

# The Quadrennial Defense Review: the American Threat to the United States

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The Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) is one of a long list of Congressional mandates directing the President or the Department of Defense to reexamine US strategy and defense plans. Like most past mandates, it has a somewhat partisan heritage. It is partly the product of Republican concerns that the Clinton Administration's strategy is not supported by adequate resources. At the same time, it is a typical product of a long-standing American belief that finding the right strategy will allow the US to impose something approaching a global order on the world, and do so at minimal cost.

The US does have a need for strategy and strong military forces. It has already used military force to secure its strategic interests on more than 250 occasions since the end of World War II, and the end of the Cold War has not affected the fact that an average of 20-30 conflicts have gone on somewhere in the world every day of every year since 1945. There is little prospect that the US can significantly reduce its peace keeping and power projection activities at any point in the foreseeable future, and the US faces serious potential military threats and major strategic uncertainties. The US is unlikely to create a "new world order to deal" with these problems, and the US must be prepared to react to new and often unanticipated military challenges. In short, the US needs the best strategy, force plans, and defense budget it can get.

At the same time, the Quadrennial Defense Review is extremely unlikely to result in that strategy, force plans, and defense budget. Quite aside from foreign threats, the American approach to strategy and defense planning involves a set of values that virtually precludes a realistic and effective approach to dealing with these problems and challenges. Important as current and potential foreign threats may be, it is the American threat to the US -- not radical states or foreign extremists -- which is probably the most serious threat to our future.

No currently likely combination of states can defeat us, or prevent us from preserving our vital strategic interests, if we have the determination to act and maintain the military forces we need. However, we are culturally and bureaucratically incapable of dealing honestly with the strategic issues and challenges that our country faces. We are unprepared to make a firm commitment to preserving our strategic strength and flexibility over the decades to come, and we are unable to face the real cost of making that commitment.

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## **Rounding Up The Usual Suspects: Foreign Strategic Threats and Major Areas of Uncertainty**

Like all efforts in US strategy and defense planning, the Quadrennial Defense Review must deal with major immediate threats in East Asia and the Gulf, and broad areas of strategic uncertainty in virtually every part of the world. While these threats and uncertainties are anything but easy to analyze in detail, even a cursory overview makes it clear that US military forces face continuing challenges that may lead to major new conflicts and which could place a severe strain on currently programming US military capabilities.

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### **The Challenge in East Asia**

The US faces a continuing challenge from North Korea and the risk of a major new challenge from China, and we do so at a time when Asia plays a steadily growing role in shaping the world's economy, technology, and global competitiveness.

In the near term, the obvious problem is North Korea, and its conventional forces, missiles, and weapons of mass destruction. Even if you can ignore the tragic-comic irony of a hereditary Marxist emperor ruling a supposedly communist state with a firmly fascist regime, North Korea is a failed state by every normal measure of success.

North Korea's GNP has declined in value by nearly 50% in real terms during the last decade. Its per capita income has dropped from \$1,800 in 1986 to well under \$900 today, while South Korea's per capita income has more than doubled from \$4,000 to \$8,000.

North Korea is, however, a nation with biological and chemical weapons and which may well still maintain a covert nuclear program. It has over 1,000,000 men under arms, an army with more than 40 main force division equivalents and 3,000 main battle tanks, and over 600 combat aircraft. Much of its equipment may be obsolete but mass can still have a major military impact, and South Korea has 660,000 men, some 2,000 tanks, and 460 combat aircraft. Further, North Korean forces are constantly deployed near Seoul, the heart of South Korea's population, government, and economy.

Further, North Korea is only the avatar of a much broader range of strategic issues which affect our position in Asia. Asia may be becoming the central focus of American strategic concerns. During the last decade, East Asia has gone from 21% of the world's GNP to 30%. To put this figure in perspective, the US

economy has remained constant at around 23% of the world's total GNP, and Western Europe has remained at 26%.

Japan's share of the world's GNP has risen slightly from 15% to 17%, but mainland China's share has risen from 4% to 8% and the smaller "tigers" of Asia have experienced similar gains.

The emergence of China as a major global power may well be one of the most significant strategic shifts of the early 21st Century. The economic importance of China's economy has doubled in a decade, and it is possible that China's GNP could double again in the next decade. Regardless of all the debates and uncertainties regarding China's current force plans and strategic goals, we cannot ignore either its potential importance or the fact the future character of its regime remains unpredictable.

These trends are not a prophesy of conflict. They are not even a prophesy of a "clash of cultures" between the US and Asia in general, or between the US and China in particular. Asia is more likely to be an economic partner than a military enemy, and virtually all of Asia's most vibrant and advanced economies are friends or allies of the US. The economic challenge Asia poses has steadily pushed our society towards new technological and economic advances, and has stimulated our economic growth and improved our living standards.

Asia is, however, a vital American strategic interest, and its importance to the US is likely to steadily increase for at least the next few decades. Asia has many troubled and uncertain regimes, and some pose major current or potential military challenges. A major American strategic presence plays a vital role in ensuring regional stability today, and it is virtually certain to do so as long as the US has the strategic will and determination to provide the forces and forward presence required to help maintain regional stability in the future.

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## The Challenge in Europe and the FSU

The rising importance of Asia does not mean that the United States can downplay the security problems of Europe, the risks posed by the uncertain future political character of the members of the FSU, or the fact that Russia remains a key strategic issue.

Part of the resulting strategic challenges are economic. If Eastern Europe and Russia are included in the totals for Europe, Europe still accounts for one-third of the GNP of the entire world and is one of the world's three critical centers of new technology. The US economy is becoming steadily more interdependent with the economies of all developed and rapidly developing nations. The US cannot choose between Europe and Asia in grand strategic terms; it must choose both. Part of the resulting strategic challenges are military. Russia still has well over 10,000 nuclear weapons, 40,000 tons of declared chemical weapons, and an unknown number of biological weapons. In spite of the military implosion and near chaos in Russian military forces and military industries, we are also talking about a state that the IISS estimates still has over 1.2 million men and women in its armed forces, 45 major active combat divisions, 16,880 active tanks, 299 major naval combatants, and 1,775 combat aircraft. In contrast, the US -- the "world's only super power" -- has about 1.4 million men and women in its armed forces, 10 major active divisions, 10,497 tanks, 239 major naval combatants, and around 3,700 combat aircraft.

