

**U.S. ARMY WAR COLLEGE**  
**KEY STRATEGIC ISSUES LIST**

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**2010**

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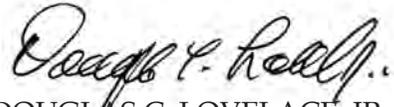
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## FOREWORD

The Key Strategic Issues List (KSIL) is published annually to make students and other researchers aware of strategic topics that are, or should be, of particular concern to the Department of Defense and the U.S. Army. The list is a compilation of input from the faculty at the U.S. Army War College as well as input from subject matter experts across the field of strategic studies. The topics reflect current as well as longer-term strategic issues, and are revised as the changing security environment warrants. This hard copy document is supplemented by a more expansive online research topic database which is updated in real time. Researchers are encouraged to contact any of the faculty members of the Strategic Studies Institute listed herein for further information regarding possible topics.



DOUGLAS C. LOVELACE, JR.  
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## FUNCTIONAL STRATEGIC ISSUES

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### **I. Overseas Contingency Operations**

1. Assess efforts to respond to evolving challenges in Iraq and Afghanistan
2. Evaluate methods for countering ideological, political, and material support for terrorism through domestic and foreign means including partnership with friendly nations
3. Assess measures for defining progress in counterinsurgency operations
4. Determine how U.S. land power can best be focused to conduct counterinsurgency operations
5. Assess methods for training international security forces (military, paramilitary, and police)
6. Evaluate methods to integrate political, economic, informational, and military tools in counterinsurgency operations
7. Assess efforts to employ local militias in counterinsurgency operations
8. Assess the utility of using U.S. land power to conduct complex contingencies and stability operations
9. Analyze issues related to genocide, ethnic cleansing, mass atrocities, Protection of Civilians (PoC), and the Responsibility to Protect (RtP)
10. Assess options for building intelligence networks which do not compromise the neutrality of nonstate actors such as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)

## **II. Homeland Security/Homeland Defense/Civil Support**

1. Assess current measures for countering and responding to chemical, biological, nuclear, radiological, and high-explosive threats
2. Assess intelligence collection requirements and restrictions in homeland security, and their implications
3. Examine the strategic implications of missile defense as a component of homeland defense
4. Reassess the roles of active and reserve components in homeland security
5. Evaluate current measures for identifying and protecting DoD and/or non-DoD critical infrastructure
6. How can we improve interagency planning and preparation for pandemics?
7. How can we establish domestic and international information sharing mechanisms among homeland defense, homeland security, and civil support entities?
8. Assess measures for integrating private sector and USG responses to public health emergencies
9. Assess the need for distinguishing between crimes and acts of war for certain activities in cyberspace; determine to what extent existing treaties and laws govern cyberspace
10. How can we improve interagency coordination and cooperation in homeland security/homeland defense to best use local, state, and federal resources to combat threats to the homeland?

### III. Military Change

1. Assess ongoing efforts to respond to the changing character of war as reflected in such concepts as unrestricted warfare, evolution of insurgencies, and cyber warfare
2. Assess the Army's responses to revolutionary change in warfare or responses to unexpected technological breakthroughs
3. Evaluate current capabilities for conducting information operations and strategic communication in the global policy and practice arena
4. Evaluate projected land force requirements for full spectrum dominance, to include peacekeeping and stability operations
5. Assess the strategic implications of emerging operational concepts
6. Assess themes in the Army's Strategic Planning Guidance
7. Identify force proficiencies for operations against irregular challenges
8. What force capabilities are needed for stability operations, domination in complex terrain, strategic responsiveness, the Army's Global Force Posture, and for battle command?
9. Assess inter- and intra-theater mobility requirements for the U.S. military
10. Assess logistical support measures for U.S. allies and coalition partners
11. Assess transformation of OSD, the Joint Staff, and the Service staffs
12. Evaluate efforts to transform the three Army components and the level of transformation success in current operations

