



RE-ENVISIONING DEFENSE

AN AGENDA FOR US POLICY DEBATE AND TRANSITION

PROJECT ON DEFENSE ALTERNATIVES

DECEMBER 2008

The US Defense Policy Paradox: Less Security at Increasing Cost

The United States is entering a critical period of policy transition. Beginning with the advent of the Obama administration, and continuing through the end of 2010, all of America's national security and defense planning guidance will be revised. Certainly the need for change is broadly felt by the public. And it is not difficult to understand why.

Recent defense policy evinces a disturbing paradox: it has been delivering less and less security at ever increasing cost. With national defense expenditures approaching \$700 billion per year, the United States today accounts for about 46 percent of all military spending worldwide—up from 28 percent in 1986. Approximately 440,000 US troops are presently stationed or deployed overseas, which is close to the number overseas at the end of the Cold War. But, in no area of concern has this prodigious effort produced substantial or sure progress—not in the

“war on terrorism”, weapon proliferation, relations with allies, relations with China and Russia, or in the conflicts in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, the Mideast, or Africa. Indeed, the world seems less stable and more polarized today than it did in 2001. And anti-Americanism is at a level not seen since the Vietnam war years.

On a world scale, what parallels the present paradox in US security policy is a process of global re-polarization and re-militarization. If unchecked, this portends a return to conditions reminiscent of the Cold War, with the world consciously divided into contesting nation-state and “civilizational” blocks. Such an eventuality would fuel arms races, weapon proliferation, and conflict potentials. In this light, the process of re-polarization and re-militarization might be considered the greatest threat to our security and global peace over the next 50 years. The challenge this poses for US policy makers is to find ways to address

current security problems that do not inadvertently or unnecessarily feed re-polarization and re-militarization.

HOW DEEP A PROBLEM?

It is tempting to attribute the paradox of “less security at increasing cost” entirely to the Bush administration and a coterie of neo-conservative thinkers. But there is good reason to believe that the problem runs deeper.

- ◆ By the late-1990s, defense budgets were already rising after a nine-year respite, but with little relationship to actual threats. The 9/11 attacks found the United States largely unaware and unprepared, despite a defense expenditure of \$3.9 trillion during the preceding decade.
- ◆ On the strategic level: polls show that America’s world reputation was already eroding before the new century commenced. Alliance relations were growing tense and relations with Russia and China, souring.
- ◆ Key precursors and enablers of current policy ideas—such as offensive counter-proliferation, the “rogue state doctrine”, and regime change—were already evident in the US posture toward Iraq and elsewhere.

BOX 1 DEFENSE POLICY COMPONENTS, INPUTS, AND EFFECTS

- ◆ Assessment of security environment
- ◆ Security interests, concerns, and goals
- ◆ National security and defense strategy
- ◆ Defense posture
 - Military roles and missions
 - Doctrine and operational concepts
 - Force size, structure, and assets
 - Force disposition—location and readiness levels
 - Base and support infrastructure
- ◆ Military operations and activities
- ◆ Security alliances, cooperation, and assistance programs
- ◆ Defense budget and management
- ◆ Defense industrial base
- ◆ Economic, social, and ecological effects
- ◆ Civil-military relations

And, of course, a prominent element of continuity in post-Cold War policymaking has been the inability of national leadership to reach consensus on a US defense posture for which the nation is *actually willing to pay, rather than borrow*.

So how deep does the problem run? We can gain a fuller perspective on our present situation by thinking back twenty years. In 1989, the end of the Cold War presented a historic opportunity to increase global cooperation, advance the demilitarization of international affairs, and claim a permanent peace dividend. Twenty years later, this promise remains largely unfulfilled. Of course, grasping the promise proved from the start to be more difficult than many had imagined. Certainly, the failure was not a product of bad policy choices alone. But they played an important part. The quandary in which we find ourselves today is *path dependent*. At every juncture since 1989, our response to circumstances shaped what was to come and helped define what would seem “feasible” and “practical” at the next turn. It is the depth and the breadth of our current policy problems that should compel us to question not just the past six years of decision, but much of the past 20.

THREE CORE CONCERNS

The formal components of defense policy are summarized in Box 1, including important associated topics. The overall effectiveness and sustainability of our posture depends on the interaction of decisions in all these areas. In this sense, *defense policy is an indivisible whole*.

Reviewing current policy, we have identified 25 specific concerns that relate to the paradox of “decreasing security at increasing cost.” (For summary, see Box 2 on page 5). These might form an agenda for policy discussion and change. From these we have distilled three overarching topics or concerns that, taken together, capture the fundamental problems in current policy. Alternative perspectives that address these three core concerns can provide guidance for understanding and addressing the rest.

Core Concern 1. Security policy vision: How do we understand and hope to attain security?

