Voiceover: This program is presented in partnership with the Army Capabilities Integration Center.

(Theme music)

Voiceover: The following is a production of the Pritzker Military Museum and Library. Bringing citizens and citizen soldiers together through the exploration of military history, topics, and current affairs. This is Pritzker Military Presents.

Clarke: Welcome to Pritzker Military Presents, with Lieutenant General H.R. McMaster, here to talk about Harbingers of Future War: Today's Conflicts and Implications For Defense Strategy. I'm your host Ken Clarke and this program is coming to you from the Pritzker Military Museum and Library in downtown Chicago, and it's presented in partnership with the Army Capabilities Integration Center. This program and more than 400 others covering a full range of military topics is available on demand at PritzkerMilitary.org. In the Twenty-first century the rules of warfare are expanding. We fight now not only against countries with defined borders but also against shadowy networks with secret cells and hidden operatives across the globe. Yet as much as global terrorism has changed the practice of combat certain constants remain the same. As we map our strategy for conflicts of the future we must be cautious not to disregard the lessons of the past. What can yesterday's wars tell us about how to fight tomorrow's wars? Here to help us navigate this topic is Lieutenant General HR McMaster. General McMaster has a distinguished thirty-two year career as an officer in the United States Army. Known not only for his leadership roles in combat strategy and training, McMaster is also recognized as an innovator, a thought leader and a commander who challenges the status quo. He has been hailed as the architect of the future US Army. McMaster serves as director at the US Army Capabilities Integration Center and deputy commanding general futures US Army Training and Doctrine Command. As director of the Army Capabilities Integration Center McMaster is responsible for developing, evaluating, and innovating concepts, requirements, and solutions for the army. These resources provide soldiers and units the resources they need for combatant commanders. McMaster has served tours of duty in Europe, Afghanistan, and Iraq serving in the Persian Gulf War and the War on Terror. His previous assignments include director of concept development and learning at the US Army Training and Doctrine Command, special assistant to the Commanding Multi-National Force Iraq, director Commander’s Advisory Group at US Central Command, squadron executive officer and regimental operations officer at the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment. A graduate of the US Military Academy, he holds a doctorate in military history from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He was a Hoover Institution fellow in war, revolution, and peace and has taught history at the US Military Academy. McMaster is also the author of the book Dereliction of Duty: Johnson, McNamara, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Lies that Lead to Vietnam. Please join me in welcoming to the Pritzker Military Museum and Library Lieutenant General H.R. McMaster.

(Applause)

McMaster: Thanks so much. Thank you, thank you. Well Kenneth thank you so much, and thanks to all of you for being here. And thanks to Kenneth and Jennifer Pritzker and the staff here at the Pritzker Museum—Military Museum and Library for the privilege of being with you but especially for what you do to connect our soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines with the people in whose name we serve. And I think it's more important today than ever, right, as our military is getting smaller, and we risk becoming disconnected from our society. And if we become disconnected that's bad. It's bad for a number of reasons. First of all it's important for our citizens to understand war and warfare, to be engaged with thinking about the problem of future armed conflict because
if we don't our citizens may not understand threats to national security. And in our democracy of course we gonna get the national security capabilities, the defense, that the American people are willing to pay for, and if the American people aren't familiar with the threats to our national security or the requirements for our military we're likely to increase risk to our security and not be prepared for those threats. So what a tremendous institution and a tremendous opportunity for me to be with you tonight. So I thought I might talk to you really about four things, four interrelated parts to this talk. The first would be to offer framework about thinking, a framework for thinking about future armed conflict with an emphasis on what Kenneth actually alluded to earlier, with emphasis on continuity. Continuity and the nature of war. And I think for us to thinking clearly about future war, we have to take the approach that the great American historian Carl Becker said we ought to take when we think about the future broadly. He said that the memory of the past and the anticipation of the future ought to walk hand-in-hand in a happy way without one disputing primacy over the other. The second thing I thought I might talk to you about besides continuities and the nature of war is why we tend to neglect them and how we have, I think in recent years, created sort of fallacies about the future of war that actually represent a danger to our national security because they're preventing us form learning from even our most recent conflicts. The third thing would be--I’d like to talk to you about is--emerging threats to national security. I don’t think we have to really consider invasion from outer space or flying saucers because I think many of the problems we're going to face in the foreseeable future are with us today and are likely to evolve in, I think, sadly, increasingly dangerous ways. And then finally just to close with, okay, so then what are the implications for defense strategy? What should we be thinking about in terms of securing our nation from the threats we see today, threats that are on a trajectory of becoming more dangerous? So first I’d like to talk to you about these continuities in the nature of war--four of them, as we talk of fours--and how the neglect of those continuities complicated our efforts in our most recent conflicts, the conflicts in Iraq and in Afghanistan. So the first of these is that war is an extension of politics. It's kind of like the Geico commercial, right? Everybody knows