain negotiations. Israel insisted it would not release the final round of prisoners until the Palestinian Authority agreed to extend negotiations. The PA refused this condition and Israel refused to release the prisoners in response. Then, the PA sought membership to United Nations agencies and treaties. Israel is opposed to international recognition for the PA, and suspended further negotiations in response to the move.
- **The United States opposes Palestinian membership in U.N. agencies and treaties.** In testimony before Congress in April 2014, U.N. Ambassador Samantha Power noted America's "firm opposition to any and all unilateral actions in the international arena, including on Palestinian statehood, that circumvent or prejudice the very outcomes that can only come about through a negotiated settlement." Such Palestinian maneuvers also endanger U.S. funding to U.N. agencies due to a law that states that funds should be denied to any organization granting the Palestine Liberation Organization "the same standing as member states."
- **The United States should monitor the new Hamas-Fatah coalition government.** The PA, led by Mahmoud Abbas, controls the West Bank. Hamas controls the Gaza Strip, refuses to recognize the State of Israel, and is considered a terrorist group by the United States and Israel. U.S. law prohibits aid from benefiting Hamas. By law, U.S. aid to the PA must also be suspended if it forms a unity government with Hamas.
- **Israel needs a Palestinian partner that is not only willing to negotiate sincerely, but also has the capacity to enforce an agreement that would provide both the Palestinian people with a demilitarized, independent state, and Israel with secure and defensible borders.** The Palestinians must have the ability to enforce a peace agreement for it to be successful. A divided Palestinian government that includes a terrorist group committed to Israel's destruction will make such enforcement extremely difficult.
- **Israeli leadership remains concerned about the threat posed by Iran's quest for a nuclear weapons-making capability.** Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu proclaimed that "the world became a more dangerous place" upon the November 2013 announcement of a nuclear deal with Iran. Israel is concerned about the easing of sanctions on Iran and the domestic enrichment provision contained in the deal. Israel maintains its threat of military action to prevent Iran from attaining a nuclear weapons capability.

- **In the West Bank, Palestinian security forces have worked closely with Israel to quell supporters of Hamas.** Israel and the PA have established a successful security cooperation strategy. Ensuring the security of Israel is vital for any peace deal and this measure is seen as one step in a positive direction.
- **Political and economic reforms should be initiated in the Palestinian territories.** Economic and civil development in the West Bank and Gaza has been hampered by corruption. Political and social reforms along with economic developments are viewed as necessary precursors to a lasting peace accord. A poll commissioned by the Washington Institute found, "Among West Bankers, 72 percent view 'corruption by Palestinian government officials' as a major problem; among Gazans, the proportion is 66 percent. Similarly, 77 percent of West Bankers and 71 percent of Gazans see local crime as a significant problem."

# Latin America

**America's inattention to Latin America has allowed foreign influence and instability to grow.** Latin America is important to U.S. national security and economic growth. Many democracies in the region face pressure from autocratic rulers, Venezuelan petrodollars, and complex criminal organizations financed by international crime and illicit drug trade.

**It is critical for Washington to do more to strengthen democratic institutions and deepen trade ties in the region.** The United States needs to have a larger presence in the region to ensure our security and economic interests.



## Key Points

- **The United States should increase its engagement and do more to secure democratic gains in the region.** As a result of the Obama administration's increasing neglect, support for Washington has diminished while Chinese, Iranian, and Venezuelan influence has grown. Past U.S. initiatives remain incomplete, and few new policy proposals have emerged from the current administration. Vice President Joe Biden's trip to Latin America in June 2014 is a small step of renewed focus to Latin America, but more needs to be done.
- **Latin America is integral to sustaining and growing America's economy.** Half of America's free-trade agreement partners are in Latin America and the region already represents an important export destination for U.S. companies. The U.S. Department of Commerce estimates that Latin America accounts for approximately 40 percent of U.S. exports. With the number of middle-class consumers across Latin America expected to rise significantly in the coming years, Washington should seek opportunities to further enhance this already robust trading relationship.
- **Complex criminal organizations financed by international crime and illicit drug trade pose a threat to key democratic partners in the region.** "Latin America is the most dangerous region in the world," states a recent study on global homicide by the U.N. Office on Drugs and Crime. Honduras has the highest homicide rate in the world, beating Iran and China. Increased drug-related violence in Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador has driven tens of thousands to flee to the U.S. and other countries. This influx of migrants is destabilizing the region. President Obama should do more to build the capacities of our neighbors who can benefit from more effective law enforcement and judicial institutions.
- **The Pacific Alliance, a regional trade bloc composed of Chile, Colombia, Mexico, and Peru, is a positive free-market alternative to the state-controlled economies in Cuba and Venezuela.** Pacific Alliance nations are democratic, share our political and economic values, and have existing free-trade agreements with the United States. The four economies represent approximately 40 percent of Latin America's economy, and each is projected to grow at a faster pace than Argentina, Brazil, or Venezuela in 2014 and 2015, according to the IMF.
- **The handpicked successor of Hugo Chavez, Nicolás Maduro, has silenced critics and violently suppressed political dissent.** In response to growing protests by Venezuelans against the country's deteriorating economic and social conditions, the Maduro government