At the same time, the political uncertainties surrounding Europe -- which today includes Eastern Europe and Russia -- make it as much of a continuing "strategic issue" as Asia. The US is in the process of redefining its partnership with Europe to extend from Germany to Poland, or even to the Urals. However, the terms of that partnership are likely to be uncertain for decades to come. Although Europe may not be the scene of future major conflicts, it is -- at a minimum -- likely to

require the use of US forces in conflict deterrence, peace making, and conflict resolution.

The US is also planning to expand NATO at a time when French, British, and German forces have lost over 30% of their strength since the end of the Cold War. This process is a continuing one that may be accelerating to overtake the rate of cuts in US forces, and European military forces have no plans to make the kind of force improvements that would bring them into technological parity with even the US forces that won the Gulf War. The current national force plans of our major European allies imply that they will cut their military manpower, combat aircraft, and heavy armored strength by at least 50% between 1988 and 2001. This is not a reason to cry wolf or bring back the Cold War. There is no evidence that Russia or any combination of FSU or former Warsaw Pact nations now poses a critical strategic threat to the US or is likely to do so in the future. In fact, we have good reason to hope that Russia will become a stable friend -- if not a partner.

Once again, however, the US cannot plan on the stability of a Europe that now reaches from the Atlantic to well beyond the Urals. It must continue to be a major actor in NATO and European security issues. A major American strategic presence will be necessary to allow the US to play that role, and any American power vacuum in Europe would greatly increase the prospect that Europe will regress into conflict.

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## **The Challenge in the Gulf and the Middle East**

The US faces very real challenges in the Gulf and it too is an area of vital strategic concern. Further, it is now all too clear that the US cannot treat an Arab-Israeli peace settlement as "irreversible."

Once again, US planners should not exaggerate the regional threat: Israel is stronger today than it has ever been in the past. Syria has not been able to import the military technology to match Israel in any area of conventional capability and Syrian arms imports during the last few years have had only 5-10% of the value they average during the mid-1980s.

However, Syria still has massive military forces, has biological and chemical weapons, threatens to turn its occupation of Lebanon into de facto colonization, and has joined Iran to use the Hezbollah in a proxy war against Israel.

The US cannot ignore the risk that the errors, hatreds, and fears of both sides may turn Israeli-Palestinian tensions into an enduring conflict similar to the one in Northern Ireland. They may also recreate the past problems we have had in dealing with Arab friends and allies at a time when we are Israel's strongest supporter.

The real-world threat posed by Iran and Iraq is much lower than the one projected in the Bottom Up Review, and they show no signs of being capable of meaningful strategic cooperation. Iraq has suffered from a half-decade-long arms embargo, as well as its defeat in the Gulf War. A grossly inefficient military machine, which depended on an average of over \$4 billion worth of annual arms imports during the decade before the Gulf War, has been savaged by Coalition attacks and has only trivial black market imports for half a decade.

Iran is still heavily dependent on worn-out, obsolescent military equipment it bought 15-20 years ago. Instead of the massive military build-up we feared, the latest unclassified DIA estimates indicate its arms imports are averaging around \$400-\$500 million a year. This compares with estimates of \$2.2 billion during the Gulf War and peaks of \$3.7 billion during the Iran-Iraq War.

The half decade since the Gulf War has made it all too clear that there are no major local alternatives to the American presence in the Gulf, and no prospects of creating such forces. The so-called Gulf Cooperation Council has failed to achieve any meaningful degree of coordination, and the Southern Gulf states have become bilaterally dependent on the US. No Arab power outside the region is a substitute or major supplement to US capabilities, and British and French power projection capabilities are much smaller than they were at the time of the Gulf War.

Iran and Iraq are not regional superpowers if the US continues to maintain a major presence in the Gulf, but they will quickly dominate the Gulf if the US does not stay. Further, they have considerable capability for unconventional warfare. Iran is steadily improving its missile, biological warfare, and chemical warfare capabilities and is seeking nuclear weapons. Iraq is attempting to preserve the remnants of its missile and WMD capabilities left over from the Gulf War and has new covert efforts. It will seek a break out in missile, biological, and chemical capabilities the moment UNSCOM and IAEA constraints are lifted or become ineffective.

Time is not on the side of "dual containment." The US cannot hope to meet its objectives in attempting to isolate Iran when few of its regional, European, and Asian allies support US policy. Waiting for Saddam to fall threatens to become a parody of "Waiting for Godot," and the "kinder and gentler" clone of Saddam that is most likely to follow his fall will not remove the threat Iraq poses to US interests. The US has every reason to support UNSCOM and the IAEA as long as they can be kept in Iraq. It may be able to sustain a high degree of military containment for both Iran and Iraq in the near term. Sooner or later, however, the US is probably going have to coexist with hostile Iranian and Iraqi regimes that it may be able to deter, but probably cannot change.

US strategic interests in the Gulf region will also grow with time. Some 60% of the world's oil reserves are located in the Gulf region; and the current projects of the Energy Information Agency project a 60-70% increase in Gulf production by the year 2015. The numbers involved are impressive. The Energy Information Agency is currently projecting an increase in total Gulf oil production capacity from a level of about 21 MMBD in 1995 to 27 MMBD in 2000. This total will increase to 32 MMBD in 2005, 36 MMBD in 2010, and 44 MMBD in 2015. This means a 27% increase in Gulf oil production by 2000, a 50% increase by 2005, a 70% increase by 2010, and a 110% increase by 2015. These estimates project that Saudi production capacity will rise from 10.5 MMBD today to 21 MMBD in 2015. It projects that Iranian and Iraqi production will rise from 4.5 MMBD to 13.2 MMBD. These are production increases of well over 100%. The official estimates of both the Department of Energy and the International Energy Agency imply that the total value of Gulf oil exports will rise from roughly \$133 billion today to \$190 billion to \$300 billion by 2005.

At the same time, the problems of securing Gulf oil will change with these increases in production. The region will need the kind of long term stability that will ensure that something on the order of \$300 billion to \$500 billion worth of investment can take place in the area during the next quarter of century in ways that will steadily and systematically expand oil and gas production throughout the Gulf in ways which respond to market forces, and not internal turmoil or external threats. The daily logistics of oil movements will have to change as well. The total number of tankers that must move in and out of the Gulf with almost clock-like regularity will triple to quadruple as more and more Gulf oil goes to Asia and must move by ship instead of by pipeline.