that. Everybody knows war is an extension of politics. That's what Carl Von Clausewitz told us, the great philosopher of war, in the early nineteenth century. But sometimes I think we forget that what that means is we wage war to achieve sustainable outcomes, political outcomes consistent with what brought us to the war to begin with, consistent with our vital interests. And so if you consider really our experience in Iraq and Afghanistan for example--you know in Iraq what's debated most frequently is whether or not we should have invaded, I think what we ought to debate sometimes is who the heck though it was gonna be easy to--and the aftermath in particular, and I think our neglect of really how we were to consolidate gains after the removal of Saddam's regime, really made it quite difficult for us to get to that sustainable outcome, and we made it in many ways just about as hard on ourselves as we could have especially in those early years after the invasion of Iraq in 2003. In Afghanistan for example we had a very successful, as we did in Iraq, military campaign initially, but think about how those military operations were a bit disconnected from what we needed to achieve in Afghanistan in the long term. So for example in Afghanistan we used air power very effectively--precision targeting of the fielded forces of the Taliban regime, and then we also use of course very effective advisors, special operations forces integrated with Mujahideen era militias who were empowered by that advisory capability and some intelligence capabilities and precision strike. And that lead to the collapse of the Taliban regime very, very quickly. But what we didn't have are really the forces available, and we didn’t have maybe the plans in place to consolidate those military gains and to begin to reestablish an Afghan state. Of course and Afghan state was ravaged by decades of war--the Soviet occupation, the resistance
to that occupation, extremely destructive civil war from '92 to '96, the destruction of any institutions that we would recognize as an institution by the Taliban, brutal and reactionary regime. And so what happened is those Mujahideen era militias who we empowered essentially affected capture over those nascent state institutions and functions as they were being reestablished. And those militias sort of morphed over time into sort of criminalized patronage networks who were advancing the interests of their militia at the expense of building the strong institutions that are necessary for the Afghan state survival. So we just have to remember war is an extension of politics, and we have to conduct military operations in a way that we bridge into those sustainable outcomes consistent with our vital interests. So the second continuity that we ignore at our own peril is that war is human. War is human because fundamentally people fight for the same reasons today that Thucydides identified twenty-five hundred years ago: fear, honor, and interest. And if we don’t consider what is motivating people to engage in violence we condemn ourselves to maybe just treating the symptoms of those motivators instead of really getting at the causes themselves. And so our enemies really understand this, right, today. I mean, ISIS understands this. What ISIS does is they prey on the fears of communities, right, and their sense of honor, and they try to convince Sunni Arab populations and turban populations in particular that the only way they can advance their interests, the only way they can protect themselves, is through violence. And so they portray themselves as patrons and protectors of a party in conflict, and they pit communities against each other in the great Middle East, mainly the Sunni and Shiite populations, create a cycle of sectarian violence, and then try to perpetuate that violence to accomplish their objectives. And I’ll talk a little bit more about that toward the end. In Afghanistan really not understanding the complexity of that society and recognizing that what was to emerge as the insurgency there was really gonna be an intra-Pashtun civil war, a competition for power and resources between elements of the Pashtun community. Not recognizing those kind of competitions we inadvertently in the beginning of the Afghan War super empowered some tribes over others and helped create these exclusionary—you know unwittingly, unintentionally—exclusionary political economies that kept key elements of the population outside the tent. And then as the Taliban regenerates across the border in Pakistan with the help of Pakistani intelligence and Al Qaeda, they are able to come back in to Afghanistan by connecting with those tribes that were left outside the tent, those pools of popular discontent that the Taliban could then pull strength from. And so understanding what’s driving conflict is critical to getting again to those sustainable outcomes, those political outcomes, consistent with our vital interests. Of course the well known story in Iraq is not doing enough to allay the fears, right, allay the fears and address the sense of honor of the Sunni Arab community there, and a string of decisions not recalling portions of the army, the severe de-Baathification, the makeup of the interim governing council, and steady conditions really from what was initially in Iraq a decentralized, localized hybrid insurgency to coalesce and to gain strength over time. So war is political, war is about politics, war is human, and we have to remember that as we consider the problem of future armed conflict, and we ought to be able to learn obviously from our most recent experiences in Iraq and in Afghanistan. The third continuity in the nature of war is that war is uncertain. Okay, war is uncertain because the political complexity and the human complexity of war complicates the heck out of things, but war is uncertain fundamentally because of the continuous interaction with your enemy, and often times with multiple enemies. Enemies who actually have a say in the future course of events in war. And so in both Iraq and Afghanistan we tended--we tended to try to understand where we were today and where our objective was and plan a linear plan from today to our objective, and not consider the interaction with that--and it could take us off course. And so for example, we announced often times
