PREFACE

CNA is a non-profit research organization whose mission is to provide empirical, objective analyses and solutions on complex problems of public policy and government operations. We do this mainly for government officials and military leaders in the Department of the Navy, the Department of Defense more broadly, and civilian agencies of government—federal, state, and local. We also pursue research under grants from foundations on matters of public policy and interest. We strive to put our analyses into the larger contexts of America’s internal and external environments—especially important at this moment of uncertainty in the American economy and politics, as U.S. forces come home and recover and “reconstitute” after more than a decade of fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan, and as budget pressures force DOD leaders to re-think their concepts for defense of America and for the forces and supporting infrastructure their organizations need.

This is a “CNA Professional Paper,” a category of CNA papers that presents a personal analytical perspective, one that allows its distinguished author to present his or her own views on the matter at hand—in this case, on the future of America’s defense. Dr. Henry H. Gaffney, Jr., in this paper, endeavors to put the future of U.S. forces into a large context. He works through the current state of America, the current state of the world, U.S. foreign policy, the role of the U.S. military in support of that policy, the future of the defense budget under current economic and political constraints, the possible future roles of the U.S. military, and the threats faced by the United States. He makes a solid case that the institutions of the Military Services are at the heart of American defense.

Dr. Gaffney writes from his long experience in U.S. and allied defense matters. He was for many years a senior government official in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, where he served in various capacities, in the Pentagon and at the U.S. Mission to NATO. He worked on European and Middle East, South Asian, and African Affairs, on nuclear and conventional force matters, on security assistance and foreign military sales, and on defense budgets and programs. At CNA, Dr. Gaffney has directed and undertaken analyses and otherwise been engaged on many strategic topics, including globalization and its impact on DOD, military transformation, U.S. military responses to international situations, the “American Way of War,” and the changing nature of warfare.

This paper—really this book—is a primer on what, in his well-informed judgment, must be done by government leaders in the coming decade to sustain the security of the United States as represented by the armed forces of the United States. It is a wonderful primer on defense and the national security of the United States, and valuable reading for professional and novice alike.

Robert J. Murray
CONTENTS

PREFACE .......................................................................................................................... 3

I. Major Points of This Paper ....................................................................................... 9

II. Summary ................................................................................................................... 11

   The world is mostly at peace ................................................................. 13

   America has fallen into deep trouble internally, especially economically and socially. ......................................................... 14

   U.S. foreign policy with and in the world in the new and dire domestic economic situation is mostly financial/economic, while most U.S. forces are coming home——after Iraq and Afghanistan ................................................................. 15

   What do the state of the world and changes in globalization mean for the future use of U.S. forces by the U.S. President? ........................................................................................................ 18

   What does the changing American world situation mean for the future of U.S. forces? ....................................................................................................................................... 19

   The final big question is “What is U.S. national security all about?” ................. 22

III. Approach ............................................................................................................. 23

IV. What’s Happening in, and to, the United States? ............................................ 31

V. The World Today ....................................................................................................... 39

   Introduction ........................................................................................................... 39

   What is the world constitutionally like out there? .............................................. 41

   Disruptions to Peace Are on the Fringes of the Prosperous World....................... 46

   The longer-range future: running out of oil——running out of gas will take longer—while global warming increases ................................................................. 48

   Summary of past and current conflicts and confrontations ..................................... 49

   Summing up the world the U.S. faces ........................................................................ 51

VI. America in the World and American Foreign Policy ............................................. 57

   U.S. connections with the world ........................................................................... 57

   Strategic thinking and planning in American foreign policy ................................. 60

   The Obama Administration’s tasks in the world....................................................... 62

   A change in strategy with America’s economic stagnation and national debt crisis .... 64

   Current foreign policy tasks of the Obama Administration ........................................ 66

   What will the U.S. be doing next in the world, as it relates to U.S. national security? 69
Recapitulation on the U.S. in the World ................................................................. 72

It is the existing, i.e., American legacy, forces that have operated across this spectrum.
....................................................................................................................................... 82

What did these legacy U.S. forces do in the world after the end of the Cold War until they got bogged down in Iraq and Afghanistan?........................................................... 84
U.S. forces’ activities outside Iraq and Afghanistan in the 2000s ................................. 92
The state of the U.S. military establishment in 2013 .................................................... 95
So how have these present activities and postures of existing U.S. forces around the world now (2013) supported the current Administration’s foreign policy?.................... 98
What have the two decades of the post-Cold War period meant for the U.S. defense establishment within the context of U.S. foreign policy? ................................. 100
On military “strategy” in the Washington defense debate ........................................... 102

VIII. The Future of the U.S. Defense Budget ............................................................. 107

IX. The Future of U.S. Forces in the Flat Budget ...................................................... 115
The initial steps for the new era of the flat defense budget........................................ 116
A first effect of defense budget cuts........................................................................... 118
What are these legacy forces? ............................................................................... 120
What, then, may be the evolution of U.S. legacy forces? ........................................... 125
Summary on legacy forces ...................................................................................... 126

X. U.S. Forces Will Probably Sustain and Evolve a Range of Capabilities into the Future......................................................................................................................... 131

XI. What Enemies and Conflicts Might the U.S. Encounter in the Coming Years?
....................................................................................................................................... 147
A reminder: The world is mostly at peace ............................................................... 147
Challenges to the security of the United States are finite. ........................................ 149
Al Qaeda terror ....................................................................................................... 150
Mexico .................................................................................................................... 153
North Korea .......................................................................................................... 153
China ................................................................................................................... 155
Hezbollah ............................................................................................................. 160
Weak and failing states—most simply do not pose strategic problems for the U.S. .. 161
Proliferation and non-proliferation—essentially a diplomatic problem ................. 168
There are no substantial threats in what is called “The Commons,” except maybe in the growing instances and fears of cyber warfare ................................................................. 171

“Uncertainty” and “complexity” ................................................................................. 175

One last non-threat: “Resurgent Russia.” Russia is not resurging .............................. 177

XII. U.S. Military Posture in the World After Iraq and Afghanistan and How It May Relate to U.S. Foreign Policy ................................................................. 183

XIII. The Future Utility of U.S. Forces ....................................................................... 189

How does the spectrum of the capabilities of U.S. forces (including the basic Service institutions) support the continuities in U.S. foreign policy? ............................. 196

Defense planning for the future: the conflict between sustaining the forces the U.S. has—while evolving them as the future unfolds ................................................................... 200

Summary on the future of U.S. forces: mapping them out across the short-, mid-, and long-terms ........................................................................................................... 204

XIV. The Future of the World, U.S. Foreign Policy, and the U.S. Military—Combined—With Possible Dependent Paths in Each Sphere ........................................ 209

XV. Recap: Major Points of This Paper ..................................................................... 213

Appendix: The Issue of “Whole of Government” ..................................................... 215

The U.S. never had a “whole of government” problem until Iraq and Afghanistan... 217

About the Author ........................................................................................................... 219
I. **Major Points of This Paper**

1. The United States is in deep economic, political, and social difficulties, with problems of debt, deficit, lack of growth, growing poverty, and lack of jobs and their creation. Growth may be returning, slowly, but deficit, taxation, and safety net reforms are needed—yet Congress is paralyzed.

2. The U.S. can hardly see the future for its defense until it gets out of Afghanistan and the forces return home, recover, and are reconstituted.

3. The U.S. will not conduct any more Iraqi or Afghan-type occupations and pretenses of nation-building for a long time, perhaps for another generation. Nor does the U.S. military police or stabilize the world, as far as anyone out there notices.

4. In the meantime, the defense budget for the future is being determined by the Budget Control Act of 2011, which involves cuts to the budget of $487 billion—essentially a flat budget—over ten years. Cuts could go higher with sequestration (another $492 billion over nine years).

5. This current budget approach is consistent with the longstanding fact that the defense budget is determined entirely outside defense, based mostly on the tolerable Federal debt—considered intolerable now.

6. No “strategy,” “requirements,” “scenarios,” “commitments,” “responsibilities,” “obligations,” etc.—all self-assigned in any case—have ever determined the defense budget top line. The only “demand” for the employment of U.S. forces in the world is by the Administration-in-office itself.

7. Thus, the forces retained and planned must fit the budget number.

8. Most U.S. forces, after Afghanistan, will have come home and will shrink; the Services are likely to keep a bit of everything, will stay ready, and will remain expeditionary as there is hardly any direct threat to the continental United States.

9. U.S. forces, whatever the budget constraints, will remain technologically the best, nearly the biggest and most capable in the world, and battle-hardened like no others. It will still outspend by far the next 20 countries, most of whom are allies.

10. Al Qaeda terrorism is being beaten by intelligence, police work, and raids. It is highly dispersed. It is not a force-determiner for U.S. defense, except for SOF.

11. China and Iran may be the only real “enemies” for planning the forces, but are to be managed mostly by diplomacy and are to be deterred, not fought.

12. U.S. “strategy” in the world is first to get its own economy going again, within the development of overall cooperative strategy for the world economy. The U.S. military supports this strategy, mostly as insurance. U.S. military forces are contingent forces, ready to do what the Administration-in-office orders them to do.
II. Summary

This paper is about the place of the U.S. defense effort and the U.S. military within the larger picture of the U.S. economy, the global economy, and, especially the Administration’s foreign policy—with regard to the specific and finite military threats the U.S. faces to its national security. A main purpose of the paper is to demonstrate the resubordination of U.S. military forces and their activities to the foreign policy of the Administration, for it is not “the world” or anyone else that demands that the U.S. military do something, but only the U.S. Administration in office. The major points below are that the world’s image of the U.S. being led by its military actions is being corrected and that the U.S. military and its operations in the world (i.e., beyond the defense of the U.S. homeland) are entirely subordinate to what the Administration wants to do with that military.

The main text covers the following broad subjects:

1. The American economy is in great trouble, American politics are essentially paralyzed in partisanship, and it may seem like the federal debt is the biggest issue in America today, though the evidence does not support that assertion.

2. The great subprime mortgage securitization in America created the housing bubble that broke the private financial system and threw America into recession. It then spread to Europe, where any growth at all is even slower, unemployment higher, and the euro currency has been on the brink of crashing.

3. U.S. defense and decision-making about defense will still be engrossed with the Afghanistan situation at least through the end of 2014, maybe longer.

4. Besides Afghanistan and the pursuit of al Qaeda terrorists, the world is largely at peace. As the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) has noted in its Yearbook 2012, the world-wide rate of violence and conflict continues to decline.\(^1\)

5. Given the political debate about U.S. national debt, the U.S. base defense budget is now going to be squeezed by around 18 percent from its high in 2012, leaving a flat budget barely keeping up with inflation over the next ten years—unless there is a drastic change in the U.S. political system, now paralyzed. This reduction is less than the 30 percent reductions after the Korean War, Vietnam War, and Cold War, but may be comparable given costs that continue to rise in real terms in personnel, operations and maintenance (O&M), and acquisitions.

6. U.S. ground forces are currently tied down by Afghanistan, but, after Afghanistan, most will come home to the U.S. and will have to recover and be reconstituted, though at lower force levels, maybe even less than those of the 1990s.

7. The top line of the defense budget is set outside defense, by the White House (OMB), not by any calculations done within the Defense Department. Congress hardly changes that top line, but makes lots of changes within it.

8. The Department of Defense (DOD) and the Services have to fit their forces into the constrained, squeezed budget top line they get from the White House, and the Services will have to set priorities between readiness (personnel numbers, maintenance, and current operations) and acquisition for the future.

9. There may be a debate between preparing for COIN (counter-insurgency) and preparing for The Great War with China. The likely outcome is a little bit of everything.

10. With the problems of major U.S. military acquisitions over the past 10 to 15 years and given the rising costs of personnel, the Services’ force structures (numbers of units) are inevitably going to shrink.

11. Administrations may be highly reluctant to get U.S. forces into another internal war for a long time to come, perhaps a generation (the U.S. left Vietnam in 1973, and invaded Iraq 30 years later, in 2003).

12. The U.S. defense budget will still be the largest in the world by far, U.S. forces will still be the most capable in the world, the forces know the equipment they already have works, and their people are most battle-hardened in the world, with the possible exception of the Taliban.

13. There is an old saying that, “It is better to keep one’s mouth shut, and let everyone think you a fool, than to open it and remove all doubt.” The equivalent for U.S. defense for the unfolding future is, “It is better to keep U.S. forces home and let everyone in the world think them formidable than to commit them to the graveyards of empires and cause all kinds of doubt on how formidable they really are.”

It is necessary to conduct a new examination of all these factors affecting the U.S. military. Military security is, after all, a maintenance function so that the real dynamics of America—that is, economics for the betterment of people’s lives—can proceed.

The situation of U.S. defense changed greatly following 9/11 and with the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, given the unique needs of those wars. Because of those events, there has been a sense that American foreign policy has become militarized, even over-militarized, and that U.S. relations with the rest of the world have been disrupted or neglected as a result, especially on the economic side.
The world is mostly at peace

The conflict situation in the world is not really getting worse, despite dire fears extending from “weak and failing states to “rising China” as the new equivalent to the former Soviet Union’s former supposed military juggernaut. The U.S. removed its forces from Iraq at the end of 2011 in accordance with the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) President Bush signed with Prime Minister Maliki back in the 2008. The situation in Afghanistan became a quagmire, including spill-over into Pakistan. Pakistan’s own terror and political situations have become very messy. The residual al Qaeda terrorist threat from Afghanistan is mostly in Pakistan and otherwise very dispersed to Yemen, Somalia, and the Trans-Sahel and among singleton Islamics in Europe and the United States. Al Qaeda “and their associates” are all wraith-like, and their incidents have been few and scattered, whatever their aspirations may be, in part because the U.S. drove them out of Afghanistan, killed many of their leaders, and finally killed Osama bin Laden. The most immediate threat to the U.S. itself, aside from individual terrorists, may be the drug war next door in Mexico.

The following points summarize the state of conflict in the world as 2013 unfolds:

- Two-state wars have practically disappeared.

- In 2013, the civil war in Syria is the most desperate internal conflict, now lasting two years. So far, it is an implosion, but the human costs mount as any hope or search for resolution remains fruitless. Outside interference grows, and spillover into Jordan and Lebanon is threatened.

- The number of internal conflicts is way down, especially as the insurgency in Sri Lanka ended in 2011. The worst continuing conflicts, other than Syria and Afghanistan, are within Africa. A major point about the current internal conflicts is that few have any strategic significance, i.e., most are local, maybe with a little spillover to adjacent countries. They are sad humanitarian situations, but not threats to U.S. national security or to the functioning of the global economy.

- Some in the U.S. say that Russia is “resurging” through assertive foreign policies and in military reform. However, the Russians do not use such a term themselves, and their military reforms are leading to greatly reduced forces and a territorial defensive posture.

- Within DOD, in its Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) and other documents, North Korea, China, Iran, and the al Qaeda terrorists are really the only ones identified as anything like real threats against which to plan. Some worry about Hezbollah, but that’s Israel’s problem, and Hezbollah cannot invade Israel.

- Despite the worldwide economic recession, economic troubles (including growth, food, oil) around the world are not yet generating any war-like conflict (with the exception of the situation between Sudan and South Sudan (little is heard from Darfur these days).
• China is not only building what seem to be sophisticated systems, but also streamlining (i.e., reducing) its gross numbers of force units as it moves from a peasant army for internal defense to more Western-style conventional forces.

• Other major nations, if they are lacking strong economic growth, have no compelling need to divert resources from other needs to put them toward defense, especially if their economies are in recession or stagnant. European countries’ defense budgets have been severely straitened, essentially since the end of the Cold War, and now by the Great Recession—but there is no threat to Europe.

**America has fallen into deep trouble internally, especially economically and socially.**

The economic situation in the U.S. (and the world, especially Europe) is the dominant issue for the current period for the United States. From 2007 into 2009, the U.S. was in the deepest recession since the Great Depression of the 1930s and the country is only slowly resuming growth. The collapse of the U.S. financial sector rippled severely into Europe, given the close private financial relations, especially on the trading of derivatives. Only China, India, and maybe Brazil have not been hit much, but even these economies at end-2012 were slowing down. Most of the rest of Latin American and most African economies are growing at rates higher than the advanced countries.

The major points about the situation in the United States at the beginning of 2013 are as follows:

• Coincidentally, and despite the Great Recession, there has been a great revolution in natural gas and oil production in the U.S. because of the fracking technique. Supplies of natural gas may be ample for another 50 years and have reduced the amount of coal used for power production. Oil imports were down to about 35 percent of consumption by mid-2013. However, CO2 emissions continue to raise global temperatures.

• The financial collapses and their rescues in 2008 and 2009 nonetheless created the most serious recession—threatening a new depression—since the Great Depression of 1929-1931. It has been a recession from which restoration of economic growth has been very slow. That is the overwhelming factor affecting American security.

• In the meantime, high joblessness persists, production stagnates, deflation threatens, U.S. infrastructure is crumbling, and basic education seems to be deteriorating. Middle-class wages have stagnated for the past 10 years, and the U.S. is also developing a huge underclass of the poor and near-poor—with no relief in sight.

• The U.S. Federal annual budgets continue in deficit, though the deficits are being reduced. State and local budgets have been severely cut. In the immediate term,
this is because the recession has significantly reduced tax revenues at the same time there were the increases the automatic stabilizers (i.e., unemployment payments). Health care and Medicare costs grow as the population ages.

- The national debt has grown, mainly because of the Bush tax cuts, no offsets to Medicare costs, and the trillion-dollar costs (so far) of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, not to speak of the loose regulations that let the financial bubble burst.

