



**Testimony before the
House Committee on Armed Services**

**“FOREIGN POLICY AND NATIONAL
SECURITY JUST BECAME
TWICE AS HARD”**

SEPTEMBER 27

A Statement by

**Kurt M. Campbell
Senior Vice President & Director,
CSIS International Security Program**

Testimony

Kurt M. Campbell
Senior Vice President, Director of International Security
And Henry A. Kissinger Chair in National Security
Center for Strategic and International Studies,
Washington, D.C.

Before the House Committee on Armed Services

Tuesday, September 27, 2005, 10:00AM
2118 Rayburn House Office Building

“Foreign Policy and National Security Just Became Twice as Hard”

After a protracted period of uncertainty concerning the nature of the foreign policy challenges that are likely to confront the nation over the course of first half of the 21st Century, twin challenges are finally coming into sharper relief. For the next generation or more, Americans will be confronted by two overriding (and probably overwhelming) challenges in the conduct of American foreign policy: how to more effectively wage a long, twilight struggle against violent Islamic fundamentalists and at the same time cope with the almost certain rise to great power status of China. Each task taken on its own would be daunting and consuming, but coming concurrently as they inevitably will, these challenges are likely to be close to overwhelming for a government apparatus and national mindset better suited to singular efforts. Together, these two international challenges comprise a sharp departure from previous foreign policy challenges – such as the nearly half-Century struggle to confront and contain Soviet expansionism – for which the United States is as yet largely unprepared, militarily, psychologically, or politically. The potential threat in this developing scenario is that the United States will find itself overstretched and overextended in its national capacities to meet both challenges concurrently.

This is the first time in the nation’s history that foreign policymakers have had to cope with two such vexing and dissimilar challenges simultaneously. While it is true that during World War II we fought on two fronts in the Atlantic and Pacific against two very different foes – Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan – the military power employed to defeat the Axis was largely fungible and the tactics employed on each front were similar, adjusting for the inevitable variations of geography and terrain. Then, during the Cold War, the undeniable shaping experience of this generation of foreign policy and national security practitioners, the United States faced one overarching and organizing foreign policy challenge coming from the Soviet Union. A singularity of purpose in the formulation and execution of American foreign policy has been the overriding experience for most of our history, allowing for a greater unity of effort and a lack of competing demands. This era is now undeniably over, as the U.S. confronts two extremely varied

sets of demands, one driven by stateless Jihadists warriors and the other by a rising commercial, political, and military giant in the East.

Ever since the galvanizing attacks of 9/11, the United States has in turn attacked (literally) the problem of violent Jihadism, primarily through the application of military power in Afghanistan and Iraq (the latter now inextricably linked to the terror matrix, largely as a consequence of American actions). The mostly unanticipated demands of the martial campaigns in the Middle East have had a corollary consequence beyond simply bogging down in unforgiving urban battlefields. The United States has been almost inevitably preoccupied away from the rapidly changing strategic landscape of Asia at a time when China is making enormous strides in its military modernization, commercial conquests, diplomatic inroads, and application of soft power. Rarely in history has a rising power gained such prominence in the international system largely as a consequence of the actions of – and at the expense of – the dominant power, in this case the United States. Current American talking points continue to stress the need to “manage” China’s emergence as a dominant power, but it is perhaps more apt to describe a China that is increasingly attempting to manage American perceptions and actions while it seeks to consolidate its new found gains globally.

It is also true that the United States is coming to the end of the first phases of strategies designed to deal with each international problem, somewhat disappointed by the results in both cases.

The United States has practiced a policy of “engagement” towards China for over a generation, an ill-defined approach based on commercial interaction designed to draw the Middle Kingdom into the global community of nations but largely free from clear metrics of success or failure. The U.S. has hedged its bets to be sure, by maintaining a robust military presence in the Asia Pacific region, but the “engagement” and “hedging” elements of the American approach are not well integrated, and the U.S. must begin to consider how best to interact with China in the next phase of relations. One might argue that the U.S. policy of “engagement” has succeeded too well, and that China is now beginning to get the better of the U.S. in open political and commercial contests.

In the war on terror, the first phase of our campaign against the Jihadists has relied too heavily on military power and not enough on an integrated political strategy where military actions are but a small part in an overall strategic approach. In the next phase, the United States and its allies must find more cost effective methods and multifaceted approaches to deal with terrorists embedded in sympathetic communities. The problems of “draining the swamps” of the Middle East and easing the resentments of disenfranchised Muslim populations in Europe and elsewhere are daunting and with no clear cut, short term solutions.