years in advance exactly the number of troop levels we would have on hand. You know, it's always been a rule of thumb in war to hold back a reserve, and that reserve's purpose was to take advantage of unforeseen opportunities or to protect against unanticipated dangers. But in both places, Iraq and Afghanistan, how much of our force did we have in reserve? None, really. So I think we are misunderstanding the nature of war, continuities in nature of war complicated our efforts in both Iraq and Afghanistan. Just consider for example the way both of those conflicts evolved over time. I mentioned the regeneration of Taliban strength across the border in Pakistan really regaining strength in Afghanistan. It was clear in 2003, 2004 into 2005. In December though of 2006 we announced we were gonna withdraw half the troops we have there and we barely had a brigade in Afghanistan, and so we weren’t necessarily paying attention to how the conflict was evolving and trying to stay ahead of that with our strategy. And of course that kind of announcement had a political effect. I think at the time President Karzai looked behind him, you know, "who's got my back?", realized it wasn't anybody, and I think at that time he sort of cut deals again with some of the Mujahideen era elites who then really began to loot the country. And in exchange for their political fealty to the Karzai government they were given essentially license to steal from the state, and so it was impunity in exchange for political loyalty, and of course that was hollowing out state institutions and functions that are critical to the Afghan state survival. In Iraq just consider the way that that insurgency evolved over time, right. What was initially again this localized, decentralized hybrid insurgency took the approach, initially, kill some Americans. Remember Saddam had handed out copies of Black Hawk Down. If you kill some Americans they’ll leave. Well that didn't work, and so they took a different approach. Okay, well, attack infrastructure. Take down power lines, blow up water lines. You know, this is the whole Lenin approach, right? The worse the better. Create those pools of popular discontent and draw strength from the insurgency. Well that wasn’t quite working, and what we were doing at the time in 2003 was kind of racing with the Iraqi Civil Defense Corps to build up an effective Iraq security force. And a person, name is Zarqawi, at the time, saw huge danger in that. Because you know Americans we were kind of disoriented there in Iraq. We didn't speak the language, super complicated in terms of tribal, religious, cultural dynamics and so forth, a country that was much different than the one we thought we were coming into. It really had deteriorated tremendously after the '91 Gulf War, and so we were catching up to that. But you know Iraqis know Iraq. Iraqis know who the foreign fighters are. And so what the insurgency did is they shifted to attacking those nascent Iraqi security forces before they had the resiliency to stand up on their own. And then ultimately the shift in strategy was toward this alliance of conveniences between these takfiris or sur Salafi-jihadist groups associated with Al Qaeda and that Baathist and Iraqi intelligence infrastructure that existed throughout the country. And then the strategy becomes jump-start the civil war, what Zarqawi called the Afghan approach to Iraq. Again, pit those communities against each other, create that cycle of sectarian violence, use that chaotic environment to establish control of territory and resources, conduct attacks into Shia areas, really invite retribution, and keep that cycle going. The same approach essentially that ISIL took. So if you take really what Al Qaeda in Iraq and the insurgency did from 2003 to 2006 and you play that again on fast forward its essentially what ISIL has done over the last two years, eighteen months or so, in Iraq growing out of the Syrian civil war and being able to do so based on the policies of the Maliki government post-2010. So we have to remember war is uncertain, right? We have to remember that the future course of events is going to evolve. And what we have to do is we have to adapt; we have to stay ahead of that, and we can't--you know, even--we can’t imagine the war we would like to have and then assume that are enemies are going to conform to that plan. The final, I think,
continuity in the nature of war that we have to remain cognizant of is that war is a contest of wills. Right, so--and Clausewitz told us, he said, really, "Winning at war means convincing your enemy that your enemy's been defeated." and so if you think about it what we have done really in both Iraq and Afghanistan often times is we've announced, you know, our withdraw from those conflicts and not maybe fully recognizing the effect that that has on your enemy. Right, emboldens them. The effect that that has on your friends sows doubts among them, and the effect that it has on neutrals for example. So in Afghanistan we say hey we're leaving that encourages really a short-term maximization of gains mentality. Right, because Afghans don't yet have enough confidence in the future of their country and certainly a vision of the country in which each of the communities believe their interest can be advanced and protected. And so what the communities are really fearful of is a return of the Taliban first of all but also a return of that destructive civil war of '92 to '96. And so what each of these groups that have not yet really come to a full kind of political accommodation, what they engage in is really activity to build up their power base in advance of a post-US, post-international community Afghanistan. And that activity--you know predatory and extractive behavior at times, the commoditization of positions within ministries, facilitation and protection of the narcotics trade, the diversion of state resources and international assistance--I mean, those activities are weakening the Afghan state, but they're motivated in part at least by this lack of faith in a long term vision. And that's associated in part by us saying, "Hey, we're gonna leave," and not really being able to encourage, you know, really dissuade our enemies, influence neutrals, and then obviously reassure our friends. Of course, you know, this is a problem if you don't try to win in war. It's become fashionable to say, "Well, you know, do we still really try to win wars?" Well, I would say yes, yes because of course, as Clausewitz also said, "in war each side tries to outdo the other," so if you’re not trying to outdo your enemy you’re at a pretty significant disadvantage from the beginning. But the other thing is is it really winning--if you decide to win you have defeat your