Further, oil is a global commodity. The issue is not where the US gets its oil today, or gets it before some future crisis. The issue is rather that the US and its trading partners will compete for the world's remaining supply at the world

price, and we are more and more dependent on the world economy. US imports already total roughly 10% of its total GNP, and exports total roughly 8%. This figure may seem small, but US exports already total well over a half a trillion dollars a year. Further, trade accounts for at least 2-3% more of the entire US economy each decade, and for 3-5% more of the US technology base.

Gulf oil literally fuels the world's economy. There is no other vital component of the world's economy that is as vulnerable to regional aggression or authoritarian regimes or whose security is so dependent on US power projection.

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## **The Challenges of Proliferation, Terrorism, and Technology Transfer**

The US faces three other familiar strategic challenges as the result of major inter-related shifts in foreign tactics and technology. These shifts include terrorism and unconventional warfare, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and the steady transfer of advanced conventional weapons into the developing world. Once again, these shifts are complex and uncertain. Even a summary analysis, however, illustrates both their importance and raises several warning flags about the need for a future US strategic commitment and the need for an effective American approach to strategy and defense planning.

### **Terrorism**

First, the United States tends to deal with terrorism and unconventional warfare by focusing on current "rogue" states and extremist movements, and by assuming that the forces at work are temporary and dependent on given regimes.

We are a nation of optimists that perpetually seems to assume that the end of history will occur upon our watch. However, violence and extremism are far more

likely to be a continuing global phenomenon that we must plan to deal with indefinitely in the future.

More than half the nations in the world have some form of low level endemic violence, and most of the world is not developing. The World Bank, which is scarcely a nest of professional pessimists, estimates that the percentage of the world's population living in poverty will increase from 60% today to 64% in 2050 and 70% in 2100.

To put this differently, the US is a comparatively small wealthy nation of around 270 million "slow breeders", that lives in a world where 3.4 billion people live in poverty. By the probable retirement date of the youngest adult now serving in the US military forces , that figure will have increased to 4.4 billion poor. By the middle of the next century, it will be 6.1 billion.

There is nothing temporary about the kind of social violence that spills over into terrorism. Americans live in a world of bad neighborhoods and the fact that they live in a wealthy suburb, and provide many of that world's police activity, will continue to make the US a natural target for terrorists and extremists.

Americans, including Americans in uniform, will die as a result for decades to come. That is a certainty. The question is how many or how few? The answer will depend heavily on whether the US makes a commitment to dealing with terrorism and low level violence that is as continuing and as serious as its commitment to major regional contingencies. This is also a commitment that must ultimately involve a forward presence. Terrorism and extremism must ultimately be dealt with by experts working in the threatened nation or region, who are partners with friendly states, and who have years of experience.

## **Proliferation**

Second, the United States must deal with the prospect that arms control has not near to mid-term chance of preventing the process of "creeping proliferation" that threatens so many regions of the world. In fact, even US successes can pose dangers. Arms control and export control regimes lead hostile states to lie and create covert or deniable capabilities to deliver weapons of mass destruction they then have little practical experience in controlling. Denying such states the more controllable tools they need to proliferate may slow down or prevent their acquisition of nuclear weapons, but nations like Iraq have shown that this can end in leading them to develop biological weapons.

US strategy and counterproliferation capabilities cannot be focused on nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles. Delivering a nuclear weapon with a ballistic missile is the most expensive, time-consuming, and difficult way to proliferate and the one most subject to arms control and counter-proliferation. In contrast, the steady increase in global transport and mobility, the advances in biotechnology, and the steady improvements in dual use civil industries like food processing greatly favors unconventional delivery of biological weapons. These are weapons where there are no meaningful arms control regimes, token controls on technology transfer, and where even an "ancient" weapon like anthrax can achieve the same lethality as theater nuclear weapons without any decisive ability to identify a precise attacker or the exact time and means of attack. To put this biological threat in perspective, a study by the Office of Technology Assessment compared the casualties from a weapon using 100 kilograms of anthrax and from a nuclear weapon with 12.5 kilotons. The nuclear weapon produced 23,000 to 80,000 casualties in a typical urban area. Depending on wind and sunlight conditions, the anthrax weapon produced 130,000 to 3 million casualties. The line source delivery assumed in this study could be replicated by having several immunized agents take attach?cases to the top of a line of tall buildings on the outskirts of a city and open them in a light wind.

America's enemies will naturally shift their focus to our areas of greatest vulnerability and do so along the line of least resistance. In fact, the more we control missiles and nuclear weapons, the more we are likely to push them towards biological weapons and other means of delivery.

### **The Issue of Arms Sales and Technology Transfer**

Third, the United States often focuses on the potential advantages of the conventional military technology that underpins the "revolution in military affairs" (RMA) without assessing the risks posed by the transfer of conventional military technologies and the growing technological vulnerabilities of a modern society. The US military and defense industry has every right to be proud of the Gulf War. At the same time, technology and the RMA are no magic answers to the challenges of the Korean War, Vietnam, Somalia, and the host of new, highly political conflicts that may occur in the future. The US also has no monopoly on innovation, and other nations still spend over \$22 billion annually on arms imports, and \$840 billion on military forces.

Being a pioneer in high technology often offers only diminishing returns relative to the imports of slightly less advanced weapons and technology that follow-on nations can purchase on the world market. Further, dependence on technology is a two-edged sword. For example, the US is probably becoming vulnerable to information warfare more quickly than it is are improving its offensive capabilities. US computer nets, communications nets, utility systems, and transportation nets become more vulnerable as they become more critical to our economy and as the constant flow of time sensitive data becomes more important. Similarly, it is extraordinarily difficult to defend against the threat of terrorism using weapons of mass destruction. Once again, this is particularly true of biological weapons -- where even 100 kilograms of a dry, storable, and largely undetectable powder could pose a major threat to a US city.

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# The American Threat to the US

It should be clear from this round up of the usual suspects that major problem the US faces is not its ability to properly characterize such threats and uncertainties. They are the proper focus of our strategic discussions and plans. They are real foreign threats to real strategic interests, and/or real strategic concerns that are not likely to change substantially in the near to mid term.