13. Assess role of women in combat: laws and norms
14. Assess measures of modular force performance
15. Assess resource conflicts between operational and institutional transformation
16. Examine whether Army Force Generation (ARFORGEN) is meeting the Army needs
17. Assess cyberspace in terms of risk and as an enabler to conduct warfare
18. Are DoD business practices responsive enough in today's fast-changing world?
19. Examine the strategic implications of space as a theater of war
20. Assess the Army's role in a possible nuclear war
21. Assess the need for more foreign area officers and billets in the 21st century strategic environment
22. Assess the appropriateness of current force structure for managing complex contingencies and/or stability operations

#### **IV. National Security Strategy/National Military Strategy**

1. Assess U.S. National Security Strategy (NSS) and/or U.S. National Military Strategy (NMS); how/where should the United States prioritize its efforts?
2. Assess costs and benefits of alternative grand strategies
3. Evaluate strategic implications of irregular and traditional challenges

4. Assess the value of deterrence and dissuasion in U.S. national strategy
5. Evaluate proliferation and counterproliferation measures in a globalized world
6. Evaluate measures to integrate military (hard power) and nonmilitary (hard and soft power) tools to achieve strategic objectives and avoid or resolve potential conflict
7. Evaluate the utility of military force as an instrument of policy in the 21st century
8. Examine the implications of U.S. missile defense for allies and potential adversaries
9. Evaluate the utility of strategic net and risk assessment in a multipolar system
10. Assess potential impact of global climate change on U.S. national security
11. Assess how military power might complement a “smart power” approach to national security
12. Evaluate potential changes to the U.S. Constitution to reflect the 21st century security environment and the changed nature of armed conflict
13. Evaluate ways to improve the effectiveness of military advice to national policymakers
14. Evaluate ways to integrate military and nonmilitary planning in national strategy more effectively

## **V. Landpower Employment**

1. Evaluate current responses to irregular challenges
2. Assess the requirements for military operations in complex terrain
3. Assess the nature and importance of information superiority in military operations
4. Assess evolving landpower roles in stabilization, reconstruction, and humanitarian operations
5. Assess measures for improving joint, combined, interagency, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) cooperation in humanitarian and counterinsurgency operations
6. Evaluate the effectiveness of U.S. landpower in foreign policy execution by combatant commanders and country teams
7. Assess the impact of international law on American military operations

## **VI. Landpower Generation and Sustainment**

1. Assess the impact of legal constraints on military and interagency mobilization
2. Evaluate measures to overcome anti-access and area-denial strategies
3. Evaluate measures for operating in areas with primitive and austere infrastructures
4. Evaluate the tradeoffs of power projection, prepositioning, and forward stationing
5. Assess landpower capabilities for waging protracted conflicts

6. Evaluate the impact of the expanding roles of contractors and other civilians in defense operations
7. Assess the role of landpower in seabasing as a logistical and operational concept
8. Assess measures to sustaining a modular, capabilities-based Army
9. Assess measures to establish a single Army logistics enterprise
10. Assess Army Force Generation (ARFORGEN) model's implications for manning, equipping, and sustaining functions
11. Assess command and control, logistics, and sustainment structure gaps for the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in support of stability operations

## **VII. Leadership, Personnel Management, and Culture**

1. Evaluate retention and readiness measures of active and reserve forces
2. Assess measures to develop Soldiers and leaders for future missions
3. Define and assess the continuum of service
4. Assess the apparent gap between civilian and military cultures and its effect on interagency interaction and purpose
5. Assess the relationship between the U.S. military and American society:
  - a. Demographics: who is in it, and who fights?
  - b. Civilian control over the military in the 21st century
  - c. Sustaining public support