enemy which means your enemy can no longer effectively pursue their strategy, and you're thinking hard about what is that sustainable outcome that I can live with, right, that is consistent with the vital interests of our nation? And so the focus on winning I think is not gonna be necessarily tracking. Or the way to track it is not track the march of an army across the map to seize the enemy's capital, but it's really--you ought to be able to measure and assess progress toward achieving that sustainable outcome. Of course winning at war is not only a good thing to do because your interests are at stake, but it's also the ethical thing to do. And if you think back to the Just War theory of Saint Thomas Aquinas, one of the key criterion for a just war--one of the key criteria for a just war is the just end of that war, so having that just end in mind and then fighting and working to achieve that just end is what helps make war less inhumane, it helps us achieve an outcome that's worthy of the risks that our soldiers, sailors, and airmen and marines take and the sacrifices they make, and it's also helps you ensure that war is ethical. So I think we've learned a lot, right? We've learned a lot from our history broadly. We've learned a lot, I think, from our most recent about the wars that we've been in in the last fifteen years. But are Americans paying attention to it? And I think this relates to this problem of will as well, right? So I often times hear is, "Well, we're war weary--in size, we're weary," and so forth, but how many Americans could even name the three main Taliban groups we've been fighting since 2001? I mean, so if you cant even name your enemy--can you imagine in WWII, "Who's that we're fighting again? I'm not sure." So I mean, if you don't understand who you're fighting, we can't understand what the stakes are. And so I think that to generate will, and this is maybe not the role of the military but it's really for all of us to be engaged with, it is to understand what is at stake and then also though to understand what is the strategy. What is the strategy that gets us to that sustainable
outcome because I think that is what will help us maintain the will necessary not just to prosecute our wars but then also to resource a defense strategy that's based on preventing wars because ultimately that's what you want to do is prevent wars. And so in terms of preventing wars, thinking clearly about future war is very important, right, to prepare for threats. And there's a great historian named Sir Michael Howard, you know, who said "No matter how hard you think, though, you're never gonna get it quite right. You know, the key is to not be so far off the mark that you cant adjust to the demands of a conflict once they reveal themselves to you." But I think we're at risk right now of being far off the mark unless we challenge some fallacies about future war that are almost now reaching the point of conventional wisdom and are preventing us from learning, learning even from our most approximate experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan. So these are fallacies because they're really important capabilities, many of them, that are masquerading as simple solutions to the problem, the complex problem--you know, the political, the human, the uncertain, the problem of wills problem--of future war. So there are four of these fallacies id like to cover. The first of these, I call it the vampire fallacy. Okay, now it's a vampire because you can't kill it; you cannot kill this vampire. And in its last manifestation the vampire was the orthodoxy of the revolution in military affairs in the 1990s. And for those of you who are interested in defense and have followed it over the years you'll recognize some of the language associated with it. Right, remember that we were gonna have dominant battle space knowledge, that advances in information technology and intelligence, surveillance, and recognizance capabilities, automated decision-making tools, and so forth were gonna lift the fog of war. And then based on knowing so much combined with precision strike capabilities, long-range precision strike capabilities, we were gonna make war fast, cheap, and efficient. The next war was gonna be fundamentally different from all wars that have gone before it. And some of the language associated with this was full-spectrum dominance, right? Those who were most hubristic about America's technological prowess applied to war even used market analogies, and they said we are just gonna be so darn good that we will lock out potential enemies from the market of future conflict. They wont even be able to enter the market against us. And so this was obviously a setup in large measure for some of the problem sets that we encountered in Iraq and Afghanistan, right, and part of that is because you know the enemy is gonna respond to what they see as your advantages, right. There are two ways to fight the US Military: asymmetrically and stupid. Right? This is what Conrad Crane has pointed out. And so you hope the enemy picks stupid, but they're unlikely to do that. And so this vampire fallacy was based on really learning the wrong lessons from the 1991 Gulf War, but everybody else paid attention, you know, to what happened to the Iraqi armed forces in 1991 Gulf War, and I see some of my fellow 2nd Cav Regiment brothers here from twenty-five years ago in that conflict. And what our enemies are gonna do is essentially four things. They're gonna evade our capabilities. There are traditional counter-measures available: dispersion, concealment, intermingling with civilian populations, deception. Enemies are going to disrupt what they see as our advantages, and we see this now especially with GPS jamming, counter-satellite capabilities, cyber and electromagnetic attacks and so forth. Increasingly though our enemies are gonna emulate our capabilities because our technological advantages are actually the element of our differential defense that is most transferrable to our enemies. And now what we see is even non-state actors have capabilities previously associated only with nation-states, right, and this includes some sophisticated air defense capabilities, long-range missile capabilities, and so forth. And then of course enemies will expand onto other battle grounds, and we see this, you know, we see this on battlegrounds with perceptions and information, battlegrounds of organized crime and criminality and how they overlap with not only just transnational terrorist organizations.