This entails our assessment of the security environment and its dynamics as well as our security interests, goals, concerns, and strategy. Presently, the “war on terrorism” provides the principal organizing theme for US security policy, which puts America on a permanent war footing. Is this the optimal frame for addressing post-Cold War security challenges?

An alternative approach might emphasize broad multilateral cooperation in mitigating and redressing the sources of stress and instability in the international system. Such an approach would not turn principally on waging and winning wars or pursuing strategic advantage in a contest of nation-states. Instead, it would turn on building broad cooperation and winning the confidence of people in troubled regions.

Water, food, energy, and health security, global warming, economic development, and the management of globalization—all represent concerns that can be addressed only on a global basis. Cooperation in these areas could serve as a foundation for cooperation on more divisive issues. This much is certain: How the community of nations responds to the challenge of post-Cold War regional instability—and how they relate to each other in responding—will determine the character of the international system for decades to come.

A central issue for the United States is finding an appropriate balance between cooperation and coercion in its strategy. Another concerns the character of US multilateralism: Will it be broad or narrow?

- ◆ Will we redouble efforts to cooperate *across strategic divides*—with Russia, China, and the Muslim world—or will we limit our chief efforts to friends and allies?
- ◆ Will we work *through* global institutions and regimes—or *around* them?
- ◆ Will we seek to lead by virtue of the strength of our ideas and diplomacy—or by throwing our weight around?
- ◆ In our diplomatic practice, What will be the relative importance of “bargaining” *versus* “coercive pressure” (threats and sanctions).

Core Concern 2. The role of force and the armed forces in US foreign and security policy

Since the end of the Cold War the role of the US military in the world, and the role of force in US policy, has not receded. If anything, they have grown more prominent. Certainly, the Defense Department has grown more influential relative to State. And the armed forces have conducted many more military operations in the 15 years following the end of the Cold War than they did in the 15 years preceding it. (Between November 1989, when the Berlin Wall came down, and 2004, the United States conducted nine major foreign interventions and operations—two involving hundreds of thousands of troops and several others involving tens of thousands. Between 1975 and November 1989, the United States conducted

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six significant combat operations abroad—most of them raids and none involving as many as 10,000 troops.)

“Force” can serve a variety of functions and ends, including coercion, offensive goals, preemption, simple defense, deterrence, and dissuasion. Similarly, the armed forces can play a variety of roles. Besides serving in combat, they can undertake stability and constabulary missions, provide security and humanitarian assistance, undertake nation-building efforts, and serve to collect intelligence or conduct diplomacy. What is an appropriate balance among these functions and activities? What does recent experience suggest about our current dependence on force and the armed forces? Should it be rolled-back (in favor of other instruments) or simply refigured?

Any adequate alternative to current and recent defense policy must provide new guidance regarding the use of force and the role of the military.

Core Concern 3. The “fit” between America’s defense posture and the global security environment

Military “transformation” and “revolution” have been DOD watchwords since the mid-1990s. But they have not yet inspired a defense posture that is demonstrably well-adapted to post-Cold War circumstances. A poorly-adapted defense posture is likely to be inefficient, relatively ineffective, and even counter-productive. And this helps produce a “sustainability” problem.

Ideally, defense planning would function like an adaptive process that adjusts military capabilities to fit changes in the strategic environment. Of course, no large-scale planning process works this way—that is, without friction. In the case of defense policy, a variety of interests—bureaucratic, political, parochial, and economic ones—impede adaptation. Institutional inertia and entrenched ideas also retard adaptation—that is: the past always drags on the present.

Adjusting the nation’s defense posture to more closely fit the security environment would simultaneously render

that posture more “sustainable”. And this might turn the defense policy paradox “on its head”—yielding greater security at lower cost. However, this path entails changes in force development and modernization programs across the services.

These three overarching concerns—security vision, role of force, and the “fit” and sustainability of America’s defense posture—pertain to the set of more specific concerns, presented in the next section. Together they define a post-Bush agenda for policy discussion and change.

An Agenda for Policy Debate and Change

The 25 specific concerns that we have identified can be divided into eight categories:

- ◆ Policy on strategic warfare
- ◆ Counter-proliferation, counter-terrorism, and homeland security
- ◆ Policy on major military operations, conventional and irregular
- ◆ Peacetime military engagement
- ◆ The US stance on international law and arms control
- ◆ Civil-military relations: The growing influence of the Pentagon
- ◆ Defense budget, acquisition, and management issues
- ◆ Country-specific controversies

POLICY ON STRATEGIC WARFARE

1. Nuclear weapons, missile defense, and the “new deterrence”

This involves the re-targeting of nuclear weapons, the renovation of US nuclear capabilities (including the weapons production complex), and the pursuit of a credible shield against ballistic missile attack. In fact, there is nothing “new” in this. It has been a long-standing dream of nuclear warfighters to “win” the arms race and render one’s own nuclear weapons usable by (1) blunting adversaries’ nuclear threats and (2) developing and maintaining one’s own options for credible, tailored nuclear attack. But there is no certainty in nuclear defense and any leakage is unacceptable. What *is* certain is that the pursuit of a nuclear “sword and shield” system-of-systems will inspire a broad range of counter-measures, breathe new life into the arms race, and kill the momentum toward nuclear disarmament.