arrested thousands of protestors, jailed opposition lawmakers, and used armed gangs and excessive force to terrorize the population. In May 2014, Human Rights Watch described “a pattern of serious abuse” and “strong evidence of serious human rights violations committed by Venezuelan security forces.”

- **The United States should support Mexico's comprehensive reforms.** Since taking office in 2013, Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto has adopted key reforms aimed at overhauling Mexico's banking, energy, and education sectors. Mexico is the second largest export market for U.S.-made goods and our third largest overall trading partner.
- **The United States should pursue greater cooperation with Brazil.** The relationship between the United States and Brazil deteriorated over revelations of the NSA's surveillance practices. Repairing relations with the largest democracy in the region is critical. The United States is Brazil's second-largest trading partner, and Brazil is the United State's ninth-largest trading partner.

# North Korea

**North Korea, the most repressive state in the world, remains a significant threat to the United States and the international community.** It is an illegal nuclear weapons state under the NPT, with plans to use its arsenal against the United States. North Korea supports the nuclear programs of other rogue states, and erodes safety and stability worldwide. While the United States and its allies continue to negotiate for North Korean disarmament, the Kim dynasty staunchly refuses to do so. For three generations, North Korea's dictators have failed to honor their obligations under international norms and laws.



**Years of failed attempts to curtail the behavior of this rogue state have underlined the need for a comprehensive reevaluation of U.S. policy toward North Korea.** The United States should increase its pressure to undermine and remove the regime of Kim Jong-Un. Attempts at negotiating in good faith with the North Korean regime continue to fail. A comprehensive strategy of economic, political, and military pressure is required to enact change within North Korea.

## Key Points

- **North Korea continues to develop and expand its nuclear arsenal.** North Korea conducted successful nuclear tests in 2006, 2009, and 2013. The extent of the North Korean nuclear program remains unknown, but North Korea is pursuing long-range missile capabilities.
- **North Korea has continually broken promises to shutter its nuclear program.** The 2002 discovery of North Korea's highly enriched uranium program marked a violation of the 1994 Agreed Framework between the United States and the regime. The subsequent six-party talks broke down in 2009 after international condemnation of North Korea's continued ballistic missile tests.
- **North Korea contributes substantially to global arms proliferation.** North Korea is a key supporter of Iran's nuclear program. North Korea and Iran are signatories to a September 2012 Scientific Cooperation Agreement, which is a means for proliferating nuclear technology between the two countries. North Korea signed a similar agreement with Syria in 2002. This agreement proved to be a large part of North Korea's clandestine efforts to build a nuclear reactor within Syria. Additionally, North Korea engages in arms deals with Cuba and Myanmar.
- **The regime of Kim Jung-Un is one of the most notoriously repressive in the world, and continually perpetrates human rights violations against its own citizens.** According to Human Rights Watch, "the government represses all forms of freedom of expression and opinion and does not allow any organized political opposition, independent media, free trade unions, civil society organizations, or religious freedom." Moreover, it is estimated that there are 80,000-120,000 people imprisoned in forced-labor camps who suffer from "induced starvation, little or no medical care, lack of proper housing and clothes, continuous mistreatment and torture by guards, and executions."
- **North Korea continues to threaten its southern neighbor.** A North Korean submarine sunk a South Korean patrol vessel in March of 2010, killing 46 sailors. On November 23, 2010, North Korea shelled the island of Yeonpyeong, killing two South Korean soldiers. North Korea has continually threatened South Korea and the United States, and has declared that the 1953 Korean War Armistice was "nullified."