It is calculated that the growth in national debt was caused 30 percent by Bush Administration actions, 30 percent by the Obama Administration trying to correct Bush Administration actions (half that was the cost of the automatic stabilizers, including unemployment benefits), and 40 percent by earned benefits growth. On the other hand, interest rates have stayed so low that the costs of servicing the debt are manageable and like to remain so for another five years. However, because government is unpopular among the public—they hardly know how it benefits them—there is great pressure to cut both government programs and otherwise popular benefits administered by the government. Pressure grew to cut back the defense budget as well if the deficit was to be curbed, and the Budget Control Act of 2011 (BCA), including the sequester, has resulted in cuts of about 18 percent to the base defense budget, while costs of the war in Afghanistan continue as supplementals.

Recovery in the private sector from the end of the recession in June 2009 has been about on the same pace as recovery from previous recessions, but greatly offset by the loss of government jobs at the Federal, state, and local levels, including those of teachers. More than 5 million jobs were added in the private sector between the end of the recession in 2009 and September 2012, but 715,000 were lost in the government sector.2

In the meantime, U.S. defense assets (funds, people, and higher-level decision-making) had been tied up in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan—which supposedly had something to do with combating terrorism. The U.S. military is now out of Iraq and is supposed to be out of Afghanistan by the end of 2014, with only a residual training force left behind.

U.S. foreign policy with and in the world in the new and dire domestic economic situation is mostly financial/economic, while most U.S. forces are coming home—after Iraq and Afghanistan.

The Obama Administration had two primary tasks up front: getting the U.S. economy moving again in the context of the global economy, and figuring out what to do about the war in Afghanistan (while continuing to phase down operations in Iraq). In the fall of 2009, however, the legislation for health-care reform in the U.S. dominated the public discourse as the recession leveled off, though unemployment (highest since 1940) has declined to below 8 percent from a high of around 10 percent.

Domestic economy

When the Obama Administration came to office, it first had to continue and wrap up the unpopular TARP (Troubled Asset Relief Program); enact a stimulus to try to stop the hemorrhaging of jobs; enact health reform as its cost had reached $2.4 trillion, or 18 percent of GDP; and enact financial reform to try to forestall the next financial bubble. The Affordable Care Act has been passed, but most of its provisions don’t take effect until 2014. The Dodd-Frank Act, including the Volcker Rule to regulate securities trading, has been passed, but the activating regulations have not all been issued yet. As necessary as these measures have been, nothing has yet cracked the jobless problem, which remained at 7.5 percent in May 2013 (with real unemployment still being around 17 percent—people have been dropping out of the work force). Growth has recovered to around 2 percent or less, which is not enough to bring joblessness down substantially.

Two solutions are discussed to get the U.S. economy growing again and create jobs. One solution is to eliminate almost all taxes on the rich so they may exercise entrepreneurship—often known as supply-side, or Laffer Curve, economics. The other is Keynesian demand-side economics, with government creating money for, especially, infrastructure, education, and innovation (science and technology). The first solution suffers in that—with stagnant incomes among all except the richest 2 percent, households still paying off high debts, and continued unemployment—consumption is depressed, so companies cannot expand. The second solution (“stimulus”) is not politically possible as it creates more debt, notwithstanding that interest rates are likely to stay low for years. Thus, the American political system has become paralyzed and not finding solutions.

Foreign policy

On the foreign scene, the new Obama Administration was stuck with the war in Afghanistan and carried out its own “surge” of 33,000 more U.S. troops. In Iraq it carried out the next step according to the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) signed by President Bush in 2008; thus, U.S. combat forces completed their evacuation at the end of 2011. The Obama Administration had to continue to restore relations around the world, reassure the world that the U.S. was off torture, go back to negotiating treaties, get off the you-are-with-us-or-against-us policies, and make new efforts in Middle East peace—in short, get back to engagement. Engagement is not an end in itself, but a way to reopen neglected opportunities for improving both economic and security conditions around the world in collaboration with allied and friendly countries—and even China.

The Obama Administration’s foreign policy has been to rejoin the world, that is, to re-engage in the world to restore relations with Europe, Russia, Japan, and others, while making new efforts to tackle Middle East peace, reverse the Iranian and North Korean proliferation threats, and expand and revise international economic institutions to overcome the financial gambling that plunged both Europe and the U.S. into recession. The issues of energy and climate change are also on the table, but perhaps will take longer times for approaches to their resolution to take hold.
In all of this, economics has come first in the newly expanded G-20, especially in light of the fact that the U.S., Europe, and Japan faced big financial problems while their growth was stagnating and, at the same time, China, India, Brazil, and other Asian countries’ economies were booming.

By mid-2013, that is, as President Obama’s second term was underway, it can be said that renewed engagement was working—especially with China’s neighbors, but even with China. There has been no progress on Middle East peace (i.e., between Israel and the Palestinians). Al Qaeda has been under control, but not so in Mali as a new theater against terrorism. The Qaddafi regime was overthrown in Libya, and Libyan oil production is back to pre-war levels, but Libya is in a chaotic transition as militias still roam the country. And the civil war in Syria has left the Obama Administration in deep quandaries of how to resolve it. No progress has been made in stopping Iran and North Korea from their paths to nuclear weapons, but sanctions on Iran are hurting that country, while North Korea continues in gross poverty while making lots of threatening noises. But perhaps the greatest uncertainty lies in the stagnation of the American, European, and Japanese economies, erstwhile the engines of the world economy. There financial systems are still vulnerable and there is much bickering about debt vs. growth. The Abe government in Japan may be the first that is breaking out to stimulate their economy.

The implications of the foreign situation for U.S. national security can be summarized as follows:

- U.S. national security—the defense of the United States—in this current world situation has been mostly about Afghanistan, which was supposed to be about preventing more al Qaeda attacks on the U.S., but al Qaeda has dispersed widely and thinly to other places and its attacks have been frustrated. The war on terror is against al Qaeda and its associates and involves mostly homeland defense plus pursuing al Qaeda and its associates through the international network of intelligence, police work, and the occasional raids on the terrorists, mostly with drones, particularly in Pakistan and Yemen.

- Stopping the North Korean and Iranian nuclear weapons programs is a matter of diplomacy, as is Middle East peace. With the change of leadership in North Korea (especially to a youngster with regents), no progress on further nuclear talks with North Korea has been made. A couple of incidents by the North Korean military have occurred (while Kim Jong Il was still alive), notably the sinking of the corvette Cheonan and the shelling of an island. Some observers think the North Korean situation has become less stable with the succession, even to worrying about war, but the North Korean economy is still unable to feed its people and China keeps it on a tight leash with only barely enough fuel and food.

- “Rising China” began sounding “assertive,” if not belligerent, about the South China Sea, and then the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands in the East China Sea. However, Secretaries Gates and Clinton mobilized the other littoral states (and Japan and South Korea), and the movement grew to counter China’s diplomatic attempts to pick off countries one-by-one. Managing all the tensions with China and its
claims to sea areas are also matters of diplomacy, with U.S. diplomacy coalescing the other claimants, while U.S. naval presence is in the background.

- The U.S. was not responsible for the “Arab Spring,” “Arab Awakening,” or whatever it may be called, as it arose in Tunisia and then in Egypt, followed by disintegration in Yemen, but the U.S. did get in more deeply upon the evolution of events in Libya. The U.S. has remained helplessly on the sidelines of the Syrian civil war.

- Outside Afghanistan, U.S. forces, when they are not recovering from their endless tours in Iraq and Afghanistan, continue their routine training, exercises, and deployments, often in joint exercises with allies and other countries. For the major security issues “other than Afghanistan,” U.S. forces are mostly “ready to deploy” (i.e., “expeditionary”—not leading on some front lines somewhere).

- The greatest crisis for U.S. forces, though, lies with the paralysis on Federal budgeting, to include both revenues an programs, resulting in the indiscriminate sequester of the Budget Control Act of 2011 (BCA), which has prevented the Services from making the most efficient allocations of their reduced resources, not to speak of the growth-stunting effects throughout the whole country of the cutting of discretionary budget programs.

What do the state of the world and changes in globalization mean for the future use of U.S. forces by the U.S. President?

- The U.S. Administration and its foreign policy lie between the world and the U.S military. Nobody else “calls for U.S. forces” other than our own political leadership, that is, the President. Some writings talk about U.S. “responsibilities” “commitments,” “obligations,” and so on, but any such taskings are self-assigned, i.e., by Administrations, not the military or any external body. No one can produce a list of commitments, except for the old Cold War treaties that called for “consultations in the event of Communist attack.”

- The U.S. is not helpless in its relating to the world and hardly dependent on the military—it engages and nudges the world through engagement, especially in diplomacy. It uses the military to some extent in this engagement and nudging, but not as much as the U.S. military thinks. Most U.S. international activity is economic.

- The U.S. military is still bogged down in Afghanistan for some time to come—2014 is a date set to finally transfer security responsibilities to the Afghan military, but the U.S. having to stay another ten years to provide training and advice and to finance the Afghan military (and perhaps to enable selective Special Forces raids) is one estimate as established in the agreement between presidents Karzai and Obama in March 2012. Another would be that U.S. forces disappear quickly from the scene at the end of 2014. The great residual problem is probably Pakistan—but again to be handled by diplomats, not by intervention of U.S. military forces.
• After the experiences of Iraq and Afghanistan, and as stated in the Administration’s new strategy, the U.S. Administration says it will be reluctant to take on another internal conflict—impling the necessity for occupation and nation-building and a long stay—for a long time to come. It is quite possible that Afghanistan will dissolve into civil war upon the U.S. military withdrawal. The U.S. and its allies have been trying to create Afghan military forces, but there is no effective government over them or an economy to fund them.

• In the war on terror, though, and perhaps for other purposes, and aside from continuing operations in Afghanistan, U.S. training teams, especially from Special Forces (as in the Philippines, the Trans-Sahel, and Colombia), are likely to continue, with the small numbers of U.S. military personnel involved in those cases. The trainers went back into Yemen in May 2012. Special Forces raids and Predator strikes have also continued to be ordered by the Administration, notably in the Pakistani tribal areas and in Yemen.

• The U.S. Navy will continue to deploy regularly and to engage with other navies and other maritime forces—this is what the U.S. Navy does professionally. The Marine Corps has been eager to go back to sea so as to restore its maritime identity after having been so long on the ground deep inside Iraq and Afghanistan since 2001.

• The U.S. is not going to invade North Korea, China, Iran, Lebanon, or Syria with ground forces, nor Somalia or Yemen.

• Upon the phase-downs of U.S. forces from Iraq and Afghanistan, most U.S. forces will have come home. The Administration in its new strategy (January 2012) signaled “a rebalancing to Asia.” In fact, that meant sustaining existing stationing of U.S. forces there and the U.S. Navy continuing its program to shift of 60 percent of whatever ships it has to the Pacific. But the “rebalancing is as much about diplomacy as it is about the numbers and maneuvers of U.S. forces.

Let us again not forget, despite the fear of terrorism and the tenuous situation in Afghanistan, and despite tensions in East Asia, the world is largely at peace, whatever scenarios DOD may be creating these days for force configuration purposes. The potential for two-state wars has largely disappeared, and the number of internal conflicts is way down. “Weak and failing states” is an exaggerated problem—African economies are still growing despite the American and European financial problems, and few of the troubled states pose strategic problems, which may be defined as threatening the U.S., harboring al Qaeda, or disrupting world trade—not even Syria, Somalia, nor Yemen—except as the U.S. may chase al Qaeda terrorists.

**What does the changing American world situation mean for the future of U.S. forces?**

The future of U.S. forces is hard to think about until Afghanistan is resolved. Until then, Afghanistan (and relations with Pakistan) will consume much high-level attention daily, the continued and wearying rotation of ground forces and Individual Augmentees (IAs)
will continue, and, above all, more U.S. and allied casualties will be incurred. However, they have made progress in shifting responsibility for the security of the country to the newly formed and trained Afghan forces. The “Overseas Contingency Operations” budget, that is, the supplemental funds for Afghanistan, will continue through 2014, and probably at a greatly reduced level after that, depending how many U.S. troops are left in the country.

But the Obama Administration in its new strategy has said that occupation and nation-building, especially in a counter-insurgency mode, is not what the U.S. is going to be doing with its forces again for a long time to come. If another such occupation were to be undertaken by another Administration, it ought to be funded out of the base defense budget or other form of payment found, as was done by Johnson and Nixon with an additional 10 percent on income taxes. Simply adding to the national debt is no longer tolerable. The notion that the defense budget is not for fighting and that some other budget should pay for fighting seems absurd, especially in the dire Federal budget situation. The United States cannot afford it.

U.S. forces returning from Afghanistan will be coming back to an America in deep economic distress, deep political divisions that are paralyzing Congress, and pressures and extreme proposals to cut the deficit, including by cutting back the common people’s earned benefits. The Congress passed the Budget Control Act of 2011 (BCA) that effectively required a total cut from the previous projections of the defense budget of $487 billion, per OMB calculations. The BCA further provides for a sequestration of another $492 billion in the defense budget over nine years, supposed to begin on January 1, 2013, but only executed on March 27, 2013. It would increase the cut in the defense budget for FY13 another $37 billion, or across the nine years of the law, by another 9 percent, to around 18 percent of the previously projected budget under BCA initially. The sequestration caps, including on the defense budget, are likely to continue for the next nine years, but, in DOD at least, only the total cap would be imposed, thus giving the Services more flexibility to program their reduced funds more efficiently.

After the BCA was passed, President Obama, Secretary of Defense Panetta, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff together worked out a new strategy and new approach to the constrained defense budget. Assuming eventual withdrawal from Afghanistan, the Administration would give priority to rebalancing its posture to Asia, continue some presence in the Middle East, especially to deter Iran, and reduce presence in Europe. It would reduce ground forces personnel by 100,000 over four to seven years. The strategy also says that the U.S. will avoid any more massive counter-insurgency, occupation, and nation-building operations, but would pursue the war against Al Qaeda and its affiliates with the much smaller Special Forces and drone raids, while continuing training and other assistance to allies and partners around the world. It would keep the reduced forces ready (i.e., “no hollow forces”) and sustain strategic nuclear forces at the levels set out in the New START treaty with Russia.

Under this strategy, the basic constraints and framework within which any new directions U.S. defense may take (especially given the fiscal discipline) will include:
1) The top line of the budget has *always* been set *outside* defense, and is now set for the next ten years, unless Congress or the elections of 2014 and 2016 were to change directions—which seems unlikely in the new era of debt austerity.

2) Once the BCA budget levels were set and the Administration worked out a strategy, the Services prepared their FY2013 programs, covering FY13-FY17 based on their allocations of the top line from the Secretary of Defense.

3) The following observations may be made as to the tasks they face across in the coming years (at least FYs 13-17):

- The biggest “strategic” decisions, having to do mostly with the balance among the Services and their capabilities as to what the nation thinks their forces are for, will have to be taken and directed at the national level (Secretary of Defense and the White House).

- The overall outcome, at least in defense programming, is likely to be sustaining a bit of everything in the forces, a range of capabilities—“full spectrum” in one sense, but far short of “full spectrum” for great wars with China and/or Iran, while occupying 30 to 50 “weak and failing states” as some in DOD and in some think tanks have projected in the past.

**Legacy forces extended into the future, incrementally improved, are not a bad thing.**

First of all, the U.S. will still spend about 40 percent of the world’s total defense budgets and have the best forces, which are also both uniquely battle-hardened and know how their equipment actually works.

Diplomacy is going to handle the big security problems (as envisioned, they are not unmanageable)—China, Iranian and North Korean proliferation, and Middle East peace. Diplomacy has not entered the Syrian civil war situation, but the U.S. and its allies can hardly contemplate the ground force invasion that would be necessary to end the war.

Fighting the al Qaeda terrorists—after Afghanistan—is not a matter for major U.S. forces’ units—more like small units training locals, conducting the occasional raid, and carrying out drone attacks. The greater portion of U.S. forces are in support of all this—remaining ready for expeditionary operations while maintaining connections with allies and other friends’ militaries.

The demand for the “use” (kinetic, i.e., shooting) by U.S. forces is decided only by the U.S. Administration, not a mysterious force out in the world imposing some demand on them. It is the Administration that makes the demand, no one else.
The final big question is “What is U.S. national security all about?”

The biggest “strategic” question for the U.S. is how the U.S. economy can recover from the severe recession of 2008 -2009 and assume some new kind of dynamic economy within the interconnections of the global economy. That means shifting the wealth that now going into financial trading into investments that create jobs, which are then sustained by the demand of ordinary customers higher earnings.

The second level of the “strategic” question is the purpose of the U.S. military—the defense of America itself vs. the U.S. somehow continuing to sustain the Cold War myth that it was the guarantor of global stability. That is, whether it is to defend America itself or be the policeman of the world.

If the U.S. Government has two “responsibilities” around the globe, in the military-strategic sense, they are to reassure Japan as China “rises” and to protect the Arab Gulf states (now from Iran), which are inherently weak, as a spin-off of American concern about the stability of the global oil market. There is no threat now to Europe, which was a big “responsibility” the U.S. undertook after World War II.

All-in-all, the answer seems rather simple: the U.S. military exists to defend America. Whatever else is done for global stability is in partnership with others and tends to be mostly economic. But, in terms of being policeman of the world, e.g., by patrolling all sea lanes of the world, the U.S. never has one it, nor is it capable of doing it, but especially it doesn’t need to, i.e., there are no big threats to “The Commons,” as the military calls them (except maybe for the mysterious cyber warfare). As for providing stability for the whole world, such a concept is much too vague to have any credibility.