but how Russia, for example, uses organized crime networks as an arm of its military and foreign policy. And so the vampire presents of course this tremendous capability, right, precision strike capability as the answer to future war, and that's what makes it a fallacy. Now related to this is a second fallacy, and I call it the Zero Dark Thirty fallacy. And the idea is that all we really need to do to solve the problem of future war is gain visibility on the network structure, you know, of terrorist organizations and insurgent organizations in particular, and then conduct strikes or raids against those networks. And we'll always just be one or two raids away from victory. But if you think about this again another very, very important capability, but it's related to the vampire fallacy in that it assumes that targeting equals tactics equals operations equals strategy and will deliver that political outcome, will address those human elements that are driving conflict, will be adequate to deal with enemy counter measures, and also will be able to affect the contest of wills. And so again this is again another very important capability, our special operations forces capability in particular, that masquerades as a simple solution to the complex problem of future war. It's related to the vampire fallacy 'cause both of them have their intellectual roots all the way back to the 1920s really and the strategic bombing theory of Giulio Douhet, right, and so these are fallacies that are always disproven but again they are very resistant to logic and even our most recent historical experiences. Now the third of these I'm trying to judge the demographics in the group here to see if you'll get this one or not. But this, I would call this the Mutual of Omaha Wild Kingdom fallacy here. Alright. So now for those younger of you in the audience I'll explain, I'll try to explain this, okay. This is back when American was wholesome, right, and there was no Bravo television. There were no Real Housewives of anything. I mean we--on Sunday nights we watched two shows. We watched Wonderful World of Disney--I mean, how wholesome is that, right--followed by Mutual of Omaha's Wild Kingdom. And on this particular show, the host of the show there on the left side of the slide, of the graphic, was Marlin Perkins. And he would introduce the topic of the day: lions, tigers, wildebeest, crocodiles. But as we know, I mean, old Marlin wasn't getting down with that wildlife typically. He would get his assistant Jim, you know, on the right side, to deal with the wildlife, and I think maybe the draw for us younger ones who were watching this show was, is Jim gonna get munched on today, is what we were thinking.

(Laughter)

McMaster: But under this fallacy we can be like Marlin Perkins, and we'll just get Jim, other militaries and especially other armies maybe to do our fighting for us. Now of course another super important capability. Is working with allies and partners more or less important than it was in recent history? More important, certainly it is. I mean, we're fighting the enemies of all civilized people today in the greater Middle East. But of course this neglects often times the fact that those who you want to do your fighting you, your Jim, often times doesn't share your interests, or your interests are not congruent enough or overlapping enough for them to possess the will to fight in your interests, and often times there's a capability gap as well. This is what obviously political scientists call principle agent problems, right, and so of course again another important capability but a fallacy because it masquerades as a simple solution to the complex problem of future war. And the final fallacy that's preventing us from learning is the RSVP fallacy. Thank you for your kind initiation to the war; the United States regrets it is unable to attend. And this is the idea that you can just opt out of these conflicts, but that of course neglects our history as well, right? Do we just go back to the Twentieth century? Remember Pearl Harbor, remember Korea in June of 1950, remember obviously most recently the mass murder attacks on our nation on September eleventh of 2001. So you know in this quotation that I think it's apocryphal in terms of its attribution to Trotsky, I think it's instructive nonetheless, that he allegedly said, "You may not be interested in war, but
war is interested in you." and as the great English theologian and philosopher G.K. Chesterton said, he said, "War may not be the best way to settle differences, but it's the only way to make sure they're not settled for you." and so this is important in terms of being able to have a military and a defense establishment that can respond to and fight and resolve conflict, but it's really an important element to deterring conflict as well. And so having a prepared military that's based not on fallacies but on clear thinking about future war is the best way to prevent it. As George Washington said, right, "The most effectual means to prevent war is to be ready for it." And so--or as Raymond Bradbury said when he was interviewed about Fahrenheit 451, right, which portrayed this dystopian, really, you know, controlled society in which individuality and privacy had been erased, any kind of intellectual pursuit, he was asked in an interview, "Hey, are you trying to predict the future?" And he said, "Hell no, I'm trying to prevent it." Right, so thinking clearly about future war is really critical for us to prevent future armed conflict. And of course in this era of diminished resources the good news is thinking clearly about war doesn't cost us anything, so it's something we can do about defense without worrying particularly about our shrinking budgets. So what about the future then? What about changes that we're seeing, I think, in light of these continuities, again taking the approach that Carl Becker said to take, the memory of the past and the anticipation of the future in a happy way? So I think thinking clearly about future war is important, but also today it's very urgent. And I think it's urgent because I think we're facing a period of tremendous risk, and that period of risk is associated with really the likelihood of a major international military crisis being higher maybe today than it has been in the last seventy years. And one of the reason for this is really the geopolitical situation we have developing that actually goes back to the geopolitical situation that Thomas McKendrick was writing about in the late 1800s and early 1900s where you have revisionist powers surrounded by weak states, and those revisionist powers are conducting probing activities at the far reaches of another power, right now the US, back in those days Britain. And do what we see is a return of what Thomas McKendrick called shatter zones of competition. On the Eurasian land mass and then also bleeding over, of course the disaster that we see continuing to unfold, the