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More than half of the world's population lives in fragile and failing states. Hundreds of armed groups, political movements, and extremists are competing for control and influence of these territories and beyond, using irregular techniques. In this interconnected world, even micro groups are capable of causing macro damage.

This current environment contrasts sharply with the kind of conflict and wars fought between states in the 20th century. Yet the U.S. national security system and those of most allies is still calibrated to clashes between major powers rather than the persistent conflicts that now dominate. The traditional U.S. security paradigm and much of the underlying U.S. strategy and operational capabilities needs to be adapted and reoriented.

The National Strategy Information Center research team worked with creative senior practitioners from democracies around the world to lay out the essential intellectual and analytic foundation for this adaptation. They identified key 21st-century actors, their visions, strategic cultures, and the techniques they are using. The team also examined effective practices from US and foreign experiences.

In Adapting America's Security Paradigm and Security Agenda, they conclude that managing the complex dimensions of the 21st-century security environment goes beyond force levels and firepower. The U.S. needs capabilities that it does not now have or that can be adapted to match the new environment. They include intelligence, military, and civilian operators with special skill sets.

The adapted agenda focuses on:

1. Intelligence dominance based on acquiring and operating with local knowledge;
2. Security, Stability, and Rule/Culture of Law Teams trained to assist local leaders in fostering stability, development, and rule of law principles;

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3. Military Units organized and trained to address the full spectrum of irregular challenges;
4. Strategic Communication, closely integrated with policy implementation;
5. Coalition Builders - skilled professionals forging cooperation among leaders in fragile states and to prevent and prevail in irregular conflicts.

The volume also contains original contributions on specific capabilities from Gen. Sir Rupert Smith; Dr. Marin Strmecki; Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad; and Kevin McCarty.