The great unknown for the future is in what shape and to what extent the U.S. economy, as part of the global economy, may resume its growth—recognizing that growth to date has and will for at least the mid-range future been dependent on fossil fuels, especially coal and oil, though plentiful natural gas has now displaced much of the coal and oil consumption, and whether all the growth for better lives of many more people would be all for naught as the ruinous effects of climate change caused by the accumulation of CO2 in the atmosphere take place.

To repeat, the motto for the next epoch in the history of U.S. defense might be, “It is better to keep your forces home and let people think they are formidable than to commit them to war in the graveyards of empires, thus to cast doubt as to how formidable they really are.”

This paper is not an advocacy paper, providing the solutions for future U.S. defense. Rather, it describes some realities—for instance, the U.S. military is subordinate and responsive to the U.S. Administration in office and its foreign policy, not to anything else. It is also predictive within bounds—that is, given the state of America and its economy, the defense budget is going to be tight and could even be drastically reduced.
III. Approach

My goal in this paper is to put U.S. defense efforts into not only a broader national security context, but also the world economic context. The chart below illustrates this approach.

As noted in this chart, one moves down from the past—the legacy, the inherited world—to the current circumstances—with the U.S military at the bottom—and then climbs into the future, while the world itself evolves at each of these levels. Moving back up from the downward evolution, the future of U.S. defense and of the U.S. military depends heavily on what America looks like, how the U.S. relates to the world, and how the world evolves, including the evolution of conflicts and their management.

Before assessing one’s own national security, one first needs a decent picture of the world—with particular attention to conflicts and confrontations. But, for me, the most important point neglected within DOD is that the U.S. Administration and its foreign policies lie between the U.S. military and the world, as shown in the following post-Cold War chart.
Actually, the connections between (1) the world, (2) U.S. engagement in the world (sometimes called “foreign policy”), and (3) the U.S. military are very loose. This may be a product of institutional inertia in each of the three elements, but it also means there are no rigid connections, which is a good thing. U.S. Administrations and the U.S. military remain adaptable to circumstances, as they have repeatedly demonstrated. Yet, pragmatism and adaptability are philosophically difficult for the U.S. military, which likes certainty and, especially, zero risk. Without “certainty,” the defense establishment tends to say that the world “is increasingly dangerous and uncertain” (whether it is or not). Now the whole advanced world is in dire uncertainty about its financial systems, but, otherwise, there has been a steady decline of both two-state wars and internal wars and a decline in defense budgets worldwide.  

The question is what an Administration might wish to do with its military—across the spectrum from “having” “keeping” forces for deterrence, the future, or for unknown scenarios to active operations around the world. The next step is to incrementally modify the forces so that they can be ready to do what the Administration may want them to do, bearing in mind the evolution of conflict in the world, the evolution of Administration policy, and the evolution of the U.S. military establishment and institutions themselves—all within the larger economic context of both the United States and the world.

The U.S. had long planned its force sizing and capabilities against specified enemies with specified forces out in the world, especially after World War II when the great Soviet

3. SIPRI Yearbook 2012.
military juggernaut was preserved, expanded, and partially kept in Eastern Europe (the only forward-based Soviet forces). There has been a tendency, even after the collapse of the Soviet Union and its empire, to speak of “THE” enemy, as after 9/11 al Qaeda became THE enemy, or for those looking into another future Soviet Union (China) as THE enemy. But we should keep in mind what the actual threats to U.S. national security may be. Little of what the new set of “enemies” may have can reach the U.S., other than the continuing Russian ballistic missiles, the few Chinese ballistic missiles, or the terrorists with hijacked planes or satchel bombs.

The U.S. Government is going to keep some U.S. forces stationed overseas after it gets out of Afghanistan, particularly in Asia. And the U.S. Navy will continue to deploy as it did during the Cold War, i.e., from the Korean War onward, as a matter of keeping up its professional readiness.4

Conditioned by the expectations during the Cold War that the Soviet Union would attack the U.S. or U.S. allies out of the blue, the U.S. military, since the end of the Cold War, has continued to think mostly about “contingencies” or “shocks,” where anything that happens, happens out of the blue. It always seems to be surprised; thus, culturally, it prepares for surprises. But the biggest surprises for U.S. forces are that they are called upon at all by the Administration in office to go do something.5 The military talks in the passive voice about “being called upon,” as if some ghostly presences were out there in the world doing the calling. It calls this “the demand,” but never specifies who is doing the demanding. The overwhelming fact is that it simply hasn’t the foggiest notion of what the Administration in office is thinking or planning to do with it and is surprised when it does; that spoils their routines. So, U.S. forces are left imagining scenarios while training and maintaining readiness, but are not particularly involved in the day-to-day world.

The Combat Commands, the other joint staffs, and the Services in their contingency planning do multiple scenarios putatively occurring simultaneously. It is never clear who writes the initial scenarios or how they made their assumptions, and any participants in analyses of the scenarios were always told up front, “don’t fight the scenario.” Moreover, all scenarios were to come out of the blue, or nearly so—all is surprise.

All these scenarios were supposed to generate “force sizing,” that is, to tell the nation how many and what kind of forces to buy. But such scenarios always generate far more forces than the nation could afford and thus lead to much despair about America’s prospects in all those simultaneous wars. The U.S. lost almost every desk-top battle to the Soviets, too. The legacy forces were always inadequate to cover all these fantastic scenarios; yet how come conflict in the world has steadily declined over the past two decades, with little U.S. military intervention, except in Iraq and Afghanistan (as well as the fiasco of Vietnam)?

4. The U.S. Navy does not “patrol” the sealanes of the world, protecting sea trade. It never has. In the current epoch, a significant part of that trade is shipments going to and from China, yet the only conjectured naval forces shooting up that trade, other than pirates, is the Chinese navy.

5. I always use the term “Administration” because that’s what we always talked about in the government—we all worked for “the Administration,” wherever it had posted its political appointees.
The U.S., or at least some in the U.S., think the U.S. should still be “the policeman of the world,” “the world stabilizer,” or something to that effect—maintaining patterns of continuous operations and sustained postures out in the world, as opposed to sitting back and waiting for contingencies to arise. They speak of “commitments” the U.S. has made—though they never specify what those commitments might be.

This “policeman of the world” notion arose out of the history of the Cold War. Given the weaknesses of both our World War II allies and then of the careful reconstitution of former enemy forces in Germany and Japan, this situation entailed the U.S. sharing in the defense of other areas, along with local countries’ forces—all in formal alliances against Soviet Communist attack. The U.S. also picked up way-stations to support the stationed forces, as in Spain, Portugal, and the Philippines.

The question has gradually arisen after the Cold War as to whether the U.S. needs to be committed to the defense of these countries given the disappearance of the Soviet and other Communist threats. In other words, does U.S. national security, as it might be narrowly defined, include forever providing security guarantees to other countries in the absence of threat? Japan may well be the exception, though it is hard to imagine China invading Japan.

To be sure, the U.S. preserves its old Cold War alliances—in part because it is a continuing form of relations among professional militaries, which lends transparency to what each other’s militaries may be up to or capable of. But threats to those long-standing allies have been greatly diminished—depending, of course, on how much China wants to be a threat, e.g., to Japan (Japan is certainly not a threat to China). There is no threat to Europe, except the terrorists, which is largely not a military problem, but a police and intelligence problem, as well as the U.S. conducting drone strikes and Special Forces raids in the few places where al Qaeda people may have lodged. Continued turbulence in the Middle East is another matter and has recently taken a new turn with people’s revolutions from below in the Arab world. But the U.S. or its allies intervening with ground forces in any of those countries is highly unlikely. The only the assistance the U.S. and its allies have provided during the Arab Awakening has been the air and space support provided to Libyan rebels in 2011—but Libya was entirely unique, as most internal conflict situations are.

A main point here is that the U.S. cannot, and does not, manage the whole world, but simply manages in the world. Thus, the U.S. military itself (and by itself) doesn’t manage the world. Rather, it does what the U.S. Administration tells it to do.

Of course, U.S. forces have had a huge involvement in the world in the decade following 9/11, that is, in Iraq and Afghanistan. U.S. military operations in Iraq were closed down at the end of 2011, and Afghanistan may now be phasing down, but, in any case, both these situations have been regarded by successive Administrations and by the military establishment itself as “temporary cases” to be “solved” or “won,” after which U.S. forces can come home and go back to planning for the old abstractions, e.g., near-simultaneous 2 MCOs (“Two Major Combat Operations”) or war with China or Iran.
I’ve taken a different approach in this paper.

First, I first portray the world in which the United States is engaged as a spectrum of activities shaded from green (i.e., peaceful activities, essentially economic) to red (outright war at the other end), with gradations in between. In the chart that follows:

- The first block is how the world operates, from mostly private business between and among countries to war between countries.
- The second block is the spectrum of how the U.S. Government has operated in the world, from leaving most U.S. activities to business (with diplomatic support) through diplomatic activities (which may have military content) to real combat at the other end.
- The third block is the spectrum of ways U.S. Administrations have used the U.S. military in operations in the world.
- Fourth, at the bottom, is the block showing what forces the U.S. may keep, develop, or adapt—that is, capabilities—for both support of U.S. foreign policy and for whatever combat operations Administrations may send them to do in the world. Note that I have shown a certain amount of cross-hatching between the third and fourth blocks because “capabilities” represent what General Colin Powell called “the tool box,” from which the appropriate military capabilities would be drawn.

At the extremes of each block are (a) indifference to what is going on in the world all the way to (b) nuclear Armageddon. “World” activities, or preparation for operating in the world, take place between these two outer poles. The sections that follow cover each of these blocks.
The most salient observation about this chart is that there is no “soft power” and “hard power” distinction, but a spectrum of activity out in the world—shades for U.S. forces from the passive to the active—from the green, mostly peaceful economics, to the red, i.e., war. The world is there, as it always has been. There are people and economies out there. Sometimes people fight each other, for all kinds of reasons. Mostly they ply their everyday tasks in living.6

The U.S. Government and its businessmen and others can nudge that world along. We are not helpless in that. The U.S. Government did not create that world, but it has done a lot of nudging to help it unfold.

Of course, we and the world can get off on a “dependent path,” like the particular path of globalization, i.e., world economic growth, on which our thinking had become dependent. And yet we can all get jolted off it into some new and unknown path (or more likely to then return to something close to the status quo ante). The dependent path since the end of the Cold War had been the increasing interdependence of world economies—what came to be called “globalization.” The greatest jolt over the past several years has

6 Unless the American finance industry and others bring down the whole financial structure at once. Military strategist Colin Gray said at a seminar at CNA in 2004 that “the most predictable thing is the unpredictability of a financial crisis”—boy, was he right.
been the financialization of business, i.e., financial gambling rather than capital expansion, which has plunged the United States and European economies into recession from which, at the end of 2012, they had not yet recovered.
IV. What’s Happening in, and to, the United States?

Overview

As the U.S. emerges from the Great Recession of 2008-2009, but only very slowly and not enough to create jobs and create demand, and as the U.S. political situation has become paralyzed upon the 2010 and 2012 elections, the big issues for the United States appear as follows:

America is a great country, but it is in very deep economic trouble. It was long the largest and most innovative and productive economy in the world. It is still nearly the largest manufacturer in the world, even as the proportion of manufacturing in the U.S. economy has shrunk (it employs only 6 percent of the working population). It has had the most mobile, hard-working population in the world, including its eager immigrants, and the third largest population in the world (after the USSR dissolved). It has had the finest higher education system in the world, which also was a driver of technological innovation, though its elementary and high school public-education system has long struggled. It has had an exuberant popular culture that has spread around the world and created the social media (e.g., cell phone) that has also spread. It has been the model democracy with its combination of innovative Federal and state governments and the rule
of law exercised through regulation of economic excesses. However, it has lagged the other advanced countries in providing the social safety nets for its people, particularly in health care, such that it requires its people to spend much more on health, with insufficient health insurance plans, and less effective results than just about every other advanced nation.

But since the Great Recession, America—its economy—has been in deep trouble because of the subprime mortgage securitization financial bust, the consequent freezing up of credit and liquidity, and the rise of official unemployment. Economic growth has recovered to only around 2 percent or even less, i.e., not enough to make up for lost incomes and revenues and not far from the brink of a new recession. At least 5-percent growth would be required to restore fully employment. The TARP bailout of Wall Street and Federal Reserve Bank actions (e.g., to protect the money market) prevented the U.S. financial system from collapsing. But the Great Recession then proceeded until the National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER) declared that it had ended in June 2009. Nevertheless, the fall in housing values and the growing number of jobless people, including laid-off government workers and teachers, led to losses of both federal and state tax revenues, with resultant growing national, state, and local annual deficits. The Obama stimulus plan of $787 billion, which was enacted in February 2009, temporarily boosted jobs by 3.5 million and GDP by 3.2 percent and led to at least minimal sustained growth in the economy. But the effects of the stimulus lasted only about a year.

All of this came on top of stagnation in real wages across the country for the previous ten years as well as the Federal budget deficits caused by huge Federal tax cuts, the introduction of Medicare D without offsets, and the nearly trillion dollars spent so far on the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan—altogether adding $6 trillion to the Federal debt. Profits in the financial industry constituted 7 percent of all profits in 1980, but had risen to 30 to 40 percent at the time of the great crash of 2008. From their historical role of providing capital for new investments in production of goods and services that would create jobs, Wall Street had switched instead to trading of exotic financial instruments, given new stimulus by the securitization of dubious mortgages. Because these new financial instruments were bought all over the advanced world, other countries fell into deep financial difficulties as well.

The following chart shows how inflated rises in GDP from wild financial trading took place simultaneously and in the same magnitude in the U.S., UK, and European Union, followed by similar collapses into recession. That trading was done on both sides of the Atlantic in large measure over the securitized subprime mortgages issued in the U.S. from the early 2000s until the bubble burst in 2007, and then the economy went into full-scale recession in 2008, with recovery technically beginning in July 2009. But U.S. growth has been slow since then, while British and Eurozone growth has teetered on being less than 2 percent or even back into recession, as shown in the chart. This makes the U.S. recovery look more robust on the chart, but still insufficient.
Nonetheless, the financial crisis and recessions in the three areas shows how intimately connected the three economies were. Before the recession, those entities plus Japan may have represented 73 percent of the global GDP. Afterwards, that level sank to something like 54 percent, a relative drop caused in part by the continuing robust economic growth of China, India, Brazil, and other countries, including Mexico, during the same period.

In mid-2013, sustained recovery of the U.S. economy has not yet been achieved. A new recession may set in, given the ongoing deleveraging of American households’ debts. During the boom, American households reached 130 percent over their net worths. But the end of 2012, they were still at 107 percent. As they deleveraged, they were also reducing consumption, i.e., demand, compounded by their stagnant wages and unemployment. Given, as well, the falling demand in Europe for U.S. exports, and given the possibility of further private and commercial real estate collapses, another recession could well descend on America, as is already happening in the UK under that government’s austerity policies.

After the TARP bailouts and government-funded restructuring of General Motors and Chrysler, the Obama Administration embarked on health-care reform as a priority since

---

7. The austerity advocates have believed that cutting government expenditures (and personnel) would automatically create jobs in the civilian economy. It has simply not happened. Government spending has a comparable multiplier to private spending. The multiplier has proved to be about 1.5, per Paul Krugman’s observations. In short, the government shrinks, the economy shrinks.
the cost of health in the country was up over $2.4 trillion (17.4 percent of GDP; now $2.8 trillion and 18 percent of GDP, and still climbing).

The next initiative was to impose regulations on the financial industry through the Dodd-Frank Act to limit the wild trading that created the recession based on subprime mortgage securitization and derivatives. Curbing carbon emissions and settling immigration issues were put on the shelf. The financial reform bill passed, and yet the worries continued that it would not solve the “too big to fail” problem, whereby the six or seven biggest banking companies still expect federal bailouts if they take excessive risks and suffer huge losses. The implementing regulations had not been finished by the summer of 2013, but their need was pointed up by J. P. Morgan Chase Bank’s losses of $6.2 billion in trading on the London derivatives market, as revealed in May 2012.

All these issues have torn the country apart, creating, for one thing, the Tea Party, which, along with others, wants to drastically reduce the role of government in the U.S. economy. But the answer to the biggest question—when will jobs be created, the unemployment rate reduced, and real wages begin to grow again, and with all that the overall growth of the economy and increased revenues from income and sales—is just not predictable yet.

In the meantime, a large underclass is growing in the United States as inequality reaches huge proportions. Eighty-three percent of all income increases in 2010 went to the top 1 percent of taxpayers. Real joblessness may be about 17 percent. People without health insurance now number close to 51 million, that is, 16 percent of the population. Seventeen percent of the people showing up in hospital emergency rooms are without health insurance—a close coincidence—but the record shows they go there for real emergencies, not routine care.

The recession of 2008-2009 curbed tax revenues to the Federal Government, states, and localities, including from property taxes as the value of homes dropped on the order of one-third. School and infrastructure fundings have been cut. The Federal debt, already large from the previous 8 years of over-spending beyond revenues, is large and growing. Interest rates have been held down by the low demand for loans and other investments as consumers deleverage their debts and as companies build their cash reserves. However, given the lack of consumer demand, i.e., the lack of increases in consumption, and thus production, interest rates are likely to remain low for at least the next five years. Moreover, with the financial troubles in Europe, U.S. bonds have continued to be the safe haven for investors and depositors worldwide, even as 10-year bonds were sold for as low as 1.7 percent interest annually. One got the impression that the Federal deficit and debt seemed to have become the most important concern of the American people according to some polls, but, in fact, only about 10 percent of voters cited it as their main economic concern in 2012 election exit-polling. Moreover, a majority is in favor of increasing taxes on the rich to help reduce the debt.