- **North Korea conducts cyber attacks on the United States and its allies.** In 2004, North Korea launched a cyber attack against the U.S. Department of State. North Korea again attacked the United States in 2007 with a logic bomb. The sophistication of North Korea's cyber attacks is likely to rise over time.
- **North Korea is one of the most impoverished countries in the world.** More than half of the 24 million people living in North Korea are in extreme poverty. One-third of North Korea's children are stunted due to malnutrition, and the country's annual GDP ranks 198th in the world.
- **Successful dealings with North Korea require an updated approach from the United States.** U.S. policy toward North Korea for the past two decades has been rooted in *quid pro quo* agreements in which the U.S. promised aid in exchange for North Korean good behavior. Unfortunately, North Korea has failed to change its policies. Instead of further bilateral deals, the U.S. should lead an international effort to undermine the stability of the regime by freezing Pyongyang's financial assets abroad; pressuring China to stop supporting the regime; opposing North Korea's sale of conventional arms, ballistic missile and nuclear technology; increasing efforts to help North Korean escapees; and improving broadcasts into the country to inspire the population against the regime.

# Russia

**Russia's actions in Ukraine and around the world undermine regional and global stability, and reflect efforts by the Kremlin to reinstate Russia as a dominant regional hegemon.** Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea in March 2014, like its 2008 invasion of Georgia, demonstrates Moscow's willingness to use force in order to expand its sphere of influence. Russia is also actively challenging the role of the United States in Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East, and continues to oppress its own people. The United States should oppose such aggression and make tangible commitments to the defense of our allies in Eastern Europe in order to deter further Russian expansionism.



## **Key Points**

### *Russia's Domestic and Regional Aggression*

- **Despite a September 2014 cease-fire, Russia continues its aggression against Ukraine and its support for pro-Russian separatists.** After the declaration of the cease-fire, Russia withdrew most of its forces from Ukraine. Yet pro-Russian forces have repeatedly violated the cease-fire and continued to engage Ukrainian forces from within and across the border. Sanctions imposed by the United States and Europe have failed to sway the Kremlin's policies.
- **The United States and our allies should strongly support the independence and sovereignty of the democratic states on Russia's borders.** Russia repeatedly threatens its neighbors, and uses its regional energy distribution dominance to gain political leverage in foreign capitals dependent on Russian fuel. American policy should seek to strengthen economic, military, diplomatic, energy and cultural ties to the region.
- **The United States should respond swiftly to activities undertaken by the Kremlin to thwart the democratic process and violate basic human rights inside Russia.** In recent years, the Russian government has accelerated a systematic rollback of democratic reforms enacted in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union, severely curtailed press freedom and political expression, and used the power of the state to harass political opponents and media outlets. The United States should speak out much more forcefully against these actions, as then-Senator Barack Obama did in condemning Russia's flawed 2008 election as a "tragic step backwards." Turning a blind eye to such undemocratic behavior further weakens democratic forces in Russia and harms American interests.
- **When Russia obstructs international consensus, the United States should not hesitate to pursue alternative multilateral approaches that exclude the Kremlin.** Although it may have seemed promising to engage Russia and China in multilateral talks with Iran and North Korea, in practice Moscow and Beijing have used such negotiations to protect their client states from international pressure. When appropriate, the United States should work with democratic allies and like-minded partners to pressure Iran, North Korea, and other states of concern.

### *Russia's Global Influence*

- **Russia continues to back Assad's regime in Syria.** Moscow continues to send arms to Syria and refuses to support any United Nations arms embargos against Damascus.