2. Prompt global strike: The advent of conventional strategic warfare

This involves long-range, high-speed offensive capabilities—conventional and nuclear—that would allow inter-

continental strikes on high-value targets with little or no warning. This is a “hair-trigger” capability that would enable a much expanded practice of forceful pre-emption, “prevention,” and coercion. New bombers, long-range missiles (ballistic and cruise), hyper-velocity air vehicles, cyber-warfare capabilities, and weapons based in space all might figure in prompt global strike. As in the case of the “new deterrence”, these efforts will elicit counter-measures, prompt those who feel threatened to greater secrecy and higher alert levels, and blur the boundary between nuclear and conventional strikes. Some adversaries may seek shelter under the umbrella of other nuclear powers. Thus, the net effect of these initiatives may be increased polarization and militarization.

3. Seizing the “new high ground”: The weaponization of space

Prompt global strike and missile defense initiatives may involve the use of outer space as a staging area for weapons. Space warfare also involves offensive and defensive capabilities to deny the use of space to adversaries while protecting US space assets. But the United States might have more to lose than gain from space weaponization. (Certainly, the world does.) At present, the US military is more dependent than others on non-weaponized space assets for communication, surveillance, and reconnaissance. This weighs against inviting a space-weapons race and, instead, argues for new measures of arms control.

COUNTER-PROLIFERATION, COUNTER-TERRORISM, AND HOMELAND SECURITY

4. Offensive counter-proliferation (OCP): Arms control by bombardment?

OCP involves the use of military means (including bombardment) to interdict, disrupt, or disable the development, transfer, or fielding of nuclear, chemical, or biological weapons, their precursors, their means of delivery, or other advanced weapons by adversaries or poten-

tial adversaries. One important issue is the balance in US policy between OCP and efforts to negotiate and strengthen non-proliferation agreements. OCP prompts greater secrecy in military development efforts, encourages defensive counter-measures, and adds to interstate tension. In these ways, it undermines prospects for non-proliferation agreements.

5. Counter-terrorism and homeland protection: In search of an effective strategy

At issue is the scope and focus of the efforts as well as the balance among the various means for blunting terrorist threats: cooperative intelligence and law enforcement, military strikes and large-scale operations, and investments in direct homeland protection and incident response capabilities. US counter-terrorism efforts currently are poorly focused and emphasize military means, which often undermine cooperation and feed anti-Americanism. Presently, homeland protection efforts suffer from serious lapses and are poorly integrated. These efforts *may* be underfunded, but they also exhibit irrational priorities, heavily influenced by pork-barreling. As a result, there has been insufficient progress in reducing even the most prominent vulnerabilities, such as those affecting aviation and nuclear security. Also at issue is the trade-off between civil liberties and counter-terrorism efforts. This pertains both to intelligence collection and the treatment of suspects.

MAJOR REGIONAL MILITARY OPERATIONS, CONVENTIONAL AND IRREGULAR

6. Planning and preparations for major wars reflect unnecessarily ambitious goals

DOD is presently preparing for several types of large-scale conventional wars. These preparations lay claim to much of the US defense arsenal, activity, and budget, distracting from other defense priorities. Current capabilities exhibit a very substantial overmatch of threats. In addition, goals regarding deployment rates and the pacing

BOX 2

AN AGENDA FOR POLICY DEBATE AND CHANGE

Policy on strategic warfare

1. Nuclear weapons, missile defense, and the “new deterrence”
2. Prompt global strike: The advent of conventional strategic warfare
3. Seizing the “new high ground”: The weaponization of space

Counter-proliferation, counter-terrorism, and homeland security

4. Offensive counter-proliferation (OCP): Arms control by bombardment?
5. Counter-terrorism and homeland security: In search of an effective strategy

Major regional military operations, conventional and irregular

6. Preparations for major wars reflect unnecessarily ambitious goals
7. “Shock and awe” strategy and attacks on civilian-military targets
8. Counter-insurgency, peace and stability operations, nation-building

Peacetime military engagement

9. Global military presence and base posture: Cover the earth?
10. Military cooperation, assistance, and arms transfers programs

The US stance on international law and arms control

11. Adherence to international law and legal institutions
12. The role of negotiated arms control in US security policy

Civil-military relations: The growing influence of the Pentagon

13. DOD’s domestic “perception management” efforts
14. DOD’s drive for expanded “authorities” and greater freedom of action

Defense budget and acquisition issues

15. DOD’s broken financial and inventory accounting system
16. Pork-barrel spending: The Pentagon budget as “gravity train”
17. DOD’s broken weapon procurement system
18. Military transformation: To what end? How much of what is enough?
19. Setting the defense budget: Forever more than \$500 billion?