The real issue is rather the American ability to react to such threats in a realistic and objective way. It is the ability of the Executive Branch, the Congress, and US analysts outside government to deal with the real costs of maintaining an adequate force posture. The US has a long history of political and bureaucratic failure in coming to grips with the practical realities of creating and paying for the forces needs, and it is embarking on the Quadrennial Defense Review at a time when it faces the following domestic problems in dealing with strategic and military issues:

*A major gap between the spending requirements necessary to implement US strategy and force plans, and the military resources programmed in the current Future Year Defense Plan (FYDP).*

*A national approach to defense management, programming, and policy planning style that makes it almost impossible to admit the seriousness of the problems the US currently faces in maintaining an adequate force posture.*

*A cultural approach to strategy, planning, and management that denies the complexity of the world the US must live in, and resulting limits to US power. A similar cultural tendency to try to deal with the world as a morality play that must act according to American values.*

It is these problems which, for want of a better phrase, can be called the "American threat to the US," and which ultimately are almost certain to make the Quadrennial Defense Review one more failure in a long-series of efforts to create a stable framework for US strategy and defense planning.

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## **The Resource-Strategy Gap**

The most obvious US threat to the US is the threat posed by inadequate resources coupled to excessive strategic commitments. The US faces growing limits on its strategic capabilities regardless of how much it spends. The US is still the world's most effective military power and has a strong economy and stable political system. Nevertheless, the relative strength of the US has long been shrinking by many measures of strategic power and must continue to shrink in the future.

## **An Inevitable Decline in Relative Strength**

The US had nearly 50% of the entire global GNP measured in market terms when World War II ended in 1945. It still had nearly 30% in 1965. Since that time, its share has slowly dropped to a little over 20%. This is still a fantastic percentage, given the reality that it has about 265 million Americans out of a world population of 5.6 billion -- only 5% of the world's total population.

American planners need to recognize, however, that by around the year 2020 - the probable retirement age of the youngest man or woman now in military service, the US economy will probably amount to less than 10% of the world's GDP, and the US will have 4% of the world's population.

The US has already dropped from 12% of the world's men and women in uniform in 1970, to 8% in 1990. It had about 6% in 1995, and current US force plans mean it will probably have only around 4% in 2000.

None of these trends mean that the US is in decline, and that its economy, technology base, and military forces cannot grow steadily in absolute terms. None of these trends mean the US will not still be the world's most powerful nation in 2000, 2010, or long into the future. They do not mean we will not have the world's most powerful projection forces well into the next century.

They do mean, however, that the US needs to honestly assess the strategic consequences of spending so little on defense, and the politico-economic impact of the emergence of major new power blocs like Asia. The world will continue to grow up around the US, and our power will inevitably drop in relative terms.

### **The Top Down Reality of the Bottom Up Review**

There is a "resource-reality gap" that affects every aspect of current US strategy, force plans, and future year defense plans. Under its current defense budget plans, the US is trying to be the "world's only superpower" by spending less than 2.7% of its GNP and 14% of the federal budget. These figures compare with Cold War levels of 6.3% of its GNP and 27% of the federal budget in FY1986 -- only a decade ago.

There is no magic percentage that is right, but it is almost certainly impossible to sustain America's current goals and strategy, and spend less than a sustained 3.5% to 4% of the its GNP. However, current US strategy and force plans, have evolved in ways that deny this fact. Our present post Cold War force posture and FYDP were shaped by the goals set in the Bush "Base Force." The Base Force, however, was the result of an exercise in down-sizing forces and costs, and not in strategic planning.

The US never really had a "Bottom Up Review." President Clinton set long-term ceilings on defense spending months before the Bottom Up Review began. The

White House then cut projected spending for some years twice during the course of the Bottom Up Review.

The two near simultaneous major regional contingencies strategy that became the focus of the Bottom Up Review was actually the strategy that Les Aspin had announced while he was still in Congress, and a year before the election. This strategy called for different force and spending levels, but the new Secretary essentially shoe-horned it into the President's fiscal ceilings.

Even when the Bottom Up Review was first completed, it was clear that the US did not have the ability to deal with two near simultaneous major regional contingencies of the size the strategy that the Bottom Up Review postulated. US military planners had to play semantic games with national security, and define "near simultaneous" as a narrow time window occurring roughly 45-60 days after the first contingency began. Even then, US forces simply did not have the specialized equipment, C4I/BM systems, war reserves and lift assets they needed to make such a strategy realistic.

### **Failing to Fund What the Bottom Up Review Called For**

Since that time, the mismatch between America's strategy and force plans, and the resources the US has available, has grown steadily for a variety of budget-driven reasons:

*The US has cut back on many major modernization programs.*

*The US has cut actual weapons strength by much greater percentages than its cuts in combat units imply.*

*The US is not fully recouping the costs of peacekeeping and humanitarian activities.*

*The US is solving some sustainment problems by cutting the definition of requirements, rather than meeting them, and maintaining OPTEMPO at the cost of longer term forms of readiness like depot maintenance, major spares and war reserves, and complex training .*

*The US has not seriously budgeted in the FYDP for the counter-proliferation mission which was the highest priority in the Bottom Up Review, and which is growing steadily more urgent with time.*

*The US has not consolidated the National Guard and reserves as required in the original Army portion of the Bottom Up Review force plan.*

*The US has not funded military personnel at competitive levels with the civilian economy. Military salaries will remain well below civilian counterpart salaries -- a factor that will be much more important in affecting force quality once we stop down-sizing.*

*Congress has adjusted the budget more in terms of "pork" than necessity. We have put vast resources into missile defense without procurement or clear plans for deployment.*

### **The Inability to Recapitalize US Forces and Fund the Revolution in Military Affairs**

The US is now in the midst of a "revolution in military affairs" that we cannot afford to complete, and is not re-capitalizing the military forces it plans to preserve. US defense research and development efforts now cost roughly half what they did in 1986, in real terms, and will decline from about \$34.9 billion in 1997 to \$31.7 billion in 2001.

The US has cut procurement funding by 53% in real terms since the Gulf War, and to a level of roughly \$40 billion in the President's FY1997 request. Vice Admiral Owens stated shortly after his retirement that the JCS procurement request forwarded to the President for FY1997 was \$65 billion and the minimum cost of what was really required was \$75 billion. This is a requirements versus resource gap of nearly 50%.