- **New economic and military cooperation agreements between Russia and Latin American countries expand Russia's influence within the Western Hemisphere.** Russia has entered into an agreement with Argentina to build a nuclear reactor in exchange for satellite basing rights. Having forgiven Havana of 90 percent of its Soviet-era debt, Russia intends to reopen an electronic eavesdropping post in the Cuban city of Lourdes, and is pledging to assist Cuba's struggling offshore oil exploration. Moscow has also responded to sanctions by banning fresh produce from Europe, North America and Australia, and instead is seeking alternate suppliers in Latin America and elsewhere.
- **In May, Russia and China signed a contract that will allow Russia to export natural gas to China, thereby enabling Russia to reduce its dependency on the European market.** The deal, estimated at \$400 billion over the next 30 years, will strengthen economic ties between Russia and China. Bilateral trade between Russia and China to date has focused primarily on natural gas and raw materials, and Putin believes that the two countries can work on joint projects in aerospace, mining, agricultural processing and transportation infrastructure.
- **Russian military exercises, both unilaterally and with China, have caused concern in Japan, and demonstrate the growing ties between Moscow and Beijing.** In August 2014, 1,000 Russian troops conducted military exercises in disputed islands north of Japan. Chinese and Russian naval forces have also held joint exercises in the East China Sea. Such exercises have drawn concern from South Korea, which claims that the Russian and Chinese military forces will infringe on the South Korean Air Defense Identification Zone in the East China Sea.
- **Russia is helping Iran circumvent Western sanctions.** In September 2014, Russia and Iran began talks on a food-for-oil deal, with Russia supplying grain worth up to \$500 million in exchange for oil. The two countries are negotiating an energy deal worth between \$8 and \$10 billion. These deals could reduce the effectiveness of U.S. and EU sanctions on both Iran and Russia.

# Syria

**The conflict in Syria poses grave and growing threats to the core national security interests of the United States.** The threats—which also endanger Israel, Jordan, and other U.S. allies in the Middle East—include:

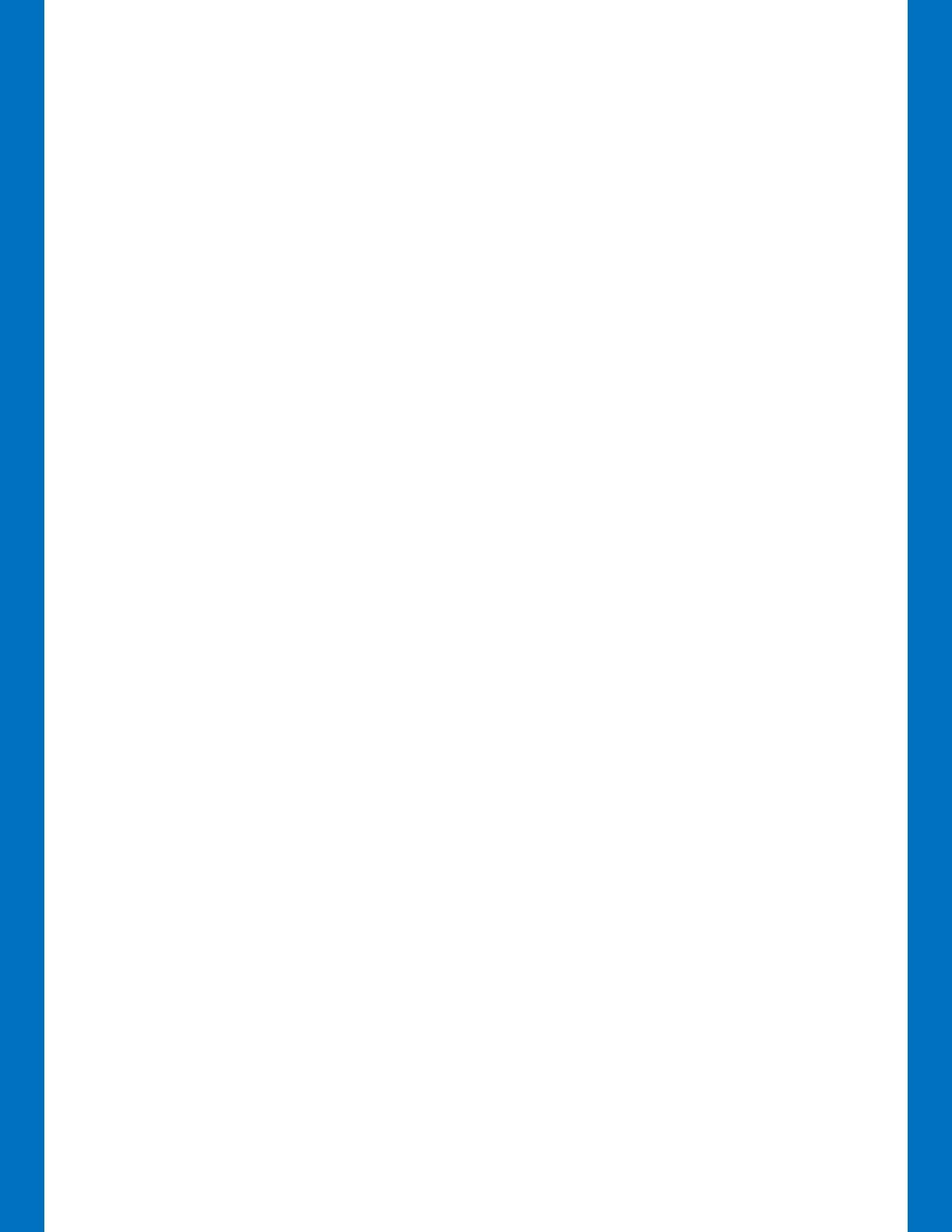
- ISIS' takeover of large parts of Syria;
- the repeated use of deadly chemical weapons against civilians by Bashar al-Assad's rogue regime;
- the rise of foreign jihadists and militants who are aligned with al-Qaeda and are trying to hijack the larger anti-Assad Syrian opposition movement;
- the influx of Hezbollah terrorists and other foreign fighters into Syria who are loyal to the Islamic Republic of Iran and fighting for the Assad regime's survival; and
- a humanitarian disaster that has claimed the lives of more than 190,000 Syrians since March 2011, including through the use of chemical weapons, and spurred the destabilizing flow of nearly 3 million Syrian refugees into Lebanon, Jordan, and other neighbors.