Country-specific controversies

20. Iraq withdrawal: Soon or never?
21. Resolving the Iran and North Korea nuclear issues
22. Afghanistan war and Pakistan instability
23. Israel-Palestine and Lebanon conflict
24. Relations with China and Russia
25. Increased military activity in sub-Saharan Africa and South America

of multiple wars are unnecessarily ambitious. Yet, DOD plans substantial upgrades. These efforts pertain to tactical air forces, naval ships and submarines, ground units, and mobility assets. Tailoring these capabilities more closely to the present security environment would permit substantial savings and would help the armed forces reorient toward new era challenges.

7. “Shock and awe” strategy and attacks on civilian-military targets

DOD war planning emphasizes early and (sometimes) large-scale “precision” attack on political and infrastructure targets, often in cities. Forceful “coercive bargaining” also often involves holding such targets at risk. These practices blur the civilian-military divide, seriously complicate post-conflict reconstruction, erode international and popular support, and feed vengeful anti-Americanism. Also at issue is the importance of their contribution to battlefield success, which is less than current military doctrine assumes.

8. Counter-insurgency, peace and stability operations, nation-building

Recent security policy guidance suggests that the US military will expand its practice of counter-insurgency and armed nation-building, with an emphasis on renovating weak states, stabilizing post-conflict situations, and opposing a putative “global Islamic insurgency.” Interest in counter-insurgency methods has revived and DOD is planning to add 92,000 troops to US ground forces.

However, the experience of the Iraq and Afghan occupations calls into question the net security benefit of such efforts. Are most of these efforts likely to succeed at any acceptable cost? Regional instability and weak states pose a real security challenge, but a less rash alternative approach would emphasize multi-lateral non-military initiatives and perseverance in diplomacy.

PEACETIME MILITARY ENGAGEMENT

9. Global military presence and base posture

Even prior to current wars, the United States maintained a very large military presence outside American territory: 860 bases and installations, more than 200,000 personnel on foreign soil, and 30,000 sailors on more than 100 deployed ships and submarines. While some of this serves specific deterrence goals, most serves the more diffuse goal of “presence”. Most of the putative benefits of peacetime presence might be garnered with far fewer forces kept abroad in fewer bases and places. This would lower operational costs and allow for a smaller Navy. It also would reduce the exposure of our armed forces, the pressure on military families, friction with local populations, the impression of US global dominance, and the impulse of other powers to counter-balance. America’s global force posture is currently under revision. How much this will reduce our military footprint abroad is unsure. Current plans also entail pushing out into new areas, which may increase tensions and involve us in dubious new partnerships.



10. Military cooperation, assistance, and arms transfers programs

Since 9/11, US efforts in these areas have grown significantly and have diversified, involving new beneficiaries. Total transfers of security-related funds, goods, and services now significantly exceed \$20 billion per year (including Economic Support Funds for strategic allies). In addition, US Combatant Commanders invest substantially in cooperative planning and exercises. The putative needs of the “war on terrorism” have become a determining factor in pursuing cooperation. Restrictions based on human rights and weapon proliferation concerns have been substantially relaxed. And the Pentagon is seeking greater authority to dispense funds, training, and weapons as it sees fit. But this “war time” framework induces short-sightedness. Many of our new beneficiaries are of uncertain reliability. This problem has consistently plagued even longer-term relationships based on perceived military necessity; Pakistan is a case in point. Other concerns that have been short-shrifted are the effects such assistance has on the internal political dynamics of recipient nations (by boosting the status of military elites) and on regional stability. Outcomes are uncertain—although such assistance certainly implicates the United States in allied behavior, internal and external, that it cannot control.

THE US STANCE ON INTERNATIONAL LAW AND ARMS CONTROL

11. Adherence to international law and legal institutions

At issue are decisions to use force, the protections afforded civilians and civilian assets during military operations, the treatment of detainees (both military and civilian), and the US relationship to the International Criminal Court. The precedent set by the United States in these areas is important. America’s reputation hinges on it. “Legitimacy” is a powerful tool for building cooperation and a key enabler of American leadership. It is the necessary precondition of “soft power”. But it requires the United States to be especially careful about operating within the bounds of existing law and institutions—and not seeking to weaken them, circumvent them, or claim special exemption. Successive US administrations have sought to advance a “new rule set” during the post-Cold War era. This is positive only insofar as it aims to enhance the protection of civil and human rights, encourage the rule of law within and among states, limit the resort to force, advance demilitarization, and strengthen international institutions. Certainly, the ascent of any “new rule set”



must follow due process and not, in the meantime, serve as a rationale for vigilante behavior.