Each of these major international challenge involves fully utilizing all the tools of a successful foreign policy – cultivation of allies and friends, targeted use of foreign assistance, prudent investments in and uses of military power, developing more robust intelligence capabilities, initiating more effective public education, and demonstrating

sustained political will in order to achieve success. Yet, beyond these generalities, there are major differences in the details of each case.

For China, the U.S. must maintain a forward deployed military presence in the region that is both reassuring to friends and a reminder to others that we remain the ultimate guarantor of peace and stability. Capital ships, stealthy submarines, expeditionary marine forces, and dominant airpower will likely be the most effective tools of military power in a range of Asian scenarios where an American role might prove decisive. The U.S. must also conduct a nuanced diplomacy that eases regional tensions on the Korean peninsula and between China and Taiwan while not comprising relations with friends and allies. We must continue to revitalize our alliances with Japan, South Korea, Singapore, and Australia and diversify our military presence in creative ways. Chinese language skills will be important at every level of government and military service, as will a general knowledge of how Asia works. Most importantly, the U.S. must begin to rebalance its energies more evenly between the Middle East and Asia, because a continuing preoccupation in the Middle East will have negative long-term ramifications for the American position in the region. These setbacks would be difficult to recover from if we wait to re-engage only after the current unpleasantness in Iraq and elsewhere is behind us.

The U.S. will require a very different set of capacities for dealing with the ongoing war on terrorism as it heads into its next phase. Effective intelligence and early warning of possible attacks will be at a premium for the foreseeable future. Enhanced Special Forces capabilities and rapid strike capabilities will be essential for the conduct of effective operations against shadowy terrorist targets. Major aid and economic programs designed to address profound problems of underemployment in the Islamic world will be of critical importance. A nuanced strategy of promoting political reform throughout the Middle East will require both a sustained commitment and an appreciation for local conditions. Greater training in a host of relatively obscure languages – Arabic, Farsi, and a host of Indonesia dialects – will be important for achieving more effective intelligence capabilities and making better political assessments. Homeland security investments to deal with prevention and consequence management will also require serious and sustained government led investments.

These concurrent challenges, in short, will require starkly different government efforts and capacities. Either one on its own would be daunting; taken together, managing the rise of China and the enduring war on terrorism are likely to prove overwhelming. Given that the violent struggle with the Islamic Jihadists is now an inescapable feature of American foreign policy and homeland security efforts, while relations with China involve a complex mix of cooperation and competition but are not necessarily destined to degenerate into open hostility, perhaps it will be prudent for American strategists to consider how best to phase and shape these simultaneous challenges. For instance, Chinese cooperation in the global war on terrorism should be a main feature in the American diplomatic strategy with Beijing, given that the PRC has as much to lose from the Jihadist's success as the United States. Southeast Asia is likely to be a major battleground for hearts and minds between moderate Muslims and radical Islamic

instigators, and China has a major stake in seeing the former prevail in this major struggle raging inside Islam and playing out in a number of Asian states.

The fight with the Jihadists is unavoidable, while a military or protracted political confrontation with China is not preordained. A wise American diplomacy would appreciate these distinctions and seek to develop its strategy accordingly. While the U.S. will need to continue its hedging strategy in Asia and to put more pressure on China for greater transparency, democratization, and regional confidence building, there are clear grounds for a sustained strategic cooperation between Washington and Beijing where one of the potential benefits would be a united front against the global jihadist threat. This does not mean that areas of competition and outright hostility between the two great powers of Asia will disappear. They will not. Instead, our differences can and should be managed and/or submerged in order to focus on more pressing matters. This may be both prudent and necessary as it is not clear that the U.S. has the political inclination and resources to deal with two, all out challenges concurrently.

Lastly, constructing a durable, bipartisan consensus on the overarching foreign policy approach to these twin challenges will be critical. A degree of bipartisanship was a recurring feature of much of the Cold War era in American domestic politics and bitter divisions often stopped “at the water’s edge” in Senator Vandenburg’s immortal words. Bipartisanship has been conspicuously absent in current foreign policy debates and this internal divisiveness arguably hampers our effectiveness in the formulation and execution of American foreign policy. Given the magnitude of what lies ahead, a concerted effort to rediscover some common ground in American domestic politics (at least when it comes to foreign policy) may indeed be one of the most important ingredients for a successful balancing act between these two huge challenges facing the country in the coming decades.