catastrophe in the greater Middle East. There's a great book really about this return to geopolitics recently published called Unquiet Frontier by authors Jakub Grygiel and Wess Mitchell, which I'd recommend. So within this problem is what we've called in the defense department the Four-Plus-One problem: four state-based threats that are now of course becoming important to us again. I mean, I think the post-war we can say with confidence, the period that we called the post-Cold War period, is over and is being replaced by something else. And also the threat from transnational terrorists and non-state actors, which we see in the terrorist proto-state of ISIL or Daesh. The first of these threats, I'd like to just talk about briefly, is Russia. And what Russia is doing I believe is waging limited war for limited objectives, but those objectives are not defensive; the objectives are offensive. And what Russia is attempting to do with a very sophisticated strategy is collapse that post-WWII political, economic, and security order--certainly the post-1991 political, economic, and security order. And they're doing it with a sophisticated campaign that combines, as we've seen with the annexation of Crimea as well as the invasion of Ukraine, the military activities in Syria, combines the use of unconventional military forces often under the cover, right, under the cover of a very significant conventional military power. But it also entails a sophisticated propaganda and disinformation campaign, sowing political decent and again trying to convince partners and allies of the United States that they should weaken their bonds and their alliances. And of course what Russia's been able to do in Crimea and Ukraine for example, is really accomplish limited objectives at zero cost, consolidate gains in eastern Ukraine, and then portray ours and allies' and partners' response as
escalatory. And so really Russia is highlighting I think the need for maybe a new approach to deterrence, an approach to deterrence that considers really deterrence by denial as the approach to take rather than deterrence by the threat of punitive action later. I think you can make--this is analogous to what China has been doing in Asia as well. Again trying to collapse the post-WWII security, economic, and political order and supplant it with an order that is more friendly to their interests, and to do so at the expense of American influence. We see this in the South China Sea certainly where you see the coercive power of China being employed by building land mass and then projecting military power off those land masses in the South China Sea, extending these territorial claims at the expense of neighbors. But this again is part of a sophisticated strategy as China and Russia employ other means and cyber being prominent among them. China has obviously engaged in the largest theft of inter-intellectual property in history, and this is aimed to have a military effect. I mean, there's a reason why the J-20 fighter looks like an F-22. I mean it's a knockoff. But also it is designed to have an economic effect as well. So these are two of the revisionist powers engaged in probing at the frontier of the far reaches of American power. I think it is very difficult to overstate the threat from North Korea. North Korea is a nuclear power with a tremendous if aging conventional military capability--aspires to be nuclear power, developing missile capabilities and additional nuclear capabilities. But it's also at the same time a failing state, and so a tremendous threat associated with any kind of contingency there with the collapse of the regime, which some authors have said, it has a more tenuous grip on power, the Kim Jong Un regime, than his two predecessors. And despite the difficulty that he's had really consolidating power. This is a threat that I think is emerging that is extremely dangerous, and that's the threat of weapons of mass destruction in the hands of these rogue regimes. And I think the threat to us and to our allies is in many ways analogous to the V-1 and V-2 threat in London in WWII. Right, the Scud Missile threat out of the western deserts of Iraq in 1991 toward Israel, or the rocket threat out of Gaza at Israel or of southern Lebanon, where these powers can project offensive power outward. A lot has been made for example of anti-access area denial technologies, but I think that understates the threat. These are offensive threats that our military has to be prepared to deal with. And the final of the four of the final four here is Iran. And I think it's not a stretch to make the argument that Iran has been fighting a proxy-war against us since 1979. And what Iran has been able to achieve in the greater Middle East is really consistent, I think, with what might be their objective, which is to keep the Arab world perpetually weak, and to do so at the expense of American interests as well. What you see I think Iran applying is what you might describe as the Hezbollah model to the greater Middle East, where they create a government or have a government in power that is dependent on Iran for support while they create militias and other entities outside of that government's control that can be turned against that government if that government takes action against Iranian interests. This is what you see obviously in Lebanon, it's what you see in Iraq, it's what you see Iran attempting to have done— they're attempting to do in Yemen for example. And I believe that they're throwing fuel on this sectarian civil war perpetuating that humanitarian catastrophe and obviously that has an affect as well on strengthening ISIL or Daesh. And so this threat I think is unprecedented in many ways. One of them is their ability to control territorial populations and resources, and we see obviously with the recent attacks in Europe but also in the greater Middle East, right, in Lebanon and in Turkey and in Iraq, the mass-murder attacks that continue there. When a terrorist organization can control territory and resources and populations it has the ability to plan and organize and sustain attacks in a way that an organization that is taking evasive action—doesn't control territory, can't control those resources--doesn't have. You know, I think ISIL's goal is its motto, right,