---

Added to this is the aging population and the bills coming due in Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid, which account for two-thirds of Federal expenditures, unless real curbing of health costs comes about as the Affordable Care Act is phased in. State and local governments are in deep fiscal distress. It is not thought that it is possible for the country to grow its way out of all these troubles given the lack of demand. All of this has also put a squeeze on the defense budget—which is where this discussion is headed.

The current issues in America can be portrayed as follows:

Each of these sectors represents some kind of crisis.

America has long been an extraordinarily rich, productive, innovative economy and culture. Americans have enormous energy and work longer and harder than most other people in the world (though with unemployment high, the average work week in the U.S. had decreased to 34.4 hours by June 2012, comparable to hours worked in France and Germany).

What is most crippling as the country faces the future is the near-paralysis of the political system, arising from the acute partisanship of that system, and the evolution of requirements for super-majorities (60 votes of 100) to pass anything in the U.S. Senate. Much of the partisanship has been created by the process of electoral district
gerrymandering to the point where only 85 of 435 Congressional districts were competitive in the 2012 election.

State governments are cutting back education, other services, and infrastructure construction. Along with cuts of Federal employees, a total of 715,000 government workers, including at least 160,000 teachers, had been laid off by the end of 2012—a substantial offset to the 5 million private jobs created during the Obama Administration by September 2012. But the main point is that U.S. economic growth has been too slow—2 percent (1.9 percent projected by IMF for 2013). Keys to future growth lie in infrastructure funding, education funding, and research and development in innovative new products and services. But those areas must be facilitated by government funds and their efficient administration by public servants. Let us remember that government workers and teachers pay taxes too.9

We in America have long thought that our country was so stable that most of the country ran itself, in both private and public spheres, and that the Federal Government at the top could concentrate on defense and foreign affairs, as it seemed to do during the Cold War years—an illusion, considering the periodic recessions, the bouts of inflation, their combination in stagflation, the increases in Social Security and Medicare benefits, and so on. Right now, aside from the war in Afghanistan and the consequent problems of “wounded warriors” back home, the recession has given the highest prominence to the domestic issues, where the President is tied down by the inability of Congress to pass legislation or budgets.

Thus, America is at the crossroads—crossroads created by the Great Recession of 2008-2009, which in turn was created by the great financial crisis caused by the collapse and near-collapse of the U.S. financial industry, which was in turn largely caused by their ballooning (leveraging up to 30 times) the subprime mortgages they issued and then securitized on the assumption of a housing boom that would last forever. The housing boom collapsed and, with it, the housing construction industry. Compounding these collapses was the accumulation of $6 trillion more of Federal government debt through tax cuts, Medicare D increases not offset, and the costs of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

At the same time, the incomes of 99 percent of the population had been already stagnant for about 13 years. The result of both the stagnation and the loss of housing values was a huge drop in consumption, a lessening of demand, and accompanying losses of tax revenues. The decline in U.S. GDP has been about equal to the loss of income and other tax revenues. The U.S. Government did bail out the financial industry (through loans that are being repaid and the possibility exists of making some eventual profit for the government, i.e., the American people), but the government stimulus to the economy was insufficient and short-term. Thus, the economy remains stagnant at barely 2 percent growth and unemployment had dropped only to 7.5 percent by April 2013. Continuing government outlays for Social Security, Medicare, and defense have been adding to the

---

U.S. debt, but interest costs on that debt remain low and it is well-covered as foreign investors seek a safe haven in U.S. bonds.

The Defense Department has been an almost helpless bystander in the stagnant economy of America and the paralyzed political situation. But even as the defense budget is further reduced under sequestration, it is being reduced only to the 2006 level, it will still be by far the largest defense budget in the world.

How all of this will be turned around is simply not clear yet, and the situation is now being compounded by the loss of export markets as Europe stagnates and the Chinese economy slows. Fortunately, because the U.S. has removed its forces from Iraq and is beginning to phase down its forces in Afghanistan, the OCO war budget is being reduced, and other strains on the base defense budget from those wars are being relieved.

As far as the national security of the United States is concerned, what does the U.S. have to worry about—other than widespread financial collapses and slowdowns of growth? The next section focuses on the state of the world, including the threats of war.
V. The World Today

Introduction

*It’s mostly an economic world*, but the economies of the older advanced countries—notably the U.S., the European Union, and Japan—are essentially stagnant, just barely emerging from the great recession of 2008-2009, but with deficits and debts that might still plunge at least the U.S. and Europe again into a recession or even a depression, especially given the political paralyses on both continents. U.S. growth in 2013 has been projected by the IMF as 1.9 percent, Japan as 1.6 percent, and the EuroZone as minus 0.3 percent.

The “emerging countries”—notably China, India, and Brazil—have been growing well, but are now beginning to slow down for various reasons, not the least being the stagnation in their primary export markets. Most Latin American and African economies are not doing too badly, despite the trends in the advanced world. The implications for the future global economy are of a continuing strong shift in economic strength to Asian economies. What this means for global politics is not clear, except that they are still going to be mostly about economics, given Asia’s large dependence on the markets in North America and Europe and for imports of natural resource imports (as well as the import of designs, tooling, and components from the West).

*It’s a mostly peaceful world*, which in large part has created both the conditions for growth and the incentives not to disturb those conditions. The particular problems that appear to be threatening global peace, at least to American national security as a defense matter, are very much at the margin of the grand economic picture.

- Above all, America is preoccupied with the continuing war in Afghanistan (the U.S. military having left Iraq at the end of 2011).
- Otherwise, two-state wars have practically disappeared.
- The number of internal conflicts is way down.
- The marginal disruptions include al Qaeda terror, drug traffic, piracy off Somalia, and North Korea’s and Iran’s apparent pursuit of nuclear weapons programs.
- Al Qaeda and its associates, as organizations, are scattered in about four places, but individual terrorists, like the Boston Marathon bombers, scattered around the world, follow the jihadist threats on the internet.
- Beginning in January 2011, real people’s revolutions rose up in the Arab world, that is, Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Yemen—and now Syria, which has turned into an awful civil war, as yet unresolved.
Some confrontations that have long existed could turn into wars unless handled by diplomacy and containment. Moreover, in most countries, domestic problems take priority for their leaderships. The currently prominent confrontations include those with North Korea, the excessive Chinese claims on the seas of the Western Pacific, and the confrontation with Iran over both its nuclear program and its threats to close the Strait of Hormuz.

The problem of drugs and crime in Mexico is spreading into Central America.

The roots of the globalization that developed after the Cold War lay back in the post-World War II period, when the U.S. found itself permanently out in the world for the first time and West Germany and Japan turned to exports rather than military conquests, thus creating greatly expanded world trade. The Asian Tigers entered this trade in the 1970s, followed by China in the 1980s. The facilitator of this globalization was “interconnections” in trade, finance, communications through satellites and fiber-optic cables, air movement of both people and goods, containerization of sea trade, and so on—all of which contributed to economic growth that was more widespread and greater than the world had ever seen before.

The post-Cold War globalization was accompanied by a great drop in military efforts around the world. In some ways, the massive nuclear and conventional military forces of the U.S. and USSR discouraged most of the countries of the world from developing nuclear weapons or to build and maintain big militaries. Aside from the U.S. invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan, the last great war in the Middle East was between Iraq and Iran from 1980 to 1988, and the last big skirmish between India and Pakistan was around Kargil on the demarcation line within Kashmir in 1999. The business of the world is business.

In CNA’s workshop of 2004 on the changing nature of warfare for the National Intelligence Council’s 2015 project, strategic military thinker Colin Gray of the University of Reading made the most prophetic statement: “The most predictable thing is the unpredictability of a great financial crisis.”

And so it happened in 2008 and 2009, starting with the great subprime mortgage securitization catastrophe of American finance, which spread elsewhere in the world, particularly in Europe, but not in Asia. The globalization of finance meant that the U.S. crash rippled across the previously advanced world. It was all led by the United States, including American innovations of exotic and risky financial instruments, which have led the economies of the United States and Europe close to collapse.

---

10. See the SIPRI 2012 Report on declining defense budgets around the world.

11. The great American crash also affected Russia in 2009, when its GDP fell by the greatest amount of any country, 7.9 percent. The Russians called this “The Crisis,” but Russia’s growth recovered quickly and had been growing steadily at about 4 percent a year, though it may slow to 3 percent or less in the next few years.
Moreover, and at the same time, the great growth of the economies around the world, and with it their populations and the demands of those populations for what we in the U.S. have considered middle-class accoutrements (e.g., cars), has depended on the discovery, global movement, and consumption of fossil fuels, that is oil, natural gas, and coal. That consumption in turn means the ultimate diminution of the world’s supplies of at least oil—before the Great Recession, oil production and oil consumption around the world were converging. On the other hand, the great shale gas fracking revolution in the U.S., with its potential in many other countries as well, may mean ample supplies of natural gas around the world for decades to come. But it also means, in the interim, the emission of vast amounts of green-house gases, notably carbon dioxide, into the earth’s atmosphere, creating the essentially irreversible effects of global warming—a man-made phenomenon, a product of the industrial age, with disruptive consequences that can be predicted, but of unknown severity.\(^\text{12}\)

Both the great financial crash for the short term and global warming for the long term mean that severe adjustments of the model of exuberant economic globalization are due—and it is left to those hapless individuals in both countries and international governance to try to figure them out. These adjustments may include the shift of financing resources to China and to other Sovereign Wealth Funds, especially those of the oil-producing countries of the Middle East; less consumption by the people in the advanced world; great regulation of finance by governments and international institutions; even some defaults by countries (Greece?); and more restrictions on the movements of people, i.e., resistance to immigration in countries that are suffering high unemployment.

Later sections of this paper focus on what this all means for the future of U.S. defense and the U.S. military.

Suffice it to say for the moment that U.S. defense and the U.S. military look like they occupy a niche, a marginal role, tidying up on the edges, within the vast economic and financial movements of globalization and awaiting whatever contingencies may arise. That role is in contrast to the great economic and military confrontations that characterized the Cold War and the large permanent overseas deployments of U.S. forces in Europe and Northeast Asia—all of which is hard for the U.S. to see while still bogged down in Afghanistan and in continuous fright about al Qaeda terrorism while tracking down what is left of al Qaeda’s organization and leadership.

**What is the world constitutionally like out there?**

The world is divided into countries—193 of them, each full of people. They all have territories with boundaries, populations, economies, cultures, and governments. The differences among these country factors vary wildly, especially in size of populations, and then in the quality of their economies and governance. But their borders—the chief measure of sovereignty—seem to be remarkably stable and unchallenged. There are only a few disputed boundaries left in the world, e.g., some of Stalin’s poison pills in drawing

up republic boundaries in the Soviet Union; Kosovo; two in Africa; Kashmir; and some Chinese claims in the Himalayas. In addition, the seas of East Asia and Southeast Asia have scattered disputes over the sovereignty of islands. There is also the case of Taiwan, and there are disputes among states about the boundaries of their Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) off their shores—China, notably, is claiming the entire South China Sea as not only its EEZ, but also redefining it as a “Security Zone.” Saddam Hussein was not allowed to keep his seizure of Kuwait because he violated the international sovereignty system. The last boundary dispute in Latin America (between Ecuador and Peru) was settled in the mid-1990s.

Only a few countries have opted out of globalization, that is, the global economy, including Cuba, North Korea, Myanmar (Burma), Somalia, and Zimbabwe. However, under a new pragmatic leadership, Myanmar seems to have rejoined the world in 2011 and 2012. Afghanistan was never a real part of the civilized world as we have known it, having no economy, though it is now the source of 90 percent of the world’s illegal opium. There is some movement, especially among some Americans, to say that a dominant aspect of sovereignty, that is, effective governance within a country’s borders, may be in jeopardy if the nominal governments of some of these countries do not effectively govern or they turn to killing their people. Syria is the current case. However, that is an American conceit, sometimes invoked to justify the U.S. invading a country. That’s not quite why the U.S. invaded Afghanistan and Iraq, but those cases have given the U.S. pause about undertaking more such invasions.

A peculiar concept has sprung up in American military-strategic circles, called “the commons,” by which they mean the oceans, international air space, space, and now the electromagnetic ether known as “cyberspace.” These “commons” are characterized by having practically no people in them, except those in transit across them. Traffic through the “commons” is practically unimpeded, i.e., there are practically no threats to transit, except for pirates (now largely confined to the Somali area, but maybe spreading off the West African coasts), and the extremely rare terrorist bombing of airplanes. There are smugglers of drugs and people, poachers of fishing grounds, and boat people out in the ocean commons trying to get to better countries. But only the pirates are real attackers. The Chinese and Americans have demonstrated that they can attack satellites in space—but with improvised missiles. Cyberspace is another matter—hackers pose unknown threats of disruption to computers, control systems, and banking and other financial facilities. The matter of “the commons” is discussed in greater detail later. The main point is that the lives of people just about all take place on land. They also have growing connections across the commons, primarily through social media.

Whatever the nature of a particular country, countries all over the world are balancing internal vs. external tasks, including even the U.S. They have to exercise the governmental writ across their own territory, economy, and societies. They have to provide power (energy) and infrastructure, as well as social safety nets. The following chart shows how governments have to balance their internal and external activities.

---

13. That’s why a UN resolution allowed the U.S. and its allies to eject the Iraqis from Kuwait. That resolution came before the U.S. Congress’s vote to approve the ejection. However, in 2003, the U.S. did not get a supportive UN resolution.
The various sources of revenues of countries affect how much a country can afford to spend on defense.

- It’s easier when their income comes from the outside to the top and the government can then indulge in military purchases, again as we see in the oil-exporting countries or in the Chinese government’s soaking up of dollars from its economy that have flowed in from its export sales.

- If a country’s revenues come from the bottom, that is, from taxes on their people, defense must compete with the funds for social safety nets.

- Russia, despite being dependent on revenues from oil and gas, has been on a tight budget, and has given priority to its national projects for education, health, housing, and pensions over its military budget, though it may now expand that military budget, given that most of the equipment that remains in its inventories, if not already scrapped, was designed and built back in the days of the Soviet Union.

- China, as it soaks up incoming dollars from export sales, is not yet clearly on a central government budget, even as it runs a tight financial and monetary system. It is only beginning to expand its social safety nets and is thus expanding its military expenditures perhaps only a little more than it had before in proportion to the
country’s overall economic growth—though to what extent remains to be seen. But its growth may now be slowing, and it may even have an imminent housing bubble. The Chinese countryside is also highly polluted and running out of water. India has similar problems.

Most countries these days are connected to the global economy and will continue to be into the future. Goldman-Sachs identified “BRICS” (Brazil-Russia-India-China, to which South Africa has been added), that is, countries as promising places for private entrepreneurs’ investments for the future. Some people then turn BRICS into some kind of possible strategic alignment, but they are mostly far apart from each other and hardly allied. The real attraction of BRICS to investors is the growth rates of China, India, and Brazil, which to date have remained robust despite the recessions and debt concerns in the U.S., Europe, and Japan and the loss of markets there. They are said to be the new “engines” of the world economy, whatever that means. Each of those countries, but especially China and India, must direct its “engines” to supporting the improvement of the life styles and social security of its populations. Although these countries’ growth has arisen from exports, their futures may not mainly depend on growth in those exports, but on encouraging their own people’s consumption.\textsuperscript{14}

Russia, per Anders Aslund, doesn’t really fit in BRICS; BRICS might well be called BICS.\textsuperscript{15} On one hand, Russia is much wealthier than the other three countries, with more of a middle class, better educated, and highly urbanized. It still depends on the extensive Soviet infrastructure in power, housing, etc., yet this infrastructure is wearing out and is not yet being replaced. And its population is much smaller than that of the Soviet Union (about 142 million, which lately may have stopped declining). On the other hand, Russia is not very connected to the global economy except for its exports of oil, natural gas, metals, and chemicals. Because its domestic consumer industries have not taken off, it is still dependent on imported cars, food, etc.—a variant of “Dutch disease,” with associated inflation.

Russia, for all its former Soviet grandiosity, is a relatively small population in a vast territory, ragged at the edges (its borders are nearly as long as the old Soviet borders), and it has continuing troubles in the North Caucasus, which has become a problem with Muslims. If it can overcome its primitive views of property rights (rights discovered over only the past 20 years), it would be ripe for much greater investment from outside, which might in the long run also lead to sophisticated technological exports, as is its dream. In the meantime, it is a kind of niche country largely oriented toward Europe, though when facing resistance by Europe to Russia’s joining European institutions, it makes noises about making closer connections to China (not to the U.S.—the U.S. exports only about $11 billion to Russia a year). Russia’s connections to the U.S. are mostly about the strategic nuclear balance, plus the Northern Distribution Network upon which the U.S. is greatly reliant for supplying its operations in Afghanistan. That connection may dry up when most U.S. forces leave Afghanistan by the end of 2014.

\textsuperscript{14} Germany exports 50 percent of its GDP; the U.S. exports only about 13 percent of its GDP.