12. The role of negotiated arms control in US security policy

With the advent of US military predominance, negotiated arms control has played a smaller role in US security policy. Today, it may seem that America can dominate any arms race and hedge against any uncertainties that such races may hold. But this overstates our effective power, while understating our vulnerabilities. It also ignores the broader costs and risks that arms races entail. And it assumes that a distinct US military primacy will last forever, which it will not. Negotiated arms control can help to impede the development of the most destabilizing types of capabilities, reduce uncertainty, ease interstate tensions, and enhance America’s global standing. Immediate opportunities in this area pertain to the Non-proliferation Treaty (including especially its disarmament provisions), strategic arms reduction, the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), the proposed Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty, treaties limiting anti-ballistic missile defenses, the Outer Space Treaty, the proposed ban on space weapons, the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), the Mine Ban Treaty, and the proposed ban on cluster munitions.

CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS: THE GROWING INFLUENCE OF THE PENTAGON

13. DOD domestic “perception management” efforts

Especially since the 1999 Kosovo war, DOD has come to view public information as a “battlespace” and has become more aggressive in attempting to manage the media, control the flow of information, and shape the coverage of American operations. The most recent example of these “strategic influence” campaigns to come to light is the use of 75 supposedly independent analysts as

FY 2008 NATIONAL DEFENSE BUDGET

- ◆ Department of Defense (DOD) baseline: \$481.5 billion
- ◆ Additional funding for wars: \$180 billion
- ◆ Non-DOD national defense: \$22.4 billion

Total FY 2008 National Defense: \$683.9 billion

FY 2009 NATIONAL DEFENSE BUDGET

- ◆ Department of Defense (DOD) baseline: \$516 billion
- ◆ Additional funding for wars: \$66 billion*
- ◆ Non-DOD national defense: \$22 billion

Total FY 2009 National Defense: 604 billion*

* Substantially more will be added in supplementals during 2009

CURRENT US SHARE OF WORLD MILITARY SPENDING

- ◆ Purchasing power parity: ~46 %

BUDGET GROWTH

- ◆ Increase in DOD funding 1998-2008, excluding war: 44% (inflation adjusted)
- ◆ Increase in DOD funding 1998-2008, including war: 90% (inflation adjusted)

POST-COLD WAR DOD EXPENDITURE

- ◆ 1992-2008: \$7.5 trillion (including wars)
- ◆ Planned 2009-2013: ~\$2.6 trillion (not including all war funding)*

* Reportedly, in early 2009, the service chiefs will request that the new president add \$450 billion to this five year sum. Also likely are additional supplementals for war.

US GROSS FEDERAL DEBT

- ◆ Nov. 2008: \$10.5 trillion

“message surrogates” in the news media. Other efforts include the planting of supposedly independent news stories in the media, the screening of journalist access to information based on their perceived bias, and the surreptitious shaping of public discussion on Internet blogs. Most serious is the stealthy conveyance of dubious or weak “intelligence” through third-parties. These propaganda campaigns are antithetical to well-informed public debate and, thus, represent a direct assault on our democratic process.

14. The Pentagon’s drive for expanded “authorities” and greater freedom of action

DOD is currently seeking greater freedom of action or “authorities” in a variety of areas, including budget, finance, acquisition, and personnel. It also seeks greater freedom in providing security and other types of assistance to potential partner nations in the war on terror (including the provision of advanced weapons), and more freedom in nation-building activities, including work with foreign police forces and interior ministries. This means loosening some of the constraints on foreign assistance and arms transfers imposed by Congress, and allowing DOD to extend its writ into areas traditionally in the State Department portfolio. Curiously, DOD points to Iraq, where it has enjoyed substantial freedom of action, as an example of the types of freedom it seeks to exercise more broadly. But the Iraq case actually argues for the opposite—that is: greater oversight and a more limited writ. This also applies to DOD’s desire to have greater freedom to call-up Reserve and National Guard troops. Similarly, the example of the war argues against DOD’s proposal that the President be given greater freedom to launch prompt global strikes.

