

The Military Balance 2008

Editor's Foreword

This 2008 edition of *The Military Balance*, the 50th edition of the book, is published in the 50th year of The International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS). When first published, *The Military Balance* comprised an 11-page pamphlet entitled 'The Soviet Union and Western Powers: The Military Balance'. Over the following years, the volume expanded its coverage into more regions, detailing the capabilities of more countries and including information on non-traditional threats, while also giving the reader increasingly detailed information on defence economics.

The Military Balance 2008 is a comprehensive and independent assessment of the military capabilities of 170 nations, and a reference work on developments in global military affairs. In common with recent editions, there is much focus in this edition on operations conducted by the US and its coalition allies in Iraq and by NATO and a US-led coalition in Afghanistan. In both missions, multinational forces continue to grapple with the complexities of creating and maintaining security in order to allow reconstruction efforts to gain ground. In Iraq, while the 'surge' of US troops announced by President George W. Bush in January 2007 contributed to a reduction in violence in Baghdad and some other areas, criminality, intra-communal militia violence and sectarian strife remained commonplace and continued to undermine political and economic initiatives. While Western governments looked for a path to eventual drawdown of their military commitments within the country, this remained contingent on the capability of Iraq's security forces: as Bush said in 2005, 'as the Iraqis stand up, we will stand down'. However, progress so far has been mixed, with progress made in developing the Iraqi army, but less so in the Iraqi police.

NATO's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and coalition forces have continued to conduct counter-insurgency operations in Afghanistan to address the Taliban-led insurgency. While the military task remains wedded to an international strategy to boost the authority of the Kabul government, its authority is still lacking in many parts of the country. However, there has been an increased effort to train units of the Afghan National Army and police – again, more successful with the former than the latter. While joint Afghan-ISAF operations have brought increased security to some areas, a shortage of military resources hinders operations across the theatre, while the application of national 'caveats' on the use of forces continues to be of concern to commanders.

In East Asia, the Chinese test of an anti-satellite missile in January focused attention on China's military modernisation efforts, in this case particularly on developments in missile guidance, command and control. Meanwhile,

Beijing's defence White Paper, published in December 2006, gave more information than in previous documents, with particular attention given to the developing aspirations of the service arms of the People's Liberation Army (PLA). However, there continued to be concern, especially in the United States, about a lack of transparency and the consequent difficulty in assessing PLA developments.

Conflict continues to loom large in international perceptions of Africa, and dominates the defence and security debate in that continent. While a new UN-African Union Hybrid Mission in the Darfur region of Sudan had by late 2007 started to deploy initial elements, initially augmenting the AMIS deployment, concerns were still raised over the level of cooperation of Sudan's government as well as the logistical and equipment difficulties that the force would likely encounter. Further east, Ethiopian forces remained in Somalia in support of the transitional government, while an AU presence lacked much of its authorised force-strength. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, fighting in Kinshasa in early 2007 and continued instability and conflict in the east absorbed the attention of the international community and the UN force, MONUC. Meanwhile, a new international mission is being established by the European Union, designed to support the existing UN presence in Chad and the eastern Central African Republic.

The Military Balance also contains analysis of defence and security developments in Europe, Russia, the Caribbean and Latin America as well as North America. Essays this year focus on unmanned aerial vehicles and the European and US defence industries and it is hoped that *The Military Balance* will feature further analysis of global defence industries in future editions.

As noted in the Foreword to the last edition, the IISS constantly reviews the way in which it analyses military capabilities. Since the end of the Cold War, the Institute has been steadily augmenting its highly regarded quantitative military capability data with more qualitative elements. We will continue to do so. For example, it is important to consider factors that influence a nation's ability or willingness to participate in international military and security operations. The Institute intends to produce, in 2008, a Strategic Dossier examining European military capabilities and considering new metrics that affect a country's ability and willingness to act. Lessons from this work will be carefully studied at the IISS with the objective, where practicable, of integrating these into the Institute's overall capability-assessment process.

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