## Key Points

- **Dictator Bashar al-Assad's rogue regime is a dangerous regional threat.** The Assad regime has supported Lebanon-based Hezbollah and other terror groups, including extremists who killed U.S. and allied soldiers during the second Iraq war. The Syrian dictatorship not only pursued a secret nuclear program with North Korea's help, but also is Iran's closest ally in the Arab world. Indeed, senior military leaders in Tehran have admitted that Iranian military troops, including members of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps' elite Qods Force, are operating inside Syria and directly assisting the Assad regime's military forces.
- **Terrorists in Syria pose growing threats to U.S. homeland security.** According to *Washington Post* columnist David Ignatius, the U.S. intelligence community estimates that extremists could account for as many as a third of the country's roughly 110,000 anti-Assad rebels. In May 2014, FBI Director James Comey cautioned that the potential terror threat from Syria is "an order of magnitude worse" than Afghanistan in the 1980s and 1990s, and could lead to another attack on the U.S. homeland. Moreover, about 100 Americans and 3,000 Europeans have traveled to Iraq and Syria to fight ISIS, and many have already returned home.
- **The Assad regime is still launching chemical weapons attacks, even though it had promised last year to surrender its chemical arsenal by mid-2014.** In May 2014, French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius told reporters in Washington that the Assad regime had used chemical weapons as many as 14 times since September 2013. A senior official in the Israel Defense Forces reportedly alleged, "From the day that he signed the deal, [Assad] has used chemical weapons over thirty times, and in every case [Syrian] citizens were killed." In September 2014, the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons said Syria had used chlorine as a chemical weapon "systematically and repeatedly" in 2014.
- **Russia has played a key role in supporting the Assad regime.** In addition to providing Damascus with military aid, Moscow has also joined China in vetoing a U.N. Security Council that would have referred Syria to the International Criminal Court. Moreover, rather than seek Assad's removal from power, Russia has called for dialogue with the regime. Such efforts have severely undermined international efforts to resolve the Syrian crisis.

- **International diplomatic pressure has failed to compel Assad to step down.** U.N. mediator Lakhdar Brahimi's resignation in May 2014 came three months after the collapse of international negotiations in Geneva aimed at ending the conflict. Assad then hoped that presidential elections would provide a veneer of legitimacy to his besieged regime. However, in a joint May 15 news conference with British Foreign Minister William Hague, Secretary of State John Kerry declared, "Assad's staged elections are a farce, they're an insult; they are a fraud on democracy, on the Syrian people, and on the world."



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