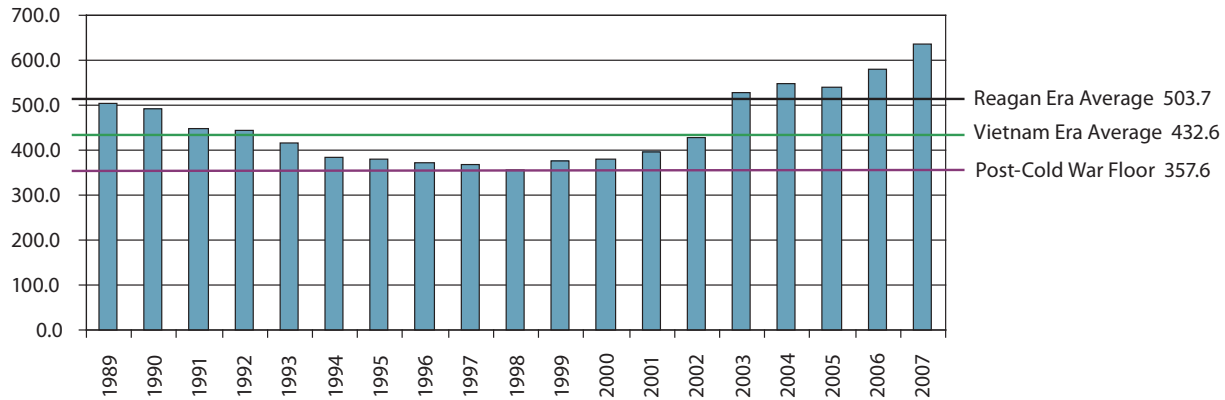
DEFENSE BUDGET AND ACQUISITION ISSUES

15. The DOD’s broken financial and inventory accounting system

The Pentagon’s financial and asset accounting systems are in complete disarray, making useful audits impossible. “DOD does not know what it owns, where its inventory is located, and how its annual budget is being spent,” according to Kwai Chan, a former lead analysts with the Government Accountability Office. DOD routinely cannot account for the final disposition of a trillion dollars or more of its funds and assets. This opens the door wide to waste, fraud, larceny, and misdirection of resources. As a result, the budget totals upon which Congress bases and

POST-COLD WAR US DEFENSE SPENDING

Billions of US Dollars



Sources: Office of the Undersecretary of Defense (Comptroller)

tracks its decisions are unreliable. And military units, personnel, and veterans often do not receive and cannot find the goods and services supposedly at their disposal. Indicative of the problem, 200,000 weapons and \$9 billion in funds have been reported “lost” in Iraq. In 2001, former Defense Secretary Rumsfeld correctly concluded that the accounting problem constituted a serious national security problem, also estimating that it cost the American taxpayer as much as \$25 billion a year.

16. Pork-barrel spending: The Pentagon budget as “gravy train”

The temptation to see and use military spending as a form of welfare for congressional districts requires constant vigilance by independent observers and actors. Congressional add-ons or “earmarks” to presidential budget requests now often exceed \$10 billion. But this is only the visible tip of the problem. Ongoing support for troubled or excessive programs within the yearly presidential budget request also may reflect parochial interest. This tendency was most evident when Congresspersons from both parties worked hard to preserve redundant military bases in their states and districts, often against the Pentagon’s assessment of requirements. Pork-barreling and horse-trading within Congress tends not only to boost the overall size of the budget (to the detriment of other priorities) but also to impede adaptation of our military to new circumstances.

17. The DOD’s broken weapon procurement system

More so than any other nation, the United States has the option of developing and building weapon systems to order. The services, however, do not speak with one voice, which often leads to an unviable choice between fielding redundant systems and pursuing “joint” ones overloaded with requirements. The US defense department also is freer than most to hope that future technological developments will allow it to reconcile competing requirements and budget constraints. And weapon developers and manufacturers encourage this expectation. But imagination consistently outruns achievement, delivering systems that are less capable, less reliable, and more costly to buy and maintain than originally hoped and promised. Helping this along is DOD’s tendency to buy into systems before they have been sufficiently tested and proven. Early in the process, competition essentially ends. Finally, DOD, the services, and manufacturers consistently underestimate the final unit cost of systems in development—and substantially so. This facilitates buy-in, but overloads future budgets.

18. Military transformation: To what end? And how much of what is enough?

The idea of a “revolution” in military capabilities has been a driver of US force modernization for more than 15 years, but its meaning and value remain contested. Some enthusiasts emphasize using information technology to

create networked armed forces. Others refer to conflict in cyber-space. And some seek to hedge against “asymmetric threats”—non-state actors and others using irregular means of warfare. In all cases, however, the quest for transformation seems detached from reality. What is often lacking is an empirical and quantitative assessments of real and rising dangers. Thus, transformation has become a rationale for the United States to engage in a solo arms race in which the only limit is the imagination of defense planners. The US military needs to transform itself, and it should take advantage of new information technology, but this must be based on a factual accounting of real and rising challenges. Otherwise, “transformation” becomes an end in itself, driven by technology, industrial interests, and inter-service competition. And this can be an impediment to usefully adapting the US military to new strategic circumstances.

19. Setting the defense budget: Forever more than \$600 billion?

By the end of FY-2009 it is likely that the United States will have authorized nearly \$700 billion for National Defense, including wars and supplementals—a sum equivalent to about 4.5 percent of the US Gross Domestic Product (GDP). One might expect that without the wars, the budget could recede to the non-war baseline: \$516 billion (or 3.5 percent of GDP). But hidden in “war spending” are tens of billions of dollars that would otherwise appear in the baseline budget. Moreover, the services are likely to demand additional tens of billions to “reset” the force,

post-war. And procurement budgets will continue to rise. This raises the prospect of post-war budgets “receding” to no less than \$600 billion—or about 4 percent of GDP, which is a benchmark that some analysts propose.