"endure and expand". And it think what we learn from all of these conflicts is that they're all about the control of territory and resources. And ISIL's particularly instructive, I think, because it helps make the argument for balanced joint-force capabilities. If you think about really what joint warfare is, it's really the child's game of rock, paper, scissors. And so you have a rock, which may be you're precision strike capability, an organization like ISIL has paper--dispersion, concealment, intermingling with civilian populations, expanding onto other battlegrounds--what you need is scissors, which are ready land forces that possess the will ad the capability to operate on sufficient scale and for ample duration to defeat the enemy to secure territory to deny its use to the enemy to protect populations, and then of course to do what you need military forces to do as we mentioned at the beginning to consolidate those gains and get the sustainable outcomes. Now that doesn't have to be US Military land forces, but you need to have that balanced joint force capability. It may be worth pointing out, you know, that ISIL doesn’t even have an air force or a navy, and they’re doing, you know, okay without them. So I think these current conflicts and challenges to national security are instructive for defense strategy, just as our most recent experiences were in Iraq and in Afghanistan. And so what are the implications then? What should we maybe take away from this as we look at refining our defense strategy and understanding these emerging threats and adjusting to what we see as a much different world than I think the world that existed even three or four years ago based on these four state-based threats and the threat of ISIL and trans-national terrorist organizations broadly? And I think the implications are four. So, in the upper left, the importance of allies. More important now than ever. Think about that first, the geopolitics chart, where you see really the competitions occurring for power and influence along the frontiers, what Grygiel and Mitchell have called this unquiet frontier. So sustaining and strengthening our alliances and assisting them through defense cooperation as we are is a key part of our defense strategy. The second thing is that recognizing that warfare is joint warfare. And for us to be ready for war we cant buy a three-wheeled car in defense. We need sufficient maritime, aerospace, land, and really maybe a five wheeled car, cyberspace power now as well. So our joint force has to be capable of operating across all domains. And then what's the power of that? The power of that is that we can compensate for the limitations of each other and accentuate the strengths. And that's always been the case. And so you have no bigger cheerleader or supporter of maritime and aerospace capability than the army because those of us who served, like I have for the last thirty-two years, we never had to look up and say, "Darn, is it friendly or enemy?" Now of course that might be changing with emerging threats, the fact that Russia has established air supremacy over Ukraine from the ground. I mean, we're seeing some real challenges to what we have hopefully not taken for granted as our differential advantages I the aerospace and maritime domains. But it's really all of our services working together, joint power, joint forces that are capable of operating at sufficient scale for ample duration to defeat our enemies, or to deter conflict. The third is about deterrence, and you see the image there of the great 2nd Cavalry Regiment striker that's conducting operations really all across Eastern and Central Europe to help reassure our allies and deter Russian aggression. And I think we really have to resurrect at this stage some of our old deterrence theories and then revise them and make them relevant to today's world. And I think the writings of Thomas Schelling in the 1970s are still extremely instructive to us, especially his emphasis on deterrence by denial and really the importance of convincing your enemy that your enemy cannot--or your adversary that your adversary cannot accomplish his objectives through the use of military force. Deterrence by denial is a much more effective approach than deterrence by the threat of punitive action later. And then finally you see an American soldier working with Afghans. We didn't even mention Afghanistan.
So I'll mention four things about Afghanistan quickly. Afghanistan can succeed. Four things have to happen fundamentally in Afghanistan. The first is an inter-political accommodation, that intra-Pashtun accommodation, but also a multi ethnic and broader accommodation among Afghanistan’s communities. And an accommodation based again on this vision of a future for the country in which they believe their interests can be advanced and protected. The second thing is that Afghanistan has to be hardened, it has to be strengthened, against the regenerative capacity of the Taliban which lies across the border in Pakistan. That has a lot to do with institutional reform, it has a lot to do with really reversing the influence of criminalized patronage networks, strengthening transparency and accountability within institutions, ensuring true meritocracies within those critical institutions, and strengthening the will and capability of security forces in particular to protect the Afghan state, Afghan forces which are increasingly making more and more sacrifices. The third thing that has to happen is obviously a shift in Pakistan to a recognition that Pakistan can best advance its interests through diplomacy rather than selective support or support for certain illegal armed groups that operate in Afghanistan and that are based on Afghanistani territory. Of course nobody's bore the brunt more from these mass murders and these murderous groups than Pakistan, and I think that we were hopeful, although we've been disappointed in the past, that Pakistan will come to that conclusion. And then finally international assistance has to be sustained. I think one of the things we can take from maybe our consideration of our most recent conflicts is, hey there aren't any short-term solutions to long-term problems. Right, and if you think about where we've been successful, they've been with long-term commitments. Maybe not at the same scale as the height of the conflict, but if you think about obviously what our military as part of the broader force in a multi-national effort and our governmental effort was able to achieve in the wake of WWII, what we achieved in Korea--I mean, Korea looked pretty bleak in 1953, right? You had a hostile neighbor, you had a country ravaged by decades of war, you had a largely illiterate population with no natural resources and a corrupt government. And it wasn't--it wasn't an overnight project, right? Now it's the fifth largest economy in Asia, a thriving nation, and a tremendous ally. Look at Plan Colombia. Much different end of the spectrum, but a tremendous success story with a sustained commitment over time. Remember the mission in Bosnia and the Balkans? Or the--the Balkans was supposed to last a year. Well, we're still there, right, and nobody's really paying much attention to it, but we were able to achieve a sustainable outcome with a longer-term commitment. So the final thing is, again on the lower right, to really recognize that the consolidation of military gains must be considered an integral part of war, not an optional part of war. So I'm really anxious to hear what's on your minds, where you'd like to take the discussion. Thank you again for the tremendous privilege of being with you.