The US has failed to make matching reductions in its basing and infrastructure costs for political reasons -- cutting them 14% to 22% at a time when it is cutting forces in excess of 40%, and we are not achieving any real savings from the cuts it has made for environmental reasons.

### **Living With a Strategy of Illusions**

The end result is a growing but fundamental mismatch between US strategy, force plans, commitments, and defense budgets. We currently have a strategy of illusions.

Granted, there is nothing new about this situation. The official strategy and force plans of the United States have never been fully funded or implementable at any point since the Cold War began. Any US planner who can remember the 2 1/2 war, 2 war, and 1 1/2 war strategies of the Cold War era will know that the US never really had had the forces to meet its major Cold War commitments. Further, the US retains the world's most powerful military. There is little doubt that it is able to win any single major regional contingency. It retains strong power projection forces, and it is making important force improvements in spite of its budget constraints.

Nevertheless, the Bottom Up Review has left the US with potential military commitments it cannot fully meet while it has created a reality where the US military will have to continue unprogrammed cuts in each service and/ or retain

major combat equipment for a decade or more longer than its plans currently call for.

Unplanned deployments will make this situation worse, and so will any investments in technology which fail to have a high pay off. Every force improvement will have to be a trade-off in terms of a fixed budget, and come at the cost of some other aspect of our force structure. "Vaporware" and developments that do not turn into deployments will be progressively more costly in terms of the margin of real military capability we will have to give up to pay for them. Every R&D effort that does not pay off in force effectiveness, will become a "force reducer" instead of a "force multiplier."

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### **American Defense Planning versus American Military Capability**

While it is always comforting for strategic analysts to blame such problems on those actually in power, it is American strategic analysts who have gradually create a national style of defense management and planning that is based on the fundamentally flawed assumption that very large organizations that exist in constant state of flux that must plan to deal with high levels of uncertainty and use new weapons and tactics under new conditions can be made highly efficient in predictable ways.

US planners and analysts have an amazing ability to believe they can make virtually any strategy and force plan work -- regardless of resources -- if they can only find the right organization, the right future defense plan, and the right technology.

### **"How Much is Enough?" or "How Little Can We Survive?"**

As a result, US planners and analysts translate the question "How much is enough?" into "How little can the US survive." At least in peacetime, they make

an endless series of efforts to "down-size" the defense budget, US forces, and military manpower. US planners and analysts deny the fact that missions and commitments have a natural and unavoidable cost. US planners and analysts deny the fact that large-scale organizations are inefficient, and that change is filled with uncertainty and what Clausewitz called "friction."

Within the Executive branch, US planners and analysts normally accept any level of resources the President grants. US planners and analysts do so even if this means trying to do more and more with less and less. In the process, they deny the fact that every sequential effort to increase the efficiency of our remaining capabilities produces diminishing returns. In fact, US planners and analysts tend to push their concepts of military planning and budgeting to their illogical conclusion: trying to do everything with nothing.

### **Making Technology a Threat**

This approach to defense planning and management presents particularly serious problems in dealing with military technology. Technology is one of America's greatest assets, but we perpetually try to use it as a substitute for adequate resources and forces. We try to turn "force enhancers" into "force multipliers," and then try to obtain them at impossibly early times, at impossibly low costs, and with impossible effectiveness. Far too often, US planners and analysts turn technology into an excuse for a "liar's contest" between program managers and the military services or in our testimony to Congress. As a result, the US style of planning and managing R&D may end in threatening America's ability to exploit the achievable aspects of the "revolution in military affairs."

The worst such risk lies in the assumption that an infinite amount of management can be a substitute for an infinite lack of resources. It is far easier to postulate effectiveness than achieve it, and it is far easier to invent artificial stupidity than artificial intelligence. There is a real risk that we will ask miracles of C4I/BM at

precisely the time we cut programs, manpower, and capabilities simply because it is so easy to claim that C4I/BM can replace conventional military capabilities. US planners and analysts may end in creating a box in the conceptual wiring diagram of the revolution in military affairs that is called, "and then a miracle occurs."

### **Teflon Wars**

The US is also exaggerating its search for effectiveness and technology to the point where it sometimes implies that it can fight "Teflon wars." US planners and analysts are tacitly seeking to meet a whole new standard of warfare in which the US and its allies suffer only minimal casualties, and the US tries to avoid virtually all forms of collateral damages and minimize enemy losses. It is bad enough to try to do everything with nothing. It is much worse to try to do it perfectly and without casualties.

### **Simple, Quick, Cheap, and Wrong: The Illusion of Control**

Americans compound these self-inflicted threats with a cultural and bureaucratic attempt to deny the complexity of the world they live in, and the limits to America's power. This is exactly the kind of mistake that was parodied in "Jurassic Park." It assumes that the right planning and management can make the uncontrollable, controllable. Worse, it assumes that it is possible to make controlling the uncontrollable efficient.

### **The New World Order Versus Jurassic Park**

Americans want to live in a simple, predictable world where proper planning could prevent all ills and the right force structure could deter or win all wars. They want to evolve a lasting world order that is based on peace, democracy, and capitalism and do so in their own lifetimes.

The American intellectual tradition loves to believe that the US can control and reshape the world if it only has the right strategy, the right leadership, and the right forces, and focus in advance on a relatively short list of problems.

As a result, Americans tend to formulate our strategy, policy, and plans with rhetoric that implies that they can solve history on our watch. Tacitly or overtly, they act as if the US could bring a decisive end to most critical structural regional conflicts or threats in the next 3 to 5 years, or at least during the span of their professional lives.

However, history and the "chaos theory" visualized in Jurassic Park provide consistent warnings against the hubris and arrogance inherent assuming that the right strategy and the right force posture can control America's future. Think for a moment of the fences crashing down in Jurassic Park and the image at the end of the movie of the helicopter leaving a hopeless mess. Think back to another memory: the helicopters leaving Saigon.

### **A Long History of Improvised US Military Reactions**

Americans have never lived in a bipolar or predictable world. The real world is very similar to Jurassic Park, and nothing has really changed since the end of the Cold War -- except that the world's other problems are now more visible.

As a result, the US has always had to be reactive and make "emergency deployments". Work by the Center for Naval Analysis traces at least 240 uses of US military forces between 1945 and 1988. About 190 of these uses of US forces had nothing to do with the Cold War or "vital" interests of any kind. They involved minor interventions, protection of US nationals, demonstrative actions, and other limited uses of force in the Third World.