There are worthwhile policy choices that could lead the budget substantially lower, however—as noted throughout this document. These include more realistic war planning, refraining from the pursuit of destabilizing weapon capabilities, and restraint regarding military occupations and long-term counter-insurgency campaigns.

At any rate, proposals to anchor defense spending to a percentage of GDP are without merit and would not be tolerated in any other area of federal spending. In an absolute sense, the nation could probably afford devoting 4 percent of GDP to defense, although other needs would go wanting. But the budget should correspond to requirements, not abstract benchmarks. Moreover, given today’s highly-competitive global economy, greater care should be exercised regarding how we invest every percent of GDP.

COUNTRY-SPECIFIC CONTROVERSIES

20. Iraq withdrawal: Soon or never?

The United States is presently on a bipartisan path of long-term, large-scale military involvement in Iraq, minimally entailing the deployment of tens of thousands of troops. However, the Iraq occupation detracts from US security, contributes to regional tensions, and feeds the divisions that plague Iraq. Iraq may need assistance of various sorts for a long time. But what are the alternatives to US troop presence? How might we reduce the risks that attend withdrawal? How might we augment the UN’s role and gain greater cooperation from Iraq’s neighbors (and the Muslim world generally)?

21. Resolving the Iran and North Korea nuclear issues

In both cases, the goal of “regime change” has impeded resolution of the nuclear issue. So have punitive measures and the general designation of the two states as “rogues”, which tends to foreclose normal diplomacy. Most deleterious is saber-rattling, which undermines both diplomacy and the prospects for democratization and stable transition. Progress in the Korea standoff during the 1990s suggests that “give-and-take” bargaining holds promise. In the Iran case, especially, real diplomacy might make possible a “grand bargain” resolving the nuclear issue and facilitating stability in Iraq and Lebanon. De-escalating the confrontation with Iran is a key to progress on these issues and others.

THE COSTS OF WAR

- ◆ Total DOD war spending, 2001-2008: ~\$810 billion
- ◆ Total non-DOD war spending, 2001-2008: ~\$50 billion
- ◆ US troops killed in Iraq & Afghanistan, 2001-Nov 2008: 4,818
- ◆ Wounded in action, Iraq & Afghanistan, 2001-Nov 2008: 33,355
- ◆ Non-hostile medical emergency/air evacuation, Iraq and Afghanistan: 41,911

US MILITARY PERSONNEL ON FOREIGN SOIL AND WATER

- ◆ End 2008: ~440,000
- ◆ Subset in and around Iraq & Afghanistan, end 2008: ~220,000

22. The Afghanistan war and Pakistan instability

What should be foremost in our policy toward Afghanistan comes last: economic development assistance. Foreign military presence and operations in Afghanistan and Pakistan are generating more conflict and instability than they are resolving. Progress depends on mitigating two problems: First, Pakistan feels that the new Afghanistan puts its security interests at risk; Second, too many Pashtuns in Afghanistan and Pakistan feel that their community interests are at odds with governments under the sway of foreigners. The United States might adopt less ambitious goals for the near-term, emphasizing compromise and containment. Elements of the Taliban might be coopted into the Afghan government. At any rate: positive change will come slowly to this region and our policy should reflect recognition of that fact. It should also recognize that the increasing resort to air power is alienating broad swaths of Afghan and Pakistani opinion.

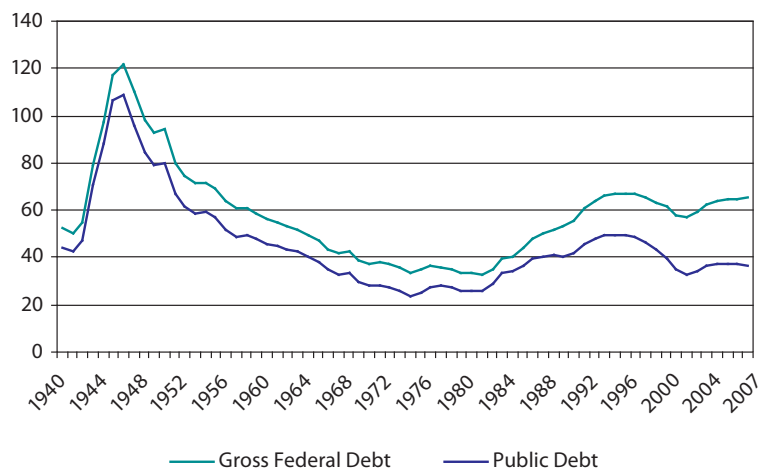
23. Israel-Palestine and Lebanon: A rising tide of conflict with no end in sight

The present confrontations help drive instability throughout the region. Currently, US security goals are focused on isolating and weakening Hamas and Hezbollah. But these two are probably the most popular and powerful organizations in the region. And neither faces any real prospect of neutralization. Can and should they be engaged? How and to what extent? Syria and Iran are key players, too—but they presently have little positive incentive for cooperation. The constitution of a viable Palestinian state and Israeli withdrawal from other post-1967 occupied territories might win Syrian cooperation, undercut the appeal of extremists, and create a better context for curbing terrorist activity. Can this be accomplished without compromising Israeli security? What types of security guarantees might Israel require?