As for the less advanced world, the huge swing beginning in the mid-1990s was the steep rise in foreign direct investment (FDI, i.e., private) and remittances back home from guest workers in other countries, especially from the Middle East oil countries as well as from the United States and Europe. The Philippines, Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, and the Central American countries have particularly benefitted from remittances. By contrast, official development assistance (ODA) has been flat for decades. ODA may have helped especially in health (including HIV/AIDS amelioration), agriculture, and education, but has not been the major stimulant of job-creating economic growth. It should be noted that the growth in these countries has been greatly helped by the dying down of internal conflicts, greatly helped by UN peacekeeping efforts. This is particularly true in Africa.

It is of interest that the “connections” of globalization are heavily “virtual,” through communications, including cultural products, container shipments, and elite movements, including businessmen and tourists, rather than mass movements of people. Labor mobility under globalization has been restricted, though there are substantial movements of Latinos into the U.S. and Muslims from the Middle East and South Asia into Europe, all looking for a better life. It is worth noting that only 10 percent of Muslims in Europe are religiously observant, that is, they are adapting to their local societies.16

The essence of globalization has been the creation of businesses by entrepreneurs and salesmen, as well as buyers—there are practically no Chinese salesmen in America; it is American buyers who have opened up China. As usual when growth is exuberant, international governance takes time to chase after and catch up to the spread of business with regulations, reductions of tariffs, resolution of trade conflicts, and so on.

Some describe the global system as “anarchic,” but, in fact, there are many international institutions that both regulate affairs and assist countries—and these institutions are collegial. The granddaddy of creating regulations for global economic relations was the Bretton Woods agreement after World War II, which, among other things, created the IMF and the World Bank. Bretton Woods and the Marshall Plan were intended to get Europe, including West Germany, back on its feet. Since then, the most strongly globalizing institution—indeed, long-running negotiations and facilitators of negotiations—has been the GATT-WTO sequence, augmented by various regional free-trade associations like NAFTA and MERCOSUR, all designed to facilitate free trade between countries.

In the 1970s, troubles with inflation (from the rise in oil prices) and currency balances led to some breakdowns of the Bretton Woods agreements, but did result in the emergence of what became G-7, then G-8, and now G-20 to coordinate global economic policies among the largest economies in the world. (The G-20 members cover 85 percent of the world economy and 60 percent of the world’s populations.) The prime official aid institutions for the less advanced countries continue to be the IMF and the World Bank, both with loan capabilities, drawing on the capital provided them mostly by the advanced

countries over time—though IMF also assisted the new Russia and is now assisting in the current European debt crisis. A new impulse for financial regulation among the U.S. and European countries has emerged to cope with the financial crises caused by the export of the U.S. subprime mortgage securitization fiasco to Europe, particularly to Ireland, Spain, and Portugal.

The major change is a shift in economic success from the U.S.-Europe-Japan triangle (one could add South Korea to that)—which emerged in the aftermath of World War II and was the fruit of “containment” in the Cold War—to the China-India-rest-of-Asia set, plus Brazil, where growth is robust. Let us remember, though, that, at the moment, the U.S., the EU, and Japan together have generated 54 percent of the world’s GDP with 13 percent of its people, while the combined GDP (at exchange rate) of China, India, and Brazil has been 11 percent of the world’s GDP, with 40 percent of the world’s people. Russia has not yet found a substantial niche in this emerging system and is mostly concerned with internally creating a free market economic system. The Russian government has felt that private oligarchs seized too much of the wealth of its country, especially in oil, in the 1990s, and has reinstated state control of many of the industries. It is now thinking of selling substantial amounts (up to 25 percent) of the shares in the state companies to private investors, without giving up control of those companies. But Russia has a major corruption problem that President Putin is trying to contain with administrative measures. But all other countries that have broken corruption have done it through a vigorous free press and frequent rotation of leadership.

The irony is that the U.S.-Europe-Japan triangle also represented the security bulwark against the Soviet empire in the Cold War. There are no security connections among China, India, and Brazil, and there are real border confrontations between China and India, as well as India providing a home to the Dalai Lama. On the other hand, given the end of the Cold War, with its massive opposing nuclear and conventional forces and their subsequently substantial reduction, there is no great need for security alliances and connections. Security lies not so much in balances among tanks, fighters, and ships as in (1) transparency among countries on security matters, and (2) tidying up disruptions around the edges. It is the adjustments in the economic and financial worlds after the great American financial collapse, followed by the as-yet unresolved European financial collapse, that will shape the new patterns of globalization. Would China, India, and Brazil be the beneficiaries of the stagnation of the American and European economies? Not if their exports decline proportionately; they will have to develop their own internal market more, as the U.S. long did.

**Disruptions to Peace Are on the Fringes of the Prosperous World**

Is it “an increasingly dangerous and uncertain world,” as many people in the U.S. defense community say? For one thing, they have always said that; for another, it is mostly about scaring Congress to give them more money. But it is not “an increasingly dangerous and uncertain world,” as elaborated below. It is, however, “an increasingly dangerous and uncertain global financial world,” as the private banks in the U.S., the UK, and the Euro Zone have demonstrated up through the great crashes of 2008, as they pursued their ever-increasing trade in exotic financial instruments with leverage of up to 30 times, that is,
retaining something like only 3-percent capital reserves on the expectations that
governments would bail them out if the risks they took failed.

Leaving aside the dire situations the U.S. has gotten itself into in Iraq
and Afghanistan, the world is mostly at peace.

The main point is that the world is mostly peaceful these days and has grown more so
over the past two decades. That pattern of peace started only coincidentally with the end
of the Cold War. Actually, it was really established in the dire confrontation of the Cold
War in which there was actually no combat between the two sides, but it had the effect of
breaking the pattern of the Great World Wars of Europe.

Is life in the world and global trade threatened by disruptions? Yes—in the madness of
the casino known as the financial world. No—neither terrorists, nor pirates, nor Iran, nor
any other violence (except maybe the drug war in Mexico) are any real threat to the
global economy and its trade.

- Two-state wars have practically disappeared.
- Internal wars, especially in Africa, have steadily declined since the early 1990s.
- Drug traffic, other types of smuggling, fish poaching, and human trafficking
  continue, along with the movement of boat people, though that is not a threat to
  peace in the world.
- Middle East peace, i.e., between the Israelis and Palestinians, remains forever
  unsettled.
- In Latin America, one worries about the instability in Venezuela, given Cesar
  Chavez’s death.

But then there’s “the Arab Awakening”—that is, the internal turmoil in
the Middle East since 2010.

The U.S. Government has watched the revolutions in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya; an
uprising put down in Bahrain; and the chaos in Yemen. There had also been the Green
Revolution in Iran in 2009-2010, which the government put down brutally and has not
recurred. And now, in Syria, there is perhaps the worst violence accompanying the
uprisings of the common people in any of these countries.

So far, Morocco and Algeria are relatively quiet these days, as have been Jordan and the
Gulf monarchies, except for Bahrain. But Pakistan has long been in turmoil as well, not
least because of the war in Afghanistan next door.

The U.S. has been mostly on the sidelines during the Arab Awakening. It has been a
source of great confusion to the Administration and other interested groups, especially as
they try to figure out what new leadership might be emerging. The Americans and Europeans have intervened militarily only in Libya.

What we are seeing in the Middle East is the end of the military-socialist-Baathist secular rule that began with Gamal Nasser overthrowing the monarchy in Egypt, followed by other monarchies being overthrown and military dictatorships instituted instead. The general publics in these countries have become much more aware, including with al Jazeera and other Arab television and the spread of social media. But the main problem is that these Arab cultures and economies still cannot generate jobs for their people, unless they have had enough oil money to do so—and those tend to be jobs on the dole, turning people into rentiers.

So a series of countries have imploded as regimes have lost control or put down the revolutions with extreme violence. A key factor has been whether militaries and police joined the popular side. But what strategic significance has it had for the United States? Americans always worry about disruptions of the flow of oil and thus higher gasoline prices, but that’s not been a factor. They have worried since 9/11 about al Qaeda taking over any of these countries, but that is not evident (as opposed to just “Islamists”). We worry about the security of Israel, and certainly whether Egypt or Jordan might renounce the Camp David Treaty. That would be a serious change, but so far there’s been essentially no spillover into the Israel issue, though anarchy in the Sinai upon Egypt’s own chaos has permitted greater supply of rockets to Hamas in the Gaza Strip. It really has come down to the humanitarian concerns—which are hard for us to declare as “strategic,” i.e., any threat to the U.S.

But then there’s Pakistan, which hangs on the edge of its own disintegration.

The longer-range future: running out of oil—running out of gas will take longer—while global warming increases…

Beyond all this, out into the future, is whether the demand for oil comes close to the maximum level of production, with consequent steep rises in prices when they meet. Demand had reached about 86 million barrels per day in 2007 prior to the beginning of the Great Recession, slipped to around 83 million barrels a day during the depth of the recession, but is growing again as China and India continue their growth, whereas Europe is slipping back into recession. One estimate of the maximum production level had been around 90 million barrels. For the past several years, the estimate of reserve production had been 2 million barrels a day, almost all in Saudi Arabia, but a new estimate of reserve production, per the International Energy Agency (IEA), is 5.24 million barrels. And more production could be forthcoming from Iraq and the development of deep-water wells in the Gulf of Mexico, off Brazil, and off West Africa, while production continues to decline in Venezuela and Iran.

17. Per www.oil-price.net, the price per barrel was a little more than $90 a barrel in mid-January 2011, with a one-year forecast of $105 per barrel. In June 2012, Brent crude (highest price) was running about $98, and U.S. West Texas about $84.
But a real revolution in the oil and gas picture has happened in the U.S. just over the past several years and despite America’s own recession and slow recovery. The shale gas revolution took off, and so the U.S. will be self-sufficient in gas for decades ahead. At the same time, even as Gulf of Mexico deep oil drilling increases have replaced declining Alaska oil production, fracking in the North Dakota and Montana oil shale has added more to U.S. oil production. In the early 2000s, U.S. oil imports had increased to 60 percent, but have now receded to about 40 percent (7.5 million of 19 million barrels consumed a day). Moreover, U.S. automobiles are becoming much more efficient in gasoline usage.

In the interim, the emissions of CO₂ continue, and the global warming effects of that accumulation are already beginning to show (e.g., melting of the Arctic icecap). The basic effects would be higher temperatures, rising sea-levels, salinization and lower water tables on shore, reduced agricultural yields, and the invasion of pests. Most of these effects are likely to arise in the middle band of the earth, to include southern Europe and Mexico, and even the southern United States. The secondary effects are disease and death of populations, followed by governments unable to provide services and maintain security. The tertiary effects—and these are what scare the advanced nations less affected by global warming and better able to cope—are migrations. Wars breaking out over all this are harder to imagine. Alternatives and adaptations are possible for both fossil fuels and for anticipating the effects of global warming between now and then, but they will take concerted government and international cooperation and massive resources to implement.

**Summary of past and current conflicts and confrontations**

The following chart summarizes the “hot spots” around the world, including conflicts (just about all internal to countries), confrontations (between countries), and those conflicts and confrontations that have been resolved (though they could always break open again).
Perhaps it is surprising to see how many of the internal conflicts have been resolved. Otherwise, most of the current and potential disruptions occur at the fringes of the world, which include, most importantly, a great part of the Muslim-majority countries and, in particular, those stretching from Morocco to Pakistan. The larger fringe, though, may be the 750-800 million people in each of China and India who are still tied to the land, i.e., the peasantry—but these are internal problems for those two countries, which are otherwise reasonably well-managed. After that is much of Sub-Saharan Africa, Central America, some of the Caribbean islands, and other Latin American countries (Peru is growing at a robust 7 percent a year), plus many other island countries, and then, of course, the poor countries of Central Asia. The global connections of many of these countries are tenuous, though in the Middle East, half have oil and gas to export and half do not. The countries on the fringes may rely too much on the export of natural resources, with little attendant industrialization. They do represent the old colonial areas (e.g., Britain, France, Italy, as well as those of Tsarist Russia and the Soviet Union).  

Incidentally, confrontation in the Arctic is labeled as a “joke” because the relations among the littoral states—U.S., Canada, Russia, Norway, and Denmark (Greenland) are all members of the Arctic Council and have cordial relations on the area. The EEZs are well-recognized among them—except that Russia is making a claim, subject to

---

18. An excellent summary of “why the world is not a more violent place than it used to be” can be found in Joshua S. Goldstein, “Think Again: War; World Peace May be Closer Than You Think,” *Foreign Policy* (September/October 2011).
international arbitration, on the Lomonosov Ridge. Russia is very scrupulous, for instance, does not challenge the U.S. EEZ. The Northwest Passage and much of the Northern Sea Route along Russia are in territorial waters. But as the Polar Ice Cap continues to melt and the feasible sealanes open up, at least for part of the year, “security communities” tend to believe armed confrontations could take place in the area. There are a lot of issues on regulation of sea traffic—to include spills, groundings, strandings in ice, etc.—to be resolved, but such issues would hardly be settled by armed threats or shootings.

This is not the gloomy picture one gets from the U.S. Department of Defense. That gloom is really not about the world, but all about Washington defense budget politics and the uncertainty of the U.S. defense establishment as to where an Administration may send its military, to their surprise. The list of what DOD worries about—and that is also encompassed as threats in the new National Security Strategy—comes down, first, to Afghanistan and then to terror, nuclear proliferation (which is really only about Iran and North Korea), “weak and failing states,” and “anti-access/area denial” (A2/AD). A2/AD in reality is about China preventing the U.S. from coming to the rescue of Taiwan in the event China attacks Taiwan, and of Iran defending itself against a U.S. invasion of Iran—an unlikely thing for the U.S. to do. However, the Chief of Naval Operations and the Chief of Staff of the Air Force say that the Air-Sea Battle capability (not tactic nor strategy) they are developing to counter A2/AD is all about protecting “the commons” (sea, air, space, underwater, cyber), not about China or Iran. Beyond that, DOD wrings its hands about “uncertainty” and “complexity” in the world, as if such things are beyond anticipation and parsing. These issues are discussed in greater detail in Section XI.

**Summing up the world the U.S. faces**

The chart below shows the broad paths unfolding in the world. In the years that I have been studying globalization and its associations with U.S. national security, I have not found it useful to posit alternative worlds. They may be useful as a heuristic device to smoke out as many major factors as possible, but they end up “stochastically,” i.e., a random walk that may go in any direction, to great confusion. Basically, I have found that an expanding fan within two extreme boundaries provides a better depiction of the future. As shown in the chart below, these two extremes for the world are:

- The world economy continues to grow, with an associated decline in conflict around the world

- Everything “goes to hell” in the world, with conflicts, rampant terror, arms races, etc. A world financial collapse would be a great contributor to this extreme.
This chart encompasses the factors, conditions, and situations I have cited earlier in this section and arrays them between the extremes. There is a broad range shown between things going well and the bad developments. The unfolding of events may be on a winding dependent path—in the sense that it depends on what has gone on before it in terms of economic development, institutional (governmental) development, events, etc.

There are, of course, some massive trends underlying it all: above all, population growth and its attendant consumption of the planet’s resources, including finite sources like oil and natural gas, with the consequent broader effects of some kinds of competition for scarce resources (not necessarily wars) and of global warming, with its particular consequences for life on the planet. Although it is conventional to wring one’s hands about the supposed negative effects of population growth, the positive effects have generally been dominant historically. Ideally, of course, everyone in the world would move upward in their economic comforts of life, as has been happening, particularly as China and India join the progress made earlier in the West. But there would always be some left behind—and even some determined to be left way behind (the philosophy of Osama bin Laden, al Qaeda, the Taliban, and maybe even Kim Jong Un and Mugabe).

What the U.S. and everybody else do in the short term has much to do with what unfolds in the future. The U.S. and everyone else in the world (both private and governmental) are either engaged or not. That is, they are tending to their own business at home or are
finding that they can expand that business with international connections. The activity of
the world is the sum of those actions. To put it another way, neither the U.S. nor
collective cooperation among countries is helpless in positively nudging the evolution of
activities on the planet—so long as they keep nudging. Private business has always led
the way in this regard, with the collective governments striving to catch up in formulating
regulations so as to ensure some kind of fair distribution. Governments have particular
roles in determining who and what enters their countries.

Then the question arises as to what events or actions can jolt the world off the
current path of the expansion of economies and trade globally onto another path of
stagnation, economic and financial collapse, or globally disruptive conflict. It is hard
to envisage, given the stakes most countries in the world, including China, have in the
current path of external trade and internal growth.

- Certainly World War I and the Great Depression beginning in 1929-1931 were jolts
to growth and trade and the global cooperation that those economic activities
embraced. They also led to alienation among countries as their connections were lost,
which, in turn, led to World War II.

- The fall of the Soviet empire and then the collapse and division of the Soviet Union
itself provided an opposite and upward lift by broadening the participation of the
post-Soviet newly independent countries in globalization as we now know it.

- The economic and financial world did suffer a series of jolts that forced governments
and businessmen to improve their systems and management—the 1973-74 oil
embargo after the 1973 Arab-Israeli war and subsequent high inflation for years; the
U.S. stagflation of the late 1970s, along with the fall of the Shah and another upward
jolt in oil prices; the huge debts in Latin America accumulated in the 1980s; the
Mexican financial crisis of 1994; the Asian Tigers’ debt crashes in 1997; the Russian
crash in 1998; and, lately, the Great Recession of 2008-09, caused by over-exuberant
bankers riding the tides of exotic financial instruments moving worldwide.

- Awful as 9/11 was, it hardly affected most of the world’s routine activity, though the
cost of the subsequent wars in Iraq and Afghanistan contributed to the huge deficits in
Federal finance in the U.S., along with the financial shenanigans of the bankers, thus
leading to the Great Recession in the U.S. economy.