(Applause)

1: General, as we all know B-52s have been forward deployed to Qatar and are there now. One quick question; will they be used, and how will they be used?

McMaster: Okay, so another just arm, a different arm of our tremendous air power. And I'll tell you, what our air force has done--I mean, I think that hey have in many ways, I rarely use this word, revolutionized close combat for us. And they've done that in a number of ways. First of all by being able to get us where we need to go through strategic lift capabilities, and our navy's done that as well, but then by being able to achieve air supremacy in the most recent conflicts, they've been able to project power onto land and really drive the identifiable fielded forces of our enemies off the open battlefield. And what that has done is obviously encourage those enemies to employ countermeasures, dispersion concealment, intermingling with civilian populations, but those countermeasures make them vulnerable to land forces because they're trying to
just save themselves, you know, and they're not as effective obviously maybe in securing or defending terrain and so forth. So I think they'll be used obviously to target these enemies of all civilized people, Daesh. And I think that as we develop a more capable land capability then that will make our enemies even more vulnerable to our tremendous air power. And so the way this will work I think, is that once you place something of value to the enemy at risk then they're motivated to defend what is of value to them. Maybe that is control of the city like Mosul. It's control of freedom of movement across what used to be the Assyrian and Iraqi border in Nineveh province. It might be access to illicit fuel that generates revenue. It might be access to a certain population center. And so once a ground force places that of value at risk, you then impel that enemy to concentrate against it, which then makes them vulnerable--identifiable and vulnerable to our air power. So it's that synergy, really, which we like the potential to get going and to see going against the fight against ISIL and Daesh, and of course one of the big areas of emphasis is building up an Iraqi force. There's a tremendous Iraqi leader there who's doing that now. Mayor Najim Abdullah Abid al-Jibouri, who was the mayor in Tal Afar when our regiment was in Nineveh province and did a masterful job at bringing communities together--he's now forming an Iraqi force that will have the legitimacy of the population 'cause the population will view it as neutral and not as a predatory, you know, exclusively Shia or Irani-infiltrated force. Once that force is established and capable and has the capacity to do it, he is the ideal person to help force the kind of accommodations that are necessary to bring this fractious and fragmented society back together.

2: On a brass-tax level and hypothetically, what does deterrence by denial look like in Eastern Europe?

McMaster: Okay. Well I think deterrence by denial really has to have, you know, a couple of qualities to it, right? First there's a qualitative aspect to it. And that qualitative aspect is to have the right kinds of capabilities able to--that could counter Russian aggression, right, and those are our capabilities, I think, like what we're seeing as land-based long-range precision fires capabilities, a tiered air defense capability, an answer to their long-range massed fires, for example, that they've employed in Ukraine. I think it's a significant enough conventional deterrent so that you can also address really what Russia has been advertising as this doctrine of escalation domination where they boast about going to the use of tactical nuclear weapons. So certainly there's a nuclear qualitative deterrent to that capability. But I think it's a broad range of join capabilities. And the second aspect I think is--maybe I'll say there are three aspects. The second aspect is capacity, right. I mean you have to be--you have to have forces in sufficient scale to demonstrate your ability to deny the enemy those objectives. So it's the qualitative combination of joint capabilities, it's the scale and capacity, but then it's also the will of the alliance, right, keeping the alliance strong and--as we are, as General Breedlove is our U-Com commander. I think he's done a tremendous, tremendous job. And in that connection. So of all the NATO leaders, I think we are all closer--one of the effects that Russia's had, you know--it's not all bad news, right, this probing and Russian activity. It's been like a wakeup call, right, so our army is conducting a comprehensive study of Russian capabilities and to make sure that we can not only counter those, but maintain the overmatch that we want to have over that kind of a force. I think you see the alliance pulling closer together as a result of it as well. You see countries looking, you know, more actively at their own defense and investing more. You see that in Poland, for example. You see that in France. They may be more associated with the threat from ISIL and Daesh there. But so you're--I think that it's not all bad news, right, and I think that--but I think the components are really the capabilities, the range of military capabilities, the capacity or size--you know, size does make a difference, right, and capacity and then the will are the three components.
Clarke: Thank you very much. Thanks.
McMaster: Thanks. Thank you.
(Applause)
Clarke: Thank you to Lieutenant General H.R. McMaster for joining us today and sharing his insights on the future of warfare. To learn more about General McMaster, his book *Dereliction of Duty* published by Harper Perennial, or the Museum and Library, visit in person or online at pritzkermilitary.org. Thank you, and please join us next time on *Pritzker Military Presents*.
Voiceover: Visit the Pritzker Military Museum ad Library in downtown Chicago. Explore original exhibits on military history, or be a part of a live studio audience. Watch other episodes of *Pritzker Military Presents*, find out What's On, at PritzkerMilitary.org.
(Theme music)
Voiceover: *Pritzker Military Presents* is made possible by members of the Pritzker Military Museum and Library and its sponsors. The views and opinions expressed in this program are not necessarily those of the Museum and Library.
(Theme music)
Voiceover: The preceding program was produced by the Pritzker Military Museum and Library.