24. Relations with China and Russia

America's relationship with China and Russia will be central to the prospects for world peace over the next 50 years, insofar as both nations will be significantly more powerful in coming decades than they are now. Since the

US FEDERAL DEBT AS PERCENTAGE OF GDP, 1940-2007



"Total debt" includes funds borrowed from the Social Security Trust funds and Civil Service Retirement Funds. "Public debt" does not include these intra-governmental transfers. Due to current recession and financial crisis, there will be a significant rise in debt-to-GDP ratio for 2008 and 2009.

Source: Office of Management and Budget, Budget of the US Government FY 2009, Historical Tables, pp. 127-128

end of the Cold War, US policy toward these two has too closely resembled military containment. And the containment ring has been tightened by means of bases, alliances, and missile shields. But it has not had the desired dissuasive effect—quite the opposite. Rather than progress, a hardening of attitudes has occurred, although it is not yet intractable. The United States might attempt a new course: relax efforts to shape these countries via military pressure—for now—and emphasize "give-and-take" diplomacy. Seek ways to encourage democratic development that do not inspire defensive and nationalist responses. The larger question is: Can the United States "make more room at the global table" for these two powers without compromising its security?

25. Increased military activity in sub-Saharan Africa and South America

Over the past decade, US military activity in Africa has increased dramatically—including military assistance, military operations, arms transfers, and the establishment of a new combatant command, AFRICOM. US military activity in Africa mostly involves a belt of 20 countries just north of the equator and anchored on those eastern states near the Arabian peninsula. In South America, mili-

tary engagement has rebounded and diversified following the loss of bases in the Canal Zone. The growth in activity especially focuses on Colombia and the Triple Frontier (border area of Paraguay, Argentina and Brazil). In both Africa and South America, “counter-terrorism” is the key rationale for the surge in US activity. But other concerns are at work as well: in Africa, the influence of China and political Islam, generally; in South America, the leftward turn of the continent since 2000. Overall, the purposes of

US military activism in Africa and South America need to be clarified. So do the effects. How does boosting security forces and military elites effect local governance? Is US activism reducing or increasing conflict potentials? Special concern might focus on any US role in the Ethiopian occupation of Somalia and the Chad-Sudan conflict. On a more general level: How do key African nations view the establishment of AFRICOM and what is its relationship to African Union initiatives?

THE PROJECT ON DEFENSE ALTERNATIVES (PDA)

PDA seeks to adapt security policy to the challenges and opportunities of the post-cold war, post-9/11 era. Toward this end, the project:

- Offers independent, non-partisan analysis of security issues,
- Develops and promotes a broad range of policy alternatives, and
- Helps support a lively, open public debate on defense policy.

PDA uniquely combines “common security” and “defense reform” perspectives in its work. Thus, the project is especially interested in policy options that reconcile the goals of:

- Reliable, sustainable defense against aggression,
- Enhanced international stability and cooperation, and
- Lower levels of armed force and military spending, worldwide.

Although the project focuses primarily on US defense policy, it also has worked on renovation of the UN peace-keeping system as well as on defense reform for East and Central Europe, southern Africa, South America, and the Persian Gulf.

POLICY INNOVATION

In weighing official policy and developing alternatives, PDA adopts a distinctively holistic perspective. The project views policy choices not only in terms of traditional cost and effectiveness criteria, but also in terms of their broad stability and collateral effects. This is a way of ensuring that policies intended to enhance security do not inadvertently contribute to conflict potentials and arms racing. Sustainability also requires attention to the broader economic effects of a defense posture.

BUILDING POLICY DEBATE

A nation’s ability to successfully adapt its security posture to changing circumstances depends on the existence of a lively, constructive, and thorough policy debate. For this reason, PDA:

- *Draws attention to the fundamental assessments, assumptions, and goals that frame policy choices.* Doing so illuminates the range of feasible alternatives and stimulates critical analysis and innovation;
- *Supports new venues for policy debate and the exchange of ideas and information.* These venues include PDA conferences, round-tables, workshops, and media forums as well as internet-based “special topic” libraries and information exchanges; and,
- *Strives to bring forward and promote innovative thinkers and ideas from across the policy spectrum, notably including armed forces personnel.*

AFFILIATIONS

PDA is a member of the Security Policy Working Group and the Unified Security Budget Task Force. It is affiliated with the International Study Group on Alternative Security Policy (Berlin) and the International Security Network (Geneva)

CONTACTS AND RESOURCES

- PDA Homepage: www.comw.org/pda
- Other PDA resources, International Security Online: <http://www.comw.org/infogate/>
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