- Beginning in early 2011, a series of revolutionary events by the people is rippling
across the Arab world—Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, and now especially in the
catastrophe that is happening in Syria. All these events promise to change the
trajectory of the whole Arab world, including those countries not affected yet (e.g.,
Jordan and Lebanon, not to speak of the threat to Israel). Even Iran and China are
nervous about the contagion of these popular movements spreading to their countries.

An odd aspect of the history of the Cold War is that the immense efforts of the United
States and the Soviet Union, in competition, to build and maintain their nuclear and
conventional military forces discouraged most other countries in the world from entering
that military competition and instead turning to economic growth, construction of social safety nets, and export industries—see West Germany and Japan and eventually even China, beginning under Deng Zhao ping.

There was a great accumulation of military equipment in the Middle East because of the Arab-Israeli wars, the accumulation of great wealth by the oil-producing countries, and as the U.S. sold military equipment to the Shah of Iran both to counter the Soviet Union and to offset the Russian supplies to some of the Arab countries. But those sales dried up when the Shah fell in 1979 and free Soviet equipment was no longer available after 1991. Since then, the Syrian, Iraqi, and Algerian forces have hardly modernized, and in 2011 Libya dropped out of the Russian market. The wealthy oil countries can still buy sophisticated equipment, but can hardly man or maintain what they buy. Although the U.S. became the main military supplier to Egypt, those supplies replaced, at most, only one-third of what Egypt had obtained from the Soviet Union, however much more capable the U.S. equipment may have been.

The U.S. military likes to envisage such catastrophic world-changing events as a great war between the U.S. and China over China attacking Taiwan, or Iran going wild and closing the Strait of Hormuz (think of Paul Van Riper’s brilliant execution of an Iranian attack on the U.S. Navy in the Millennium Challenge exercise of 2002—all on paper), or of an Iranian nuclear attack on Israel if it were actually to acquire such weapons. More likely the greatest world-changing/redirecting event would be a world-wide financial and economic collapse—after all, the world is on the brink of it now, at least in the U.S. and southern Europe. But the rise of militaristic, empire-seeking regimes like Japan and Germany were in the 1930s is hard to imagine. Some try to put China into that category, but its stakes in the world economy are simply too high, and it is still under rigorous Communist Party rule.

The world went from the Cold War, with its decolonization at the fringes, to the emergence of globalization as the 1990s wore on and China’s exports blossomed. With the networking and trade that globalization represented, it seemed to be becoming much more a “one world” with potential prosperity for all people. The international organizations regulating that trade—e.g., NAFTA, GATT, APEC, WTO, G-7/8/20—grew and spread as well. The bloodiest conflicts were scattered and non-strategic (e.g., in Africa, the Balkans, Chechnya) and were gradually resolved. There were scattered incidents of terrorism, but we hadn’t recognized the global potential of al Qaeda until 9/11, even though the Clinton Administration had urged Sudan in 1996 to expel Osama bin Laden and then attacked his base in Afghanistan with Tomahawk missiles in 1992. But, in a way, globalization was too exuberant in the financial sector, and something like 400 to 800 trillion dollars of highly-leveraged financial trading was sloshing around the world daily while the world GDP has grown only to something like $70 trillion.

Then came 9/11 and “the global war on terror.” The U.S. military got bogged down in Afghanistan, Iraq, and then more deeply in Afghanistan as U.S. military presence in Iraq

19. U.S. military sales programs in the Middle East (most financed by Foreign Military Sales, i.e., for cash) had become big after the 1973 Arab-Israel war and the oil embargo, to which Egypt was added in 1979, and continue today in the Gulf oil states.
was phased down. And then the great financial bubble in the U.S. broke and involved Europe as well, causing the Great Recession of 2008-2009, with consequent shrinkage of GDPs, growth, wages, and so on. We don’t even talk about the benefits of globalization anymore as the U.S. and European economies implode. But the fear of running out of oil and natural gas has receded (in part because of the slowdowns in the advanced economies and with more discoveries), while the recognition grew that as, eventually, oil and gas reserves would diminish, they would leave a great problem of global warming ahead. But right now, at mid-2013, with so many current problems in the world, high levels in governments are hardly thinking about energy supplies and global warming.
VI. America in the World and American Foreign Policy

U.S. connections with the world

The U.S. has long been connected to the world. It became most firmly connected upon the global World War II and in the post-war the recovery period followed by the emergence of the political, economic, and military competition with the Soviet Union. Then the Cold War ended with the collapse of the Soviet empire and the Soviet Union itself. After the end of the Cold War, America entered the age of globalization, which it fostered with free trade agreements, including with China. The world became very tied together with trade and communications. Then, upon 9/11, America turned to the war on terrorism, marked by its invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan, while its financial sector—along with that of the Europeans—plunged the U.S. economy (and Europe’s, too) into the Great Recession. Given its economic and political stagnation, America has turned very much inward in the year 2013, but still keeps strong connections with the rest of the world.

U.S. Administrations lead U.S. interaction with the rest of the world on three paths: the economic-financial path, the non-military security path (e.g., on proliferation and on peace-making efforts), and the military path (now mostly in Afghanistan, but, after Afghanistan, when most U.S. forces will be home awaiting contingencies, the U.S. will continue to engage militarily with allies in consultations and exercises). U.S. military activities occupy a niche within an Administration’s foreign policy, subordinate to it. They do not lead it; they are one tool, especially as they have been bogged down in Afghanistan and Iraq, which have consumed the U.S. military establishment since 2001.

An Administration-in-office’s foreign policy and activities lead official U.S. involvement in the world. That foreign policy in turn drives what the Administration asks the U.S. military to do out there in the world, which “asking” by an Administration is actually very episodic, other than in long-standing military associations. Most of what the U.S. government does in the world is not military, but diplomatic and economic.

U.S. foreign policy has long been more a matter of nudging the world than seeking some grand settlement that will allow the U.S. to bring its forces home and leave the world to itself—though the U.S. would always sustain its trade and other interconnections with the world. The major point is that the U.S. manages IN the world. It does not manage THE world. It is involved, it nudges where it can and resolves issues where it can. It may remain ratcheted up to some issues, like Middle East peace, for an interminable time. There are great continuities in U.S. foreign policy. The U.S., and particularly the Administration in office, provides leadership in the sense that, when nobody else is coming up with ideas, it comes up with proposals for further discussion. But the U.S. no longer has all the answers, especially since it has ruined its own economy and so far sees no way out of its present dire domestic political, economic, and financial situations.

At the present time, in 2013, the U.S., European, and Japanese economies have been stagnating while the Chinese, Indian, and Brazilian economies have been booming...
(though each of those now slowing—Mexico is now growing fast than Brazil). Yet both the Western world and the emerging economies are now functioning at a much higher level of wealth than 20 years ago—though apparent wealth can drop quickly (e.g., about 40 percent loss in U.S. household wealth since 2007).

Despite the Great Recession, first in the U.S., and then in Europe, the dollar is still the world’s reserve currency, in part because U.S. treasury securities are the safest place in the world for countries to place their savings. The U.S. is still running a substantial current accounts (trade) deficit—as much as $660 billion a year—which is financed by the sale of treasury notes and other financial instruments, but has not yet led to some drastic shift of economic or financial leadership to, say, China. China still needs the U.S. market in which to sell its goods, and in turn needs to soak up the dollars those sales bring to its country in order to keep its workers’ wages low while trying to hold down the inflation that flooding the country with its own currency would threaten. China is paying interest on its people’s savings that is less than the inflation rate.

Within all this mostly economic (not just conflict or security) global and U.S. foreign policy context, there’s a big question as to what U.S. “national security” is, when it is not chasing terrorists, and what provides that national security.

Somehow we all knew what “national security” was during the Cold War: there was a competing system and a formidable opponent out there—the Soviet Union. And that led America to establish a global, worldwide presence—both civil and military—and a tendency to relate everything going on in the world to that particular confrontation.

But much of U.S. foreign policy and activities in the post-Cold War era has been and will be conducted in the economic area, including financial management and reform, the G-20 consultations, expanding free trade areas, and coping with global warming and the need for alternative fuels.

So, what lies ahead for U.S. national security, between the extremes of simply protecting the U.S. and somehow pretending to protect everybody in the world? Maybe we should worry most about defending the U.S. The U.S. still lies behind its two oceans, and between what are probably the least-defended, least threatening countries in the world—Canada and Mexico—with both of which the U.S. has intricate trading relations (NAFTA). The U.S. has generated about 23 percent of the world’s GDP with only about 5 percent of the world’s population, though its proportion of the world’s GDP may now be shrinking. It does a lot of trade around the world (in 2013, around $1.8 trillion in exports and around $2.3 trillion in imports).

The picture that follows show the range of American activities in the world as coupled to how the world itself operates. I had laid out the spectrums of world activity on page 31, starting from a picture of the total world, from peaceful economics to war, then beneath that the spectrum of U.S. foreign policy and activities in the world, private and public, to be followed by the spectrum of how U.S. military activities in the world connect to U.S. foreign policy, and finally the spectrum of the military forces the U.S. maintains and develops in support of those military activities in the world.
As the bottom spectrum on U.S. foreign policy and activities shows, and again, as in all these spectrums, and lying between “isolation” (the U.S. not engaged at all in the world) to the threat of nuclear weapons (a threat to end the world as we know it), and stretching from the green (economic) to the red (war) within the spectrum.

- It starts on the left with most American contacts in the world being carried out by private business, though facilitated by and assisted by U.S. embassies’ commercial attachés.
- It then proceeds to routine U.S. relations with other governments, especially neighbors and long-standing allies. The U.S. government also participates in international institutions, including the UN and economic institutions (e.g., IMF and World Bank).
- The next step beyond that, as shown, but still “green,” involves setting up new global economic arrangements, like Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) or taking initiatives on energy and climate matters.
- Entering the “red” area, the U.S. may decide to participate in peacekeeping and humanitarian relief operations.
- Getting more deeply into the military sphere, a prime function of U.S. diplomacy since World War II has been the maintenance of military alliances, originally mostly to offset Soviet (Communist) global initiatives. The U.S. has also tried to work with the ever-frustrating UN peacekeeping processes.
Finally, the spectrum reaches the more extensive and intense military functions an Administration may decide to undertake, sometimes even involving combat, as will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.

Strategic thinking and planning in American foreign policy

Having been involved in the American strategy process (i.e., foreign policy plus defense) since 1962, I can say that Americans are not very good at strategy, but they are very good at pragmatic action. They are problem-solvers. They are adaptable. They rise to occasions. They are good at planning operations, if they take the time to do the planning and to change plans as situations evolve. That is, in our studies we have found that, when operations are planned with some care (Panama, Desert Storm, UNOSOM I in Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia, and the major combat phase of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF)), they were more efficiently and successfully executed. But those operations that were more improvised (UNOSOM II, Kosovo bombing, coping with the aftermath of OIF’s major combat phase, and Afghanistan) have gone on much longer than expected and, except for Kosovo, were unsuccessful. For example, the long campaign in Afghanistan has evolved in a series of improvisations and new starts. Beginning in 2009, it was as if General McChrystal and then General Petraeus were starting anew in Afghanistan after eight or nine years of prior U.S. involvement on the ground there. In both cases, it seemed that they were making up their courses of action as they went along.

At the foreign policy level, it is the Administration that sets the policy and moves out into the world to execute and adapt it. What American officials don’t need is some look-it-up boilerplate (“Grand Strategy”) to be able to figure out what they want to do. The world doesn’t stop for them while they do that, and the continuities that must be pursued, e.g., the Middle East peace process, are always there. They may set down a national security strategy, as now required by law, but, as Eliot Cohen noted at the IISS Annual Conference in 2002, nobody in the U.S. reads these documents except their authors, while all the foreign countries go over them with a fine-tooth comb to find out what they think the U.S. really intends to do. But if the U.S. officials who are involved in the decision-making (the President makes the final decisions) are not consulting their own look-it-up document, aren’t those foreign officials going to be confused when the U.S. takes some other initiative not anticipated in the formal document, departures usually forced upon it by circumstances? There are complaints by other countries that the actions of the American government are not predictable—which sometimes may be a good thing. Adaptability is an American genius.

The general thesis of this paper, though, based on close observations of successive Administrations over the past 50 years, is that the personnel at the top in Administrations don’t spend much time constructing grand architectures—especially as events come crashing in on them early on, whatever election campaign papers they may have prepared. Rather, from the first days of taking office, they are busy reacting to what comes up and then, as time passes, taking opportunities to nudge the world along—through relations with established allies, in resolving issues by consensus in established international institutions, in negotiating such things as free-trade agreements, and in other consultations (to include Middle East peace and the hard cases of North Korean and
Iranian nuclear proliferation). This is sometimes referred to as “engagement,” but it is more than that: it is seeking mutual agreements with other governments. To repeat: any “architecture” of foreign policy at the beginning of an Administration is quickly overcome by the inherited burdens and obligations of continuities, and by events that come crashing in.

For the some in the U.S. military and for some academic observers, though, “grand strategy” is something to be done at leisure and at removal from the world, in order to prepare the mind (and even the forces) for some great encounter (e.g., war). It is also the preparation for surprise, for the unexpected event out-of-the-blue. The 45 years of the Cold War tended to compound those kinds of military anticipations and preparations, since there was almost no U.S. combat action (with the huge exception of Vietnam). The Soviets never even attacked Europe nor did North Korea attack South Korea after the truce of 1953 and the establishment of the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), even during the huge diversion of U.S. forces to evict Iraq from Kuwait in 1991. The U.S. military had to mine the 1973 Arab-Israeli war for any real military lessons, like ammunition consumption rates, since, aside from Vietnam, it had no relevant experience since the Korean War. During the Cold War, and aside from Vietnam, the only U.S. forces’ combat experiences were for the Mayaguez freighter incident off Cambodia and the coup in Grenada in 1982.

The major change in U.S. foreign policy after the security-dominated Cold War came about two years into the first Clinton Administration. Their interventions in Somalia and Haiti had not been particularly rewarding, and they switched strongly to economic and trade diplomacy. They completed the NAFTA Treaty (North American Free Trade Area), pursued more GATT (General Agreements on Tariffs and Trade) initiatives, which eventually turned into the WTO (World Trade Organization), and continued the periodic G-7 talks, adding Russia to make them G-8. Essentially, this was the construction of globalization, also greatly helped by satellite communications and the laying of fiber optic cables all over the world.

Until the U.S. invasions of Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq in 2003, and leaving aside the no-fly zones the U.S. maintained over Iraq from 1991 to 2003, the U.S. military interventions in the post-Cold War period were selective, short-lived in their combat phases, and involved only a few personnel killed-in-action. Their costs were absorbed in the base defense budget, without supplementals, or, in the case of Desert Shield/Desert Storm, mostly covered by the $62 billion provided by Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Germany, and Japan. There have been impressions that U.S. forces were very busy all over the world during the 1990s, but our CNA studies showed that, after Panama and Desert Storm, all the additional days of such interventions over the pace of the interventions in the 1970s and 1980s were accounted for by Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia/Kosovo, and maintaining the no-fly zones over Iraq. The invasions and occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan have changed all that, in duration, costs, and casualties.
The Obama Administration’s tasks in the world

The Obama Administration first issued a National Security Strategy (NSS) in May 2010 that largely restored the continuities in U.S. foreign policy that had been disrupted by the Bush 43 Administration, with due consideration for the problem of terrorism and of the continuing war in Afghanistan. I would summarize the Obama Administration’s approach to the world, as reflected in the many words of the NSS, as follows:

1. “Start solving” the nation’s huge financial and economic recession crisis.

2. And in doing so, contribute to stabilizing the global economy and, hopefully, resuming both American and global growth (involving some big revamping of international financial institutions and other cooperative economic institutions).

3. Engage/re-engage with most of the world, especially on the economic side, because the U.S. doesn’t have all the needed brilliant ideas.

4. Grapple diplomatically with the specific troubling situations that pose some bigger security disruptions, namely, Middle East peace and the Iranian and North Korean nuclear programs,

5. “Reset” with Russia, initially with a new START treaty, and maybe in the future really engage in a major dialogue about a new TransAtlanticEurAsia security system.20

6. Hold the line in Iraq and Afghanistan—except that Afghanistan is turning out to be an almost overwhelming problem with no clear resolution, and, in the interim has become the “AfPak” problem—that is, adding Pakistan, where the spillover from the war in Afghanistan (Pashtuns taking sanctuary), political weakness and turmoil, and the growth of terror within Pakistan itself has led to our fears of the whole country breaking down.

7. As for the terrorists, that’s what Afghanistan was supposed to be all about, notwithstanding that “The Base” (al Qaeda) had moved to Pakistan after it evacuated Tora Bora. Now Osama bin Laden and al-Libi have been killed, leaving Zawahiri isolated in Pakistan “in charge,” while AQAP in Yemen, al-Shabab in Somalia, and AQIM in the Trans-Sahel are the residual al Qaeda centers. Much of the leadership has been killed, and others continue to be pursued by drone strikes in Pakistan and Yemen. Otherwise, chasing terrorists is mostly a matter of

---

20. The Obama Administration stopped the initiative for a “The Third Site” missile defense in Europe, planning on “regional” missile defenses instead. It is not clear, though, why the U.S. taxpayer should be footing most of the bill for defense of Europe against Iranian missile attacks (the Europeans are to provide “the connections”). And, besides, why is it that Iran would lob ballistic missiles into Europe, and what would they be aiming at, given an extremely rich target set and so few Iranian missiles?
police and intelligence work (and financial tracking, too), and the occasional Special Forces raid to chase the terrorists before they can send some individual to strike the U.S. The whole terror issue considerably overlaps the domestic and foreign security spheres of the U.S.