Many of these US interventions were so small that they went virtually unnoticed by the US public and world opinion. At the same time, they were part of a

continuing pattern of limited "police" actions that have characterized US military operations ever since the end of World War II.

Earlier studies by Barry Blechman and Steven Kaplan of Brookings, indicate that most of these non-"vital" US uses of military force were successful. They were successful because US military planners recognized that they could not reshape the world, but that they could serve limited US interests with limited military operations. The operations succeeded because of a narrow focus on direct US interests, and because they could be performed cost-effectively with existing forces.

A detailed review of the CNA list of several hundred US military actions before the end of the Cold War indicates that most such actions had to be improvised with little warning. It also indicates that US planners had no way to assure the ultimate outcome or to control the casualty level. They engaged US forces in a climate of uncertainty and without an insurance policy based on "20-20 foresight." They accepted uncertainty as a fact of history.

Such a review shows that US interventions often involved the sudden assembly and adaptation of mixes of existing combat-ready and forward deployed or rapidly deployable forces. It indicates that the US intervened where such force mixes seemed likely to be effective, and adopted a posture of "strategic indifference" where they did not. US forces were most effective when the US could intervene early and when it could deal with a problem before it could be termed a "vital" national interest.

### **Trying to Control the World with Strategy**

More broadly, America has never been able to shape or control the world, and Americans must not confuse luck with strategy. Three times this century, the US has clearly been the dominant global power, and each time for reasons that have

had nothing to do with US strategy, force plans, and formal commitments before we achieved that status.

*The first time was in 1918. Europe's self-destructiveness made the US the world's leading power, and America walked away from that role and retreated into isolationism.*

*The second time was in World War II. The US emerged from the war as the world's only super power and almost walked away again. The US slashed its forces during 1946-1949 and put its hope in the UN and earlier forms of "new world order." It would have abdicated its emerging global role once again, except for Stalin's blatantly aggressive actions and his poor timing in putting pressure upon the US before it had fully run down its forces and retreated from Europe and Asia.*

*The third time occurred in 1990. The Soviet Union and Warsaw Pact collapsed partly because of our resolve, but largely for internal reasons. Fortuitously, this collapse occurred almost precisely at the time the US needed to deploy massive forces from Europe to the Gulf and use most of its combat-ready forces in CONUS, to inflict a devastating defeat on Saddam Hussein. Once again, the US was lucky enough to deal with a stupid aggressor -- a man who acted before he had nuclear weapons and before the US made the massive force cuts.*

America's current role as the "world's only superpower" emerged out of that victory, the collapse of the FSU, the failure of Europe to unite, and the fact that Asia is both divided and still in the process of development. It did not happen because of an emerging new world order, the triumph of democracy and capitalism, the end of history, an invisible hand, or divine intervention. It happened because an American president had the resolve and leadership to respond to a specific act of aggression and fight a major war. It happened

because of the collapse of the Soviet Union and Warsaw Pact, and the "new world disorder" the US was lucky enough to be able to exploit.

### **A Continuing Pattern of Low Level Conflict During the Cold War**

The myth of a "new world order" -- a phrase that first achieved great popularity during the Communist takeover of Russia -- was dead before the phrase was born. History is not ending. The end of the Cold War may have removed a central focus for US security, but it has scarcely remade the world. Nor, however, has it suddenly created new levels of instability.

History is, and will be, what history was. Some 20-30 conflicts have gone on somewhere in the world every day since the cease-fire in the Gulf War, but this is almost exactly the same number of conflicts that went on during every day of every year between the end of World War II and the cease-fire in the Gulf War. These conflicts were rarely the product of the Cold War. Work by Herbert J. Tilemma has traced over 600 significant armed interventions between 1945 and 1988. Roughly 105 of these 600 conflicts involved a Third World state intervening in the affairs of another Third World state and 269 involved significant armed conflict.

*The US, NATO, and Communist bloc never intervened in most of these conflicts or simply acted as the patron of a given side without clear strategic goals. Virtually all of these conflicts involved different force mixes, politico-military conditions, different terrain, and cases where there was no clear "bad guy" or "enemy."*

*Many of these conflicts then involved prolonged or repetitive struggles -- often lasting half a decade or more. Many reoccurred in spite of one or more major efforts at conflict resolution. Peace generally failed as often as it lasted.*

*Most of the human costs of these conflicts had nothing to do with the kind of high technology conflict which we are best equipped to fight, and which allow the US to limit casualties and the time in which our forces must be engaged. Virtually all of the direct military casualties in these conflicts were caused by relatively low technology weapons like rifles, automatic weapons, artillery, mortars, and mines. Most were primarily political in nature and involved kinds of low level conflict where the revolution in military affairs we postulate to deal with major regional threats would have been largely irrelevant.*

*Most were civil conflicts where today's concepts of information systems and information warfare will have little impact on the outcome.*

In short, the history of recent conflict is a study in chaos or complexity theory. While any such judgment has to be a "guesstimate", more than two-thirds started suddenly and do not seem to have been predicted by US intelligence or US planners.

These were not always petty clashes with minor human price tags. While it is impossible to make any accurate estimates of those who died, Tilemma's list of civil conflicts indicates that well in excess of 10 million died as the result of direct combat and war related effects like famine and disease.

Yet, these estimates of human losses in recent conflicts ignore another critical factor in trying to create a new world order or police the world. Even if the US had had perfect peace keeping and conflict resolution in the classic sense of these terms, internal repression would have still been the primary killing mechanism between 1945 and the end of the Cold War, and most of the casualties would still have occurred. Tens of millions of additional deaths occurred at times when no conflict was underway. Authoritarian repression led to mass killing. They ignore the domestic impact of Stalin, Mao, Pol Pot, and leaders like Idi Amin.

## History Isn't Ending: This Level of Conflict will Continue

Further, this recent past is not simply the prologue to America's strategic future, it is America's strategic future. Consider the probable impact of the end of the Cold War:

*Virtually all of the FSU countries face at least another decade of crisis and change.*

*Many nations will be affected by the by the removal of super power concerns that had at least a limited stabilizing influence on their region or nation.*

*A rush towards self-determination following the break up of the Warsaw Pact has triggered many of the same results as a similar rush in the Versailles Treaty.*

The world remains an extraordinarily trouble place. There are at least 100 nations in the world that face major economic, ethnic, sectarian, demographic, and religious problems.

*About 30% of the nations in the world have at least one disputed boundary, and about 30% have serious ethnic or religious differences. In most nations, there are growing economic problems, problems with social change, problems with population pressures, water problems, etc.*

*As has been mentioned earlier, the World Bank projects that the total percent of the world's population that lives in poverty will slowly increase steadily with time. It was 58% in 1990. It will be 60% in 2000, and 62% in 2025. This lack of wealth not only affects major nations, it affects whole sub-continent like India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh.*

*The world's population will increase by 16% between 1990 and 2000, and from 5.3 to 6.1 billion. We are headed by a world of 8.1 billion people in 2025, and*

*conservative estimates indicate that the world's population will more than double by 2075.*

All of these forces for strategic instability are interacting in a heavily armed world. The world is spending about \$870 billion on military forces, and there are about 24 million men and women in regular military forces with another 15 million in paramilitary forces. Arms imports are still over \$20 billion a year, with \$17 worth billion going to the developing world. And, more than 20 states are directly involved in acquiring weapons of mass destruction.

These broad strategic trends and complexities do not pose the kind of tangible risk discussed earlier in describing the "usual suspects." They do not pose the same kind of predictable challenge to our regional and vital strategic interests. They do, however, offer an almost certain prospect that America must live in a world of 20-30 ongoing conflicts indefinitely into the future.

Many of these conflicts will take highly unpredictable forms which cannot be predicted or controlled by any US Administration, strategy, or force posture. Many will be almost impossible to control, and many will thrust US forces and deployments into new "emergency deployments." As a result, many, if not most, future American uses of force must be reactive. At a minimum, this means that "emergency deployments" will be the norm and not the exception, and that a strategic focus that only looks at the predictable list of usual suspects will amount to tunnel vision.

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## **The Eschatological Struggle between Good and Evil, and the Great American Morality Play**

Hans Morgenthau warned after World War II that the American tendency to divide the world into good and evil, and to sanctify useful states while demonizing

hostile and potentially hostile states distorted American strategy and the American perception of reality.

Throughout the Cold War, however, US planners tended to bi-polarize a non-bipolar world, and moralize it in the process. As a result, they labeled many movements for change as communist and evil. They often confused potentially or mildly hostile leaders and movements with real enemies. They also often transformed strategic marriages of convenience into friends, democrats, and the "right side."

At various times, the US turned Communist China into a modern "yellow peril," and leaders like Jomo Kenyetta into forces for "darkness and death." It turned primitive Pushtan Islamic extremists into Afghan freedom fighters. It turned leaders like Mobuto and Savambi into democrats. We made the authoritarians who opposed the US into "rogues," and the authoritarians who supported the US into "moderates."

The US is now playing similar semantic games with a host of unstable regimes and movements where the moral difference between sides is more a matter of rhetoric than substance, or is largely a function of which side has the power to persecute the other. Bosnia is a classic case where Americans have tended to divide three repellent, warring, ethnic factions into a "good" side and a "bad" side simply because the strongest faction has the greatest ability to indulge in atrocities and ethnic cleansing.

Iran, Iraq, and Libya are cases where the US has taken hostile regimes that pose real, but limited, threats and "demonize" them without developing any workable mid to long term end game for its strategy. US planners cannot hope to totally isolate these states, and it makes no sense to treat them as if they were identical "rogue" or "terrorist" states. It makes no sense not to set specific, incremental,

and achievable goals for improving our relations and to define suitable "carrots" and "sticks" to try to change their conduct through long-term dialogue.

It makes no sense to use the kind of extreme rhetoric and inflexible policy that ends in alienating allied, friendly, and neutral states who must live with Iran, Iraq, and Libya, trade with them, or import energy from them. It makes no sense to "moralize" containment to the point where US officials do not distinguish between vital interests like limiting their capability to use terrorism, conventional forces, and weapons of mass destruction, and exploiting the political, economic, energy, and cultural aspects of containment to try to change their behavior and influence their domestic populations.

The US lives in a morally gray world and cannot succeed by trying to make it black and white. It cannot afford to talk about genocide when mass killings reach television -- particularly if the killed are white -- and ignore the killing off camera. It cannot afford to talk about "war crimes," "rogue states," and "terrorist states" with remarkable carelessness about the meaning of these labels. It cannot afford to talk about peace enforcement and peace keeping with equally little regard to the probable mid to long term success of any action the US can afford to take.

This does not mean the US can ignore human suffering, and the moral character of the actions of foreign factions and states, simply because they do not directly threaten the US or US interests. Even if morality were not involved, a global power that operates in today's world must act morally if it is to maintain the loyalty of friends and allies, avoid alienating neutral powers and potential friends, build coalitions, obtain the support of international organizations, and deal with the media. Opportunism and narrow self-interest have probably never been a successful approach to realpolitik, but Americans live in an environment where foreign perceptions of their national character and integrity have become a "vital" strategic interest and we must act accordingly.

Americans need to understand, however, that their real-world posture must still often be one of strategic indifference. US peacekeeping and "police" functions must normally be limited in scope and focused on real US interests, and we must often choose the cases in which we act on "capability driven" basis or purely on the basis of the cost and probability of success.

Yes, the US can do a better job of preparing for peace making and "police" operations. For example, we can budget properly for such operations and shape dedicated forces to execute them. Accepting the fact that they will be the rule, rather than the exception, would allow our military services to adapt to such needs without consuming the funds needed for readiness and modernization, having to use forces designed for other purposes, and extending deployments for months beyond the time that is fair to our men and women in uniform.

We can make improvements at the technical level. We can improve our regional intelligence analysis, the breadth of our special operations capabilities, our ability to support non-military operations, and our numbers of foreign area specialists to deal with a wide range of Third World countries and regions. We can try to improve our linguistic resources. These are all vital needs for such missions. They are areas where we already know we have major problems, and where we often are now making devastating cuts in our current capabilities.

However, there is no "royal road" to peace keeping.

The US can never mobilize the forces, the contingency planning capability, and the intelligence resources to even deal with those crises that appear on television or prick the world's conscience. Further, no matter what the US does to improve its current methods and capabilities, many peace keeping and humanitarian efforts will either become semi-permanent or end in being cosmetic. Limited uses of military force cannot change the basic character of local governments and

politics, they cannot restructure economies or heal ethnic and sectarian divisions. Even when America appears to have temporary success, it will actually fail. It may delay the impact of the crisis, or spread the killing out over longer periods of time, but the problems that cause the crisis will reassert themselves when we leave.

There will be far more cases where we can do nothing than cases where we can act. When we do act, we will generally only be able to offer temporary humanitarian relief, or deal with an immediate crisis, not solve the underlying problem in any lasting way. "Moralizing," "demonizing," and "sanctifying" the world will simply waste our already limited resources, lead to needless casualties and wastes of resources, and discredit the use of force and limit our freedom of action when the US really needs to act.

Tragically, this means that far more people will die than the US can possibly save, that these human costs will sometimes be incredibly high, and there will be bloody episodes of continuing low-level conflict and political repression we can do nothing to prevent. Americans must also be prepared for the fact that repression will often be a massive killer without overt civil conflict or the kind the US can hope to deal with by using American military forces.

It is an open question as to whether Stalin or Mao is the leading recent example of such killing. However, Mao is unquestionably the leading killer of the post-World War II era. Chinese estimates put the total dead that resulted from the Third Redoubt campaign, the Great Leap Forward, and the Cultural Revolution at as many as 55 million -- a figure that begins to approach some estimates of the total human cost of World War II.

We were not indifferent to Mao's actions nor negligent in dealing with the fate of the Chinese during this period. There was nothing we could do beyond the

political and diplomatic level. Today, we face a similar paralysis in dealing with the killing grounds caused by failed governments and civil conflict in Cambodia, the Sudan, Sri Lanka, Burma, North Korea, and Afghanistan. There will be many such cases in the future, and population pressure alone will steadily increase the number of human beings at risk.

## **Surviving the American Threat to the United States**

Accepting these realities is not pessimism. It is simply an acknowledgment of the very real limits to our strategic culture, the long-standing problems in our post-War approach to defense planning and management, and the realities of history. No strategy short of nuclear Armageddon can make history end on our watch. It is not optimistic or hopeful to deny the scale and complexity of the forces at work in the world today, or to insist that America must be prepared to deal with the world in realistic terms. This kind of denial will simply end in unworkable adventures, impractical strategic goals, and wasting opportunities where our limited resources could be used successfully. Further, nothing about the "American threat to the US" implies it is fatal or even means serious or inevitable American decline.

The bottom line of the American threat to the United States is, however, that American defense planners, politicians, and strategic planners need to do far more in dealing with today's strategic challenges than simply rounding up the usual suspects -- important as they are. These strategic realities mean that we must prepare to live out our lives in a world of instability and conflict, and in a world that the US can influence but can never hope to manage.

In short, the most important strategic issues America faces on the edge of the 21st Century are not Asia, the Former Soviet Union, the Gulf, terrorism, proliferation or any of the usual suspects -- real as these threats are. They are rather our willingness to face up to the real nature of the world we live in, the

depth of its problems, and its uncertainty. We must accept the fact that we are not visitors to "Jurassic Park". We live in it! The Tyrannosaur may be dead or sleeping, and today's raptors may currently be slow, stupid, and unable to cooperate, but we are not evolving towards the "new world order" or a world that any American strategy can predict or control.

The US must be prepared to react as new threats inevitably begin to materialize. It must have the wisdom to know what it cannot change. It must accept the fact that there will often be little or no moral difference between today's "friends" and "enemies," and that only a few allied states will ever fully share our values. The best possible strategy, plans, and analysis will never be a substitute for large, flexible forces in being. They will never be a substitute for the capability to react to unforeseen contingencies, and the ability to improvise will often be far more important than the best possible intelligence analysis and contingency-related force planning.

There is no organizational or technological magic that will allow the United States to remain a superpower on the cheap. The US needs to reshape its strategy, force plans, and defense spending in ways that show far more concern with "right-sizing" than "down-sizing," and it must accept the fact that we can never achieve some ideal level of organization, management, or technological efficiency. The US must accept that acting as a major military power involves risk, killing, and sometimes substantial American casualties.

Unfortunately, it is almost certain that the US cannot do this as part of the Quadrennial Defense Review, or any other peace-time planning effort. All of our past history warns the US that we will not accept costly realities until events force the US to do so. Nothing about the current nature of America's politics, culture, or concepts of strategy allow the US to easily grasp the nature and complexity of the forces now shaping history and the immediate need for much larger defense

resources than the US now programs. The Clinton Administration and Congress are scarcely prepared to stop asking the American military to do more and more with less and less. It will be a long time before American strategic planning and defense analysis changes its bureaucratic and institutional character.

The end result is that the output Quadrennial Defense Review will be another variant of the "Donner Pass strategy." Stripped of its glorious rhetoric, the document will produce remarkably little change in most aspects of US force plans and program budgets. All of the American threats to the United States will be left intact. Like the Donner Pass party, however, a lesser struggle will go on hidden from the sight of most American planners. US commands, military services, and procurement and R&D planners will be fighting for inadequate marginal resources out of sight. The strongest will survive by "eating their colleagues" -- at least in terms of the resources their colleagues need to survive. At the end, even the survivors will be half starved of what they need and be unable to go on for any length of time without sudden outside help.

Fortunately, America can probably survive the threat it poses to itself. Potential threats are still weak or nascent enough so that a continuing, and probably worsening, "resource-reality gap" will have painful but not fatal consequences. The US can go on living in a climate of strategic and bureaucratic illusions, and in which it is equally ill-served by its defense planners, politicians, and strategic analysts. It can then fall back on its traditional solution to its strategic problems: react when it is forced to, make sudden massive increases in its forces and defense spending, and fight wars or battles it might otherwise have avoided. This solution will sometimes be costly in terms of influence, money, casualties, and even success in areas of marginal strategic importance. At least in the near term, however, foreign challenges are weak enough so that it should work. The bad news is that the Quadrennial Defense Review will not help the US police, manage, or reshape the world that American strategic rhetoric inevitably calls for.

The good news is that the US will eventually react to the needs of the day, doing what it must to prevail.

*The Quadrennial Defense Review and the American Threat to the United States;  
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