6. Assess efforts to identify, manage, and sustain the Army's intellectual and technological talent
7. Assess the status of the Army as a profession
8. Evaluate how the Army develops and responds to "lessons learned"
9. Assess how differences in service cultures detract from or enhance Joint synergy
10. Evaluate measures for maintaining a culture of innovation
11. Assess the implications of adopting commercial best business practices for the military
12. Assess measures to manage nondeployable Soldiers
13. Evaluate the strategic purpose and effectiveness of the Individual Ready Reserve
14. Examine the pre-commissioning program's effectiveness for meeting the needs of the Army
15. Analyze the impact of changing military service requirements on families
16. Examine the impact of military service on the perspectives of political and business leaders concerning defense policy
17. Assess implications of interagency integration on professional military education, career progression, and other human resource management practices
18. Examine the utilization of foreign area officers in Office of Defense Cooperation (ODC) and Defense Acquisition Organization (DAO) positions within the Senior Defense Official (SDO) concept

19. Assess the knowledge, skills, and abilities that military leaders require in complex contingencies and/or stability operations
20. Examine ways to optimize cooperation among international, host nation, government, and nongovernment actors



## REGIONAL STRATEGIC ISSUES

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### **I. Evolving Regional Security Matters in Africa**

1. The evolving role and organization of U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM), and its receptivity within Africa
2. Africa and the war on terrorism
3. Lessons learned from Africa's insurgencies and implications for Africa's future conflicts
4. Implications of HIV/AIDS on the ground forces of African partners
5. Strategic implications of Chinese, Iranian, Indian, and Brazilian activity in Africa
6. Analysis of regional African infrastructure and its impacts on how African nations provide for their own security (e.g., the Zambezi River Valley, or the Great Lakes nations, or the Trans-Sahel)
7. U.S. strategy toward the Trans-Sahel
8. U.S. strategy toward the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and its impact on its neighbors
9. Maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea subregion—threats, challenges, and solutions
10. U.S. strategy toward the west Indian Ocean nations (Comoros, Mauritius) and southeast African coast
11. Nexus of security and development in Africa—why they go hand-in-hand

12. U.S. military roles in human security issues in Africa
13. The impacts and risks of mass migrations and refugee flows in Africa
14. The role of the African Union in African peacekeeping operations
15. Army international activities programs in Africa
16. Professional development of African militaries
17. Developing partnerships with Africa's powers: Nigeria, Ethiopia, Kenya, and South Africa
18. Transnational crime and security in Africa, including the effects of narco-trafficking on stability in West Africa
19. The U.S. role in the Niger Delta conflict
20. Climate change and conflict in Africa

## **II. Evolving Regional Security Matters in the Middle East and the Islamic World**

1. U.S.-Iraqi security relations and cooperation following a withdrawal of U.S. combat units from Iraq
2. U.S. interests with respect to a stable, sovereign Iraq
3. Military and security issues of the Arabian Peninsula including Saudi Arabia and Yemen.
4. Changing the U.S. military presence in the Persian/Arabian Gulf
5. Security issues created by the Israeli-Palestinian conflict
6. U.S. strategy toward Lebanon

7. U.S. strategy toward Libya
8. U.S. strategy toward Syria
9. U.S. strategy toward Iran
10. Regional and global implications of the Iranian nuclear program and ballistic missile program
11. The impact of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM (OIF) on U.S. national security
12. Strategic implications of a changing Egypt
13. The future of Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and the smaller Gulf monarchies in Middle East security
14. Strategic implications of fully or partially democratic, but anti-U.S. governments, mass movements, and political parties, in the Middle East
15. Strategic implications of increasing Chinese interests in Middle East oil, arms sales, and economic aid in the Middle East
16. Future role of external powers and security organizations in the Middle East
17. Emerging and evolving military relationships among Middle East states including counterterrorism relationships
18. Strategies that regional states have for dealing with the United States and its allies in the Middle East
19. Regional security strategies in the Middle East including ways in which the United States can most effectively cooperate with regional allies

20. The nature of politically-oriented Islamic militancy, salafi jihadism, and their implications for U.S. and regional security
21. Efforts to contain and moderate violent ethnic and sectarian conflicts throughout the Middle East
22. Dangers of “spillover” problems from Iraq, and the activities of regional states within Iraq
23. The danger of the spread of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) of all kinds throughout the region and the potential danger of regional conflicts in which WMD are employed.
24. Regional implications of efforts to improve and modernize the conventional militaries of major regional powers including Egypt, Iraq, Iran, Israel, and Saudi Arabia
25. Challenges of political reform (including fair treatment of all religious sects and ethnic groups) and the ways in which such reform may enhance domestic and regional security

### **III. Evolving Regional Security Matters in the Asia-Pacific**

1. Balancing U.S. security interests in China and Taiwan
2. Implications of China’s growing economic and military power in the region
3. China’s regional and global grand strategy
4. China’s military transformation
5. The strategic implications of China’s growing capabilities in space
6. Chinese-North Korean relations
7. Strategic response to North Korea’s intentions and capabilities

8. Evolving Republic of Korea-U.S. security relations
9. The role of the U.S. military on the Korean Peninsula
10. Politics of history and memory in South-North Korean relations
11. The future of the Japan-U.S. security relationship
12. Japan's relationships with Asian nations
13. Security concerns in Southeast Asia and implications for the United States
14. Future of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and U.S. strategic posture in the region
15. Future of the U.S. alliance with Australia and New Zealand
16. Sources and dimensions of anti-Americanism in Asia: policy implications
17. Role of nationalism in Asia and implications for U.S. policy
18. Role of ideology in Asia and implications for U.S. policy
19. Russia's interests, policy and actions in Asia
20. Transformation of U.S. forward deployment in Asia
21. Toward U.S. energy security strategy for Asia and the Pacific
22. Organized crime and security in South Asia
23. India as a rising Asian power and the expansion of its overall capabilities and interests
24. Strategic implications of U.S.-Vietnam security relations

25. Evolving U.S.-Thailand security relations
26. Contending sea powers in East Asia
27. Strategic implications of U.S. economic downturn and global financial crisis on U.S.-Asian relations

#### **IV. Evolving Regional Security Matters in Europe**

1. U.S. Army roles in future Balkan security
2. A roadmap for future security in the Balkans
3. The revival of the Russian military
4. Prospects for Russo-American security and/or defense cooperation
5. Russia's future relationships with Europe and the United States
6. Energy security in Europe
7. Democratization and instability in Ukraine, Georgia, and Belarus
8. Impact of growing Muslim populations on European security policy
9. Strategic implications of reconfiguring the U.S. military presence in Europe
10. Implications of a changing NATO
11. U.S. leadership in NATO: Does/should the U.S. Army still play a role?
12. NATO and European Union (EU) defense capabilities: new or just repackaging the old?

13. EU civil-military cell: a useful model for joint/interagency operations?
14. Is the U.S.-Europe military capabilities gap still growing; are U.S. technology transfer rules helping or hindering?
15. Implications of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM (OIF) for European cooperation in the war on terrorism
16. EU expansion while excluding Turkey from membership
17. Strategic implications of drawing down U.S. forces in Europe
18. Will ISAF break NATO?
19. Should the United States encourage handover of Operation ENDURING FREEDOM (OEF) to NATO and allow U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) to focus on OIF?
20. The future role of U.S. European Command (EUCOM) with the Maritime Analysis and Operations Centre-Narcotics (MOAC-N) located in Lisbon, Portugal (7-nation regional center)
21. Discuss coordination across the combatant command seams: The unique role that Joint Interagency Task Force South (JIATF-S) plays in the EUCOM area of responsibility (AOR) to combat cross-Atlantic illicit narcotics trafficking
22. How should the United States leverage European engagement with China?
23. Mediterranean strategic implications in light of the creation of AFRICOM

**V. Evolving Regional Security Matters in South Asia**

1. Balancing U.S. security interests between India and Pakistan
2. Role of India in world events and U.S.-Indian military-strategic relations
3. Maintaining stability and security in Afghanistan
4. Long-term implications of maintaining the OIF coalition
5. The evolving American security relationship with Pakistan
6. The global response to state failure or internal conflict in South Asia
7. Organized crime and security in South Asia
8. The risks, benefits, and implications of poppy eradication in Afghanistan
9. Iran: A potential partner in stemming illegal Afghan drug flow. Should the coalition seek to engage Iran in mutually beneficial border control to stem the flow of illicit narcotics?
10. Strategic implications of China-India cooperation and conflict

**VI. Evolving Regional Security Matters in Central Asia**

1. Growing U.S. security interests in the Caucasus and Central Asia
2. Russian-China-U.S. competition in Central Asia
3. Implications of energy development in the Caucasus and Caspian regions
4. Synchronizing security cooperation and political reform in Central Asia

5. The role and structure of the U.S. military presence in Central Asia
6. Strategic implications of the evolving Shanghai Cooperation Organization

## **VII. Evolving Regional Security Matters in the Western Hemisphere**

1. U.S. interests in Caribbean security issues
2. Hemispheric security forces (military and police) and new threats
3. Improving security ties with Brazil
4. Lessons from the Colombian insurgency
5. Immigration and people smuggling as a security issue
6. Alternately governed space and implications for territorial security
7. Gangs and other transnational crime as a threat to the area
8. Venezuela as an exporter of political instability
9. Narco-funded terrorism networks
10. Instability and disenfranchised indigenous and poor populations
11. Implications of the rising threat of populism in the region; the difference between populists and the “responsible left”
12. Addressing the fundamental disconnect between the U.S. and Latin American visions of current threats to the region
13. Long-term implications of Chinese engagement in Latin America
14. Maintaining the viability of hemispheric security forces during a time of declining budgets

15. Implications for U.S. security of a post-Castro Cuba
16. Forming a North American Security Community
17. Improving U.S.-Mexico security ties
18. Implications of the drug war in Mexico
19. Impact and desirability of forming sub-regional security organizations like the *Conferencia de Fuerzas Armadas Centroamericanas* (Conference of Central American Armed Forces [CFAC])

#### **VIII. Other**

1. Revising the boundaries of the geographic combatant commands
2. Integrating regional security cooperation plans, basing, and presence policies
3. Environmental issues as a basis for enhancing security cooperation
4. How interagency combatant commands function
5. Analysis of a viable and relevant sub-national, national or trans-national political actor along the framework suggested by the Analytical Cultural Framework for Strategy and Policy (ACFSP), as discussed in the May 2009 SSI Letort Paper "Cultural Dimensions of Strategy and Policy," to identify that group's sense of purpose and values, the interests that derive from them, and implications for U.S. strategy and policy regarding that group

## WAR AND SOCIETY

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### **I. American Society**

1. Discuss ways of balancing individual civil rights and national security requirements
2. Assess the debate over America's place in the world
3. Examine America's changing perceptions of other nations
4. Examine the U.S. media's role in political and social mobilization
5. Examine American civil-military relations in wartime
6. Examine the role of religion and faith in the American way of war
7. Strategic implications of public perceptions of who serves, and who dies
8. Assess how operations in Iraq and Afghanistan have affected U.S. civil-military relations
9. Assess civilian control of the military and the requirement to provide military advice
10. Examine possible political boundaries for general and flag officers, active and retired

### **II. International Society**

1. Assess the impact of the global financial crisis on the United States
2. Assess the strategic impact of the rising powers (i.e., China, India, EU, Brazil, Russia, and others) on the United States

3. Assess the “Clash of Cultures” debate
4. Examine the implications of anti-Americanism for U.S. foreign policy
5. Examine centers of power in other societies and cultures
6. Assess the role of “strategic communication” in establishing trust with our partners

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