8. As for “weak and failing states” (more discussion later in Section XI), as noted in the earlier brief discussion on disruptions in the world, few are of strategic significance. It is UN diplomats and peacekeepers who have been managing most of them.

9. Looming in the 2000s as a security problem for the U.S. is China—that is, beyond the problems the U.S. has with China over the trade deficit, the currency exchange rate, and American fears of China’s relentless search for and exploitation of commodities, including in Africa. The security dialogue with China is not good, and the U.S. fears the aggressiveness of its improved military in the Western Pacific.

10. But the major international problem for the U.S., given its close coupling to the U.S. economy and given the U.S.’s internal economic concentration, is the whole system of global trade, finance, currency exchanges and settlements. Up through 2007, globalization was seen as the great wave of improvement for just about all the people in the world, with steady growth and expanding trade among countries. But now we fear financial collapse, slow growth or recession, national debt, and, certainly in the U.S., unemployment and the stagnation and even shrinkage of wages for most of the American people. As of end-2012, the possibilities for economic turnarounds back to growth, in at least the U.S., Europe, and Japan, are not yet apparent. This is already squeezing the U.S. defense budget.

11. For the longer term, and even despite new discoveries of oil and gas in the U.S., but with the accumulating irreversibilities of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, the U.S. and the world have to address (a) alternative energy supplies, notably for diminishing oil, and (b) the climate change coming upon the increase of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere leading to global warming and its effects on agriculture, sea-level rise, disease, and, worst of all, potentially creating mass migrations, particularly from south to north. The advent of shale gas and oil has alleviated some of these concerns.

The National Security Strategy of May 2010 has been a comprehensive strategy for U.S. maintaining its connections with the world—and more than about the military. It involves continuing old alliances and friendships and seeking new engagements with the full range of entities around the world—international institutions, including alliances, countries, non-governmental organizations, and individuals. It really has been a pragmatic approach to the world, i.e., tackling problems as they arise, maybe creating multilateral architectures to sustain solutions as the problems are attacked. The U.S. had been rather successful at creating institutions in the post-World War II period, but their
efficacy is being severely challenged after the great financial and economic crisis of 2008-2009. In short, economic activities and relations come first nowadays.

A change in strategy with America’s economic stagnation and national debt crisis

Upon the great U.S. budget and debt impasse that unfolded across 2011 with the failure of several proposed solutions, the Budget Control Act of 2011 was passed by the Congress and signed by the President on August 2, 2011. It specified up front what turned out to be a $487 billion cut of the base defense budget over ten years from the previous budget projection. It also specified that a super-committee of the Congress would attempt to make further adjustments to the overall Federal budget, or, if it failed, an automatic sequestration of the FY2013 budget would be executed on January 3, 2013. That would entail another $492 billion cut in defense over nine years. Indeed, sequestration was executed in March 2013.

The Obama Administration had set out in September 2011 to rework simultaneously both its defense strategy and its previous draft of an FY2013 budget (actually, its Future Year Defense Plan, or FYDP, covering the period FY13-FY17). The President took a direct hand in these proceedings. The result was the document, “Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense,” issued on January 1, 2012. Note that this was about defense, not the entirety of foreign policy, so presumably the rest of the National Security Strategy of May 2009 was still pertinent outside of defense matters.

The general portions of the new strategy were pretty much the standard U.S. boilerplate: preserve U.S. leadership, maintain U.S. military superiority, and keep faith with our troops and their families and with veterans. And there are the usual standard missions of U.S. forces that have prevailed since the end of the Cold War, but were apropos even during the Cold War: counter terrorism and irregular warfare; deter and defeat aggression (with even the hint of the old “two major combats at a time” fallacy—“denying the objectives of, or imposing unacceptable costs on, an opportunistic aggressor in a second region”); project power despite anti-access/area denial challenges (i.e., a country defending itself), counter weapons of mass destruction; operate effectively in cyberspace and space; maintain the nuclear deterrent; defend the homeland and support civil authorities; provide a stabilizing presence; and conduct stability and counterinsurgency operations—with the important caveat, “However, U.S. forces will no longer be sized to conduct large-scale, prolonged stability operations,” i.e., no more occupations and nation-building. Instead, they would be limited to humanitarian, disaster relief, and other

21. Not all of them survive (e.g., SEATO and CENTO, especially as the U.S. was not a signatory of either treaty). In a way, NATO, as “the most successful institution,” was most successful simply because of the “forcing event” of having two ministerial meetings a year—I watched successive secretaries of defense try to figure out what they would say that was different “this time” and what initiatives they might propose.

22. It should be noted that the “opportunistic aggressor in a second region” has always been North Korea, but North Korea has passed up something like six opportunities when the U.S. was seriously distracted elsewhere over the past 62 years, and never did take the opportunity. Whatever the history, the fallacy of “two major combat operations” has been that it has never driven budgets or force sizes, except maybe for the BUR, but the BUR was still under-costed.
operations that tend to be short-term. How one can form and direct U.S. military capabilities discretely against all these missions is discussed later. Suffice it to say, U.S. forces would be jack-of-all-trades.

But the specifics relating to the actual world in the new “sustaining” defense strategy are what really count, and they really do seem to form a priority order:

1. Actively counter threats by al Qaeda and its affiliates.

2. “Of necessity,” rebalance toward the Asia-Pacific Region.

3. In the Middle East, continue to place a premium on U.S. and allies’ military presence in, and support of, partner nations in and around this region.

4. Simply say, “our posture in Europe must also evolve,” and be rebalanced—putting it clearly behind Asia-Pacific and the Middle East in priority.

5. Build partnership capability elsewhere, using small-footprint approaches.

6. Assure access to the commons (including cyberspace), strengthening norms of responsible behavior (sounds more like a diplomatic task) and maintaining interoperable military capabilities.

7. Retain capabilities for effective operations to counter WMD proliferation.23

In the light of the sequester, DOD, under its new Secretary of Defense, Chuck Hagel, was reviewing priorities for the defense budget, including whether the January 2012 would require changes. But since the wording of that 8-page document was so broad, it is unlikely to need much changing, other than a few more gloomy adjectives. For instance, since the rebalancing to Asia meant mostly just sustaining the not-so-large U.S. forces that were already stationed in the Western Pacific, it is unlikely to be changed.

It is against these general statements of U.S. military strategy that the next section explores the evolution of U.S. military forces themselves.

23. I have inserted “capabilities” in this line because most of the U.S. foreign policy effort across the years has been in “non-proliferation,” i.e., through diplomatic means. The Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction program (CTR) in the former Soviet Union after the end of the Cold War was a non-proliferation operation. The U.S. has never attacked North Korean nuclear facilities, though it was tempted to do so in 1994 when North Korea pulled rods from the reactor at Yongbyon. Desert Storm in 1991 was done solely to evict Iraq from Kuwait, but terms of surrender meant that Saddam dismantled a lot of his WMD capabilities, such as they were. A fear that he might have kept some led to the Desert Fox four-day strike in 1998, which specifically targeted what was left of such facilities. Finally, the excuse for Operation Iraqi Freedom was that Iraq was concealing WMD capabilities, but none were found—false intelligence. Now, counter-proliferation against Iran looms as an option of last resort. In short, U.S. forces themselves have hardly carried out any counter-proliferation.
Current foreign policy tasks of the Obama Administration

The unfolding of U.S. involvement in the world—including foreign policy—can be summed up as follows, with its three tracks mention at the beginning of this chapter: economic-financial, the non-military security path, and the military path:

First of all, the U.S. has to get its own house in order—as shown at the bottom of the chart.

Then note the three paths shown above (the examples shown in each path are not meant to be exhaustive):

- **First on the left is the economic-financial path.** It is the widest path shown, for it is the path that, in this new era of globalization and upon recovery from the great recession of 2008-2009, is going to take the greatest efforts by the governments in the world and for which U.S. leadership has been involved since 1945. In 2012, aside from the President himself, the major U.S. actor was the Secretary of the Treasury, in close coordination with the White House and the Secretary of State.
• **At the far right is the almost purely military path,** which is what the U.S. does with its military within the larger foreign policy context. It is, of course, very “kinetic” (involving shooting) in Afghanistan (no longer in Iraq), or Predator attacks in Pakistan and Yemen against al Qaeda people, as well as continued assistance by Special Forces to local forces, as in Colombia, the Philippines, and the Trans-Sahel, but it also involves the readiness and posture of U.S. forces and their routine interactions with other militaries around the world. The Combat Commanders (COCOMs) and the Services play the major roles in this path.

• **In between is what I call “the non-military security path.”** This is the realm of global diplomacy meant to avoid war, to control and restrict dangerous security developments (like proliferation), and to build the alliances and cooperative relationships that provide transparency and mutual confidence, again for the avoidance of war and for containing through diplomatic means those conflicts that might occur. The prime actor on this path, other than the President himself, is the Secretary of State, though the Secretary of Defense is very active in the diplomacy as well, in close collaboration with the Secretary of State. If there is not close collaboration, as in the case of Donald Rumsfeld vs. Colin Powell and Condoleezza Rice, U.S. foreign policy falls into disarray.

• **Note the sphere of U.S. homeland defense at the bottom** of the two security paths. It is mostly related to preventing terrorism in the U.S., although the drug traffic across the Mexican border, coupled with the immigration problem, may in the immediate future be taking even more resources, including that of National Guard troops.

Note also the feedback loops for both the economic side and the security side. Progress (and setbacks) in any of the three paths feed back both into the functioning of the U.S. economy, given its extensive global connections, and into the planning of the overseas posture and development of the U.S. military for the future. Finally, note that the U.S. can and does proceed on these three paths in foreign policy without some grand strategy, and certainly without waiting for some grand strategy—because almost all the issues shown are inherited, and are not new, but simply require new energy and direction (or redirection in priority).

There may well be shocks (as indicated by the “disruption” lines) that cause shifts in direction by an Administration. 9/11 certainly caused enormous changes in the Bush 43 Administration’s approach to the world and revealed a new connection, i.e., a new threat, from the world directly into the U.S. that gave a huge new impetus to homeland defense. It was a path-changing event onto a new, unanticipated course (though there had been a succession of terror attacks leading up to it, none with such damage and consequences). And yet, the disruption by terror should not be exaggerated—it has hardly caused a ripple in globalization and global trade, or in country economies. On the other hand, it has tied down the United States militarily and psychologically in its wars in Iraq and Afghanistan across the past decade and more, despite those situations having only a tenuous
connection to the globally and thinly dispersed terror networks whose attacks the U.S. has to anticipate and forestall.

In its first three years in office, President Obama and his team, especially Hillary Clinton at State, Bob Gates at Defense (then replaced by Leon Panetta), and General Jim Jones as National Security Advisor (then replaced by Tom Donilon and in early 2013 by Denis McDonough), moved out to restore American connections to the world. This included Obama’s speech in Cairo to the Muslim world; his Nobel Prize acceptance speech; his offer first for a dialogue with Iran over its nuclear program, followed by determined pursuit of further sanctions on the Iran through the UN; the P5+1; and, unilaterally, the broadening of the G-8 to the G-20; the apparently failed Copenhagen conference on curbing carbon emissions, but which did yield voluntary quotas from some countries, including China; and the “reset” with Russia, to include as the first step the negotiation of a new nuclear arms reductions treaty.

As the Obama Administration created its stimulus program to keep unemployment in the U.S. from falling further, President Obama also urged the European countries to pursue their own stimulus programs and to join in better regulation of the financial corporations that had caused the Great Recession. But the financial situations in both the U.S. and Europe have gotten much worse, without resolution. The greatest U.S. foreign policy non-security concentration at end-2012 was on finding ways back to global financial soundness and economic growth, but with almost a sense of hopelessness given European political paralysis. It does not mean, however, that the world security situation is falling apart—except for the grievous internal implosion of Syria, where conflict is now spreading across its borders into Lebanon and Turkey, while al Qaeda people flow in from Iraq and IRGC operatives flow in from Iran.

On the U.S. national security side, the U.S. removed all its forces from Iraq at the end of 2011, but the U.S. preoccupation with Afghanistan continues. The Obama Administration did surge another 33,000 U.S. troops into Afghanistan beginning in November 2009 and stepped up U.S. and allied efforts to organize and train the Afghan security forces. The surge troops had then been removed by the end of September 2012, leaving about 68,000 U.S. troops there. The U.S. and its allies were turning over more security responsibilities to the Afghan forces beginning in 2012 and will continue across 2013. By the end of 2014, security will have been turned over fully to the Afghans and U.S. fighting forces will all have been removed. The U.S. has reached an agreement with the Afghan government to provide financial and training support; whether this actually happens remains to be seen. If the U.S. is lucky, the Afghans will refuse to provide immunity to remaining U.S. military personnel, as the Iraqis did. The fate of Afghanistan as a country is a whole other question.

The pressure on Iran to stop its nuclear program continues. Both UN sanctions and U.S. unilateral sanctions have greatly complicated Iran’s economic situation—the country has both high inflation and high unemployment, and the value of the rial is dropping precipitously—but the government is moving ahead doggedly in its uranium enrichment program.
The New START treaty was agreed with Russia and has been ratified by the two countries.

There was a contretemps with the new Japanese government over the prior agreement on relocation of military facilities in Okinawa, but it seems the program will continue given the disturbing signs of Chinese “assertiveness,” which has drawn the U.S. and Japan closer.

**What will the U.S. be doing next in the world, as it relates to U.S. national security?**

U.S. strategy regarding its current international involvements—matters of both foreign policy and U.S. national security—might be described as being between two poles.

**One pole is a very big one**—the U.S. as it interacts with the world on economic and financial matters. The U.S. Government cannot both manage its own economy and provide leadership for changes in the management of the international economy, especially as the U.S. economic and financial problems are so bad. Progress (or setbacks) unfold only through the operations of the markets for recovery from the recession, subject to governments managing their financial situations and currencies over a period of time.

**The other pole is Afghanistan,** which may be a little one in a global sense, and carries with it a determination of the U.S. and its allies to its mission being completed sooner rather than being prolonged. The goal is to turn over security completely to the Afghan army and police by the end of 2014. Some in the U.S. want U.S. forces to stay there until “victory” is secured and the Taliban is eliminated.

**The “big pole”**

The economic crisis “pole” has involved all kinds of strategizing by the United States to protect investors—including the short-term measures in the U.S. Government to bail out the financial system (and GM and Chrysler) and then to impose new regulations on that system to prevent financial bubbles from forming again. Then there are the long-term measures to reduce the costs of health care in the U.S. (where cost growth, if unchecked, is going to turn the U.S. into some kind of giant hospital and the Defense Department into a giant HMO) as well as to cover most citizens. In the meantime, the debt limit and the deficit in the Federal budget have become the biggest political issues, and drastic solutions are now being executed, including reductions in the defense budget for the first time since the early 1990s.

Doing anything about carbon emissions has dropped completely off the American political screen—which also stymies any constructive participation by the U.S. in any international efforts to limit those emissions. In the meantime, the evidence for global warming as carbon dioxide accumulates in the atmosphere becomes clearer, most recently by the severity of recent severe storms and droughts.
Both the short-term and long-term programs in the financial and economic sphere require international mobilization if further country insolvencies like those in Ireland and Greece are to be avoided. As for controlling carbon dioxide emissions, China and energy feature prominently in this sphere. The life and prosperity of the planet depend not so much on its resolution, but on its positive evolution, i.e., economic growth in most of the world while economizing in energy usage and reducing carbon emissions.

What do these topics have to do with U.S. “national security,” i.e., the defense of the United States? It has much to do with the attention of U.S. leadership, especially to domestic economic matters and as they have an impact on U.S. society. In addition, as in most advanced countries in the world these days, resources gleaned from the American economy and society for defense, especially as it may be for “expeditionary” ventures to distant places somehow perceived as threats to the U.S. itself, are competing with the country’s safety nets. Indeed, the emerging proposals for cutting the Federal deficit all focus on cutting Social Security and Medicare benefits while cutting the defense budget as well, since these are the major contributors to the deficit.

Some say that economic troubles and competition for commodities may lead to shooting conflicts, especially with China. This is not clear, since the economic penalties of non-peaceful resolution affect everybody. Some may say that the disparities in resources and the freedom of governments to command those resources (e.g., not to have to fund the transfer payments for social safety nets) may mean the richer country can buy bigger and better military forces to threaten and cow other countries.

China and the U.S. are discussed in this regard below; there is no other such confrontation for the U.S. (I also talk about “reset” with Russia later.) At the opposite end of the spectrum, some say the “weak and failing states” with their collapsing governments and anarchy can spread troubles to neighboring countries and around the world, e.g., though terrorists or migrants. Terrorists are the only real problem for the general welfare of the world, and they are in very few of these “weak and failing” states and can be tracked. They are still planning and attempting to carry out operations, e.g., attacks on U.S. airliners, but they have been unsuccessful since 9/11.

The “little pole”

As compared to economics as the “big pole” for the United States, the “little pole” is Afghanistan—the most intense and costly international U.S. involvement, whose costs (along with the prior war in Iraq) have contributed greatly to the deficit President Obama inherited and the prosecution of which has also greatly complicated our relations with the rest of the world—not to speak of the two wars breaking the backs of U.S. ground forces. The costs are already approaching a trillion dollars, and the long-term costs may be as high as another three trillion dollars, considering the costs for the long-term care of the wounded after these conflicts. President Obama has to worry about Afghanistan every day, and the situation in and with Pakistan has also gotten complicated.
The war on terror continues

The war on terror has taken a good and dramatic turn with the killing of Osama bin Laden, as well as less significant al Qaeda leaders (e.g., Awlaki, al Libi, al Masri the bomb-maker). It remains of great domestic concern in the U.S.—though its only visibility to the American public may be the protection of public buildings and their encounters with the TSA security inspectors at airports. The Obama Administration refers to the terror threat as that of al Qaeda and its affiliates. Others talk more broadly about “Islamic extremism,” with the additional terms “Jihadi” and “Salafist.” The problem is that, whereas the core terrorists are few, dispersed, and connected almost only by the internet, it gets fuzzy at the edges as to the extent of its membership and potential recruits. Otherwise, terrorist plots and attacks are mostly by single individuals.

Disorder in coastal waters

The piracy emanating from anarchic Somalia into the Indian Ocean is another current immediately aggravating security problem in the world with which the Administration is concerned. The U.S. Navy is one of many navies patrolling the area. The situation has greatly improved, with great reductions in the number of incidents and the number of ships taken hostage. There have been benefits for naval cooperation, including Russian and Chinese vessels cooperating in a coordinated international effort for nearly the first time. Otherwise, the piracy situation in the Strait of Malacca is under control, given cooperation among Malaysia, Singapore, and a rejuvenated Indonesia.

The next situation of disorder in coastal waters that the U.S. has been worried about and has taken some early tentative steps is in the Gulf of Guinea. The biggest problem of illegal activity in many countries’ waters is still fish poaching, though this is not particularly a problem for the U.S.

Most of the other “security” items the U.S. Government pursues overseas (leaving aside homeland defense preparations for now) have almost nothing to do with U.S. forces—e.g., Middle East peace, the Iranian and North Korean nuclear programs, diplomacy about Taiwan, Georgia, etc.—however much U.S. forces loom in the background, especially with regard to Iran. Diplomatic work to resolve them would contribute to our security, but the opposite—bombing the hell out of each place—is thought to have exactly the opposite effect: alienating the world while probably not solving the problem at hand.

The revolutions in the Middle East

Uprisings of the people against long-time autocrats—that began in January 2011 in Tunisia, spread to Egypt, and then to Yemen, Bahrain, Syria, and Libya, plus the aborted Green uprising in Iran back in 2009—surprised the Obama Administration. (No one was more surprised than the Tunisian and Egyptian people at the opportunities for freedom that arose for them.) Such uprisings make for turmoil, including episodically in oil prices. Other countries now fear their own uprisings (Morocco, Algeria, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia in the Middle East; even China in the Far East), and the U.S. especially
fears the rise of Jihadist groups to power. It is a revolution that evokes the French Revolution, the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of Communist rule in Eastern Europe at the end of 1989, the fall of the Soviet Union after the failed internal coup in August 1991, to name the most prominent historical cases.

These Middle East states had not necessarily been “weak and failing states,” though Yemen and Syria certainly have been. The main problem is the suppressed desires of the people for jobs and equal opportunity by autocrats and corruption favoring the few. It is not simply a call for democracy, whatever that is—except that rotation of stagnant and corrupt long-time leadership may be the essence of this democratic impulse, which can better be described as looking for alternative leadership to the existing entrenched autocrats and plutocrats. The uprisings seem founded on economic concerns, not on religion or from external agitation.

Israel, in its isolation and given its peace treaties with Egypt and Jordan, is certainly worried—it kind of liked having autocrats and monarchs to deal with, as has actually seemed to have been an American preference as well—but then we do not really try to change or choose other countries’ governments, except some distant past cases (Guatemala in 1954) and then Saddam Hussein in 2003.

Are “weak and failing states,” however, a threat to U.S. national security? It is certainly not something that U.S. Administrations would use the U.S. military to respond to (other than for evacuation of American citizens or perhaps humanitarian aid). For the future, it will be a matter for U.S. diplomacy as new relations are forged with new leaderships and in these countries. The people in these countries certainly have more to worry about than the U.S. does.

Recapitulation on the U.S. in the World

The chart below basically places the U.S. in the world—and thus U.S. Government foreign policy—between the world and the U.S. military.
Note the constraints at the left end of the chart, including the attention of the most senior Administration officials to domestic matters, the problem of getting the funds for any foreign pursuits, which in turn are related to the Congressional, press, and public (if any) pressures on the Administration, and, of course, the necessary focus on inherited current problems, especially Afghanistan and the continued pursuit of al Qaeda operatives who want to attack America.

As shown in the chart, U.S. foreign policy in the near-term deals with the here-and-now problems: the financial/economic crisis, the war in Afghanistan, Middle East peace, the Arab awakenings, strategic negotiations with Russia, counter-terror, non-proliferation with regard to North Korea and Iran, and reconnecting with allies. These initiatives in turn set up the initiatives for the mid-term, which get more general, as in setting up new or reformed global financial institutions. It is the actions and involvement in the near-term block that set up what can be done in the mid- and long-term. Foreign policy operates day-to-day and month-to-month (as in the European financial crisis), and builds on its experiences and resolutions of issues as they occur. For the longer-term, it’s a matter of institution-building to enable problems that arise the next time.

The U.S. military, on the other hand, stands back for contingencies for which it must be prepared to respond upon being ordered to do so. Contingencies are “the unknown
future,“ which look worse the more uncertain one is about that future. But planning for those contingencies does not create that future. In the day-to-day world, U.S. forces are in constant touch with the forces of U.S. allies and friends—which provides reassurance that the U.S. is still on the scene, improves everyone’s capabilities, and familiarizes U.S. troops with those distant environments. They also signal to China and Iran—the only two countries that the U.S. might get into scrapes with—that the U.S. is still around.

For the longer-term, and based on actions taken in the near-term and sustained, one can divide an Administration’s foreign policy into (1) the U.S. in the economic world, (2) the category described earlier as diplomacy to obtain greater security, as in non-proliferation, and (3) the programs of U.S. military forces in readiness, operations, and modernization as necessary for them to deter situations through the continuing strength and deployability of U.S. forces or to be prepared for selective military interventions.

As noted earlier, an Administration knows that it has to tackle the immediate and inherited problems, while continuing to help build global institutions and to respond to new diversions that may come up. Terrorism, to be sure, requires international interlocked schemes of protection. New financial regulations, especially global, represent a strategy to prevent further financial bubbles and subsequent collapses so that the U.S. and European economies can resume their growth.

One last comment to set the stage for the next discussion of what U.S. military forces are for in their service to U.S. national security: whatever this portrait of what earlier and current U.S. Administrations have done in foreign policy, it does not add up to the U.S. “running the world” or being “the guarantor of stability” all around the world. The U.S. hardly can do that—even if it were truly U.S. foreign policy—given how bogged down it is in Afghanistan, and assuming that the U.S. doesn’t try to take on another graveyard country, e.g., Syria or Yemen. Moreover, the dire economic situation in the U.S. is going to restrain unbudgeted, deficit financing for further wars overseas.

- In this context, what the U.S. does about the economic institutions of the world is far more important than what it may do about “weak and failing states” in the mid-term. Indeed, many of what were supposed to be “weak and failing states” are doing okay, especially in Africa—up to 5-percent growth—despite the recessions in the advanced countries.

- After Afghanistan—if there is ever to be an “after”—the U.S. and its ground forces are going to be so exhausted that they will not be in any condition to conduct another counter-insurgency campaign in another country, especially one without a government.

- The al Qaeda terrorists are highly dispersed and only “virtually” connected. Police and intelligence work, good relations with Muslim-majority states and the occasional raid, as well as homeland defenses (e.g., TSA) keep them at bay—most of these actions having to do with the Administration working well with other countries, not deploying large military force units.
• Nuclear weapons proliferation by North Korea and Iran is being handled by diplomacy. In any case, possession of a few nuclear weapons wouldn’t make Iran’s ancient and deficient conventional forces any better. Nor are nuclear weapons actually usable, i.e., to be fired on another country. The retaliation to such use would wipe Iran out. Threatening such use is just bluffing.

• The problem of China for the rest of the world is mostly economic—China needs to continue to operate in the world markets. But an invasion of Taiwan or any other combat against neighbors could deprive it of those markets. Whatever cyber, space, and maritime threats it issues is just bluffing—unless some out-of-control lower-level official does something rash. The U.S. has long sustained its alliances with Japan and South Korea and has been expanding its relations with the Southeast Asian countries. The U.S. is also sustaining the forces it has had in East Asia (and in Guam, Hawaii, and the U.S. West Coast) despite reductions in its force presence elsewhere and especially in Europe where there is no threat except, perhaps, from al Qaeda terrorists.

• There is talk about the U.S. having to defend “the commons” in order to ensure that world trade continues—but the U.S. simply does not do that because there is no threat in almost all the “commons,” except cyberspace. The Persian Gulf may be the exception. Of course, most of the oil exported from the Gulf is now going to Asia, including China. One may ask why the U.S. should be providing the protection for that, but it has done so in order to protect the stability of the market, i.e., prices. The U.S. has developed better relations with the Gulf states since the oil embargo following the Arab-Israeli war of 1973, and U.S. naval ships in the Gulf have constituted a line of defense for them ever since Iraq and Iran posed threats to them.

These challenges are discussed in greater detail in Section XI.

In conclusion, the U.S. is not the policeman of the world and nobody out there expects it to be. Working within the global economic institutions and maintaining good relations (through diplomacy) constitutes the real “presence” of the U.S. in the world. Nobody at the high policy levels of the U.S. Government (i.e., the Administration) ever talks about the U.S. having an “empire” or exercising “hegemony” over the world. Administrations have problems to solve and relations to sustain. They are pragmatists.
VII. U.S. Defense Support for U.S. Foreign Policy (and Defense of the U.S. Itself)

The chart below repeats the spectrum of typical U.S. foreign policy activities around the world discussed earlier in Section VI and then roughly correlates it to what Administrations have tended to ask U.S. forces to do in the past.

This chart illustrates the two spectra of (1) U.S. Government involvement in the world coupled with (2) how U.S. forces might support those foreign policy activities. It can almost be described in one-to-one relationships at each stage in the spectrum.

As noted earlier, these spectra are colored from green to red:

- “Green” stands for the mostly economic and other peaceful activities, which are what the U.S. Government is pursuing while the forces are in readiness, including interactions with allies and friends overseas as a matter of routine.
- The increasing “Red” indicates the increasing possibility of “kinetic action” by the U.S., i.e., violence or shooting, up to actual fighting.

These spectra demonstrate that there is not a clear break between “soft” and “hard” power, as the shading of color in this chart shows. Administrations have been active
across the spectrum in the range in their relations, economic activities, alliance relations, exercising with allies, etc., all the way to real shooting—which is the real “hard power” and has been only episodic, even in the Cold War, except for the U.S. in Vietnam, until Iraq and Afghanistan. So there are nearly infinite gradations along these spectra between the extremes—an isolationist foreign policy on one hand and nuclear deterrence on the other. Both of those extremes are essentially passive, i.e., the forces sit and wait. They do represent the defense of the United States itself as it might be necessary.

- A truly isolationist foreign policy for the U.S. is hard to imagine given the extensive connections of this country, especially economic connections created by American businessmen, aided by U.S. diplomacy, throughout the world. However, from time to time, like immediately after 9/11, defending the approaches to the United States, from the sea or by ICBMs through space, becomes a high priority.

- At the other end of the spectrum, nuclear war can only be imagined—no nuclear weapons have been used since Hiroshima and Nagasaki, but the U.S. keeps its nuclear forces at the ready, though, per agreement with Russia, they are targeted now only at the sea.

The spectrum of active U.S. forces (of which some are activated reserves)—“what U.S. forces might do around the world”—is then shown between the two outside extremes of homeland defense and nuclear readiness. These functions are largely based on DOD’s post-Cold War experience, i.e., from late 1989 on—up until the almost total preoccupation of U.S. forces in Iraq and Afghanistan from 2001 through at least 2014. The functions shown here are not conjectured on some future world.

Thus, looking at the first item in the spectrum of U.S. forces, “U.S. forces stay home, unless at overseas bases,” and assuming most U.S. forces will be out of Afghanistan by the end of 2014, 1.2 million of 1.4 million active U.S. military personnel will be in the United States. The difference would be the 94,000 listed as afloat in March 2012; about 70,000 in Europe (assuming over 9,000 deployed in Afghanistan return to the U.S., not Europe); about 78,000 on the ground in East Asia; and about 7,000 on the ground in the Middle East, including the Persian Gulf. The U.S. military in the U.S. would stay in readiness, including training and making other expeditionary preparations, and administering the forces, including acquisition support, plus other miscellaneous

24. In any case, the word “power” in matters of international relations is used indeterminately. When people use the word “power,” I have no idea what they are talking about. Nobody ever tells me. I think it has something to do with either killing people or buying them off. It is never clear to me—just a rhetorical word thrown into the conversation.

25. U.S. nuclear forces were originally designed to be always at the ready, given American fears of out-of-the-blue Soviet nuclear attacks. Thus, ICBMs could be fired quickly (though day-by-day now they are aimed at only the ocean waters). The SSBNs still maintain their long at-sea patrols though the time on actual alert is much reduced from the past. The nuclear weapons role of bombers has gradually been reduced, and they no longer stay on strip-alert.
functions. These forces in the U.S. are the core of what make up U.S. expeditionary forces, ready to go anywhere in the world when directed.26

The next step across in the spectrum is U.S. military relating to other militaries around the world, as they long have, whether already stationed in countries overseas or deployed to exercises or in exercises at sea or in international staffs. There are also small numbers deployed around the world on Military Training Teams (MTTs) under security assistance programs. All these activities are continuations of the practices that began during the Cold War, first with European NATO allies and in South Korea, then spreading around the world as the U.S. expanded its global contacts during the Cold War.27 These associations with other militaries are unique in the world and lend much transparency among the militaries involved—a contribution to continued peace.

Then there is “governments form military alliances” in the spectrum. Most of U.S. alliances date from early in the Cold War. But such alliances also are sustained through consultations at high levels, usually because there are the forcing events of regularly scheduled meetings. The United States lately has practically formed a new alliance among the ASEAN countries in response to Chinese threats in the South China Sea, and has reinforced its alliance with Japan with regard to the East China Sea and the Senkaku Islands. This particular relation with the ASEAN countries (we had already interacted with them on the economic side in APEC) is not yet regularized, that is, there is no secretariat. ASEAN has long resisted being known as some kind of military alliance, not unlike the Russian-Chinese-led Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), but “habits” of collective consultation on security issues may be growing among the countries. See also the RIMPAC exercises sponsored by the U.S., which take place in Hawaiian waters and include 20 or more countries.

When there are no higher priority missions to undertake or U.S. military resources happen to be in the area, minor policing and humanitarian responses by the military out in the world may be ordered by the President and Secretary of Defense. Those responses are most often carried out along with other friends and allies. They are mostly minor operations with few troops or ships and aircraft. They may include non-combatant evacuation operations (NEOs). All these little operations tend to be occasional and short-term (matters of days)—and at most only a few a year. The American military participants in such operations find them personally highly rewarding. The U.S. has unique capabilities for helping countries—notably with helos off carriers and amphibious ships—which improves the image of the U.S. But the U.S. is rarely alone in helping other countries. All these situations are generally thought to be “not into harm’s way,”

26. There is talk of leaving 6,000-15,000 U.S. troops in Afghanistan after 2014, to train and advise, and also including Special Forces for selective raids. As a personal view, I would predict a rapid deterioration of the security situation in Afghanistan and either civil war or another takeover by the Taliban after the last U.S. combat troops have left.

27. When I joined the Defense Security Assistance Agency (DSAA, now DSCA) in 1981, 80 countries were participating in the U.S. International Military Education and Training program (IMET), most of whose students came to the U.S. for training and schools. By the time I left in 1990, the program had expanded to 100 countries, and at least 15 of the additional 20 countries had broken away from associations with the Soviet Union. The Soviets were losing their empire rapidly across the 1980s.
but in some situations (as in Haiti), assisting U.S. forces and agencies may have to anticipate some local disorders.

It is of interest that just about all the much shorter or smaller “responses to situations” mentioned earlier in this paper almost completely disappeared in the period 2001 to the present—except mostly for humanitarian relief operations, e.g., the tsunamis in the Indian Ocean and off Japan, a Pakistani earthquake, Hurricane Katrina, Haiti in 2009. There was one U.S. NEO in the 2000s, from Lebanon in August 2006 during the Israeli-Hezbollah war.

The next three steps of what U.S. forces do around the world may be characterized as going into “into harm’s way,” at the red end of the spectrum. That is, real shooting takes place, or the near-imminence of it. I have listed (1) U.S. or UN forces intervening in a country to resolve a civil war or other chaos and hoping to stabilize the country, (2) shows of force, and (3) going to battle in, and even occupying, a country. These operations could be large-scale operations that take some to time to muster and deploy.

For the U.S. in the post-Cold War period, beginning in late 1989 until the early 2000s when Iraq and Afghanistan turned into insurgencies and counter-insurgency, the “battles” were rather short—except for two inconclusive years of peacekeeping (but not “nation-building”) in Somalia until the “Blackhawk Down” incident in 1993. In Panama, Desert Storm, Bosnia, and Kosovo, the actual periods of shootings were rather quick in historical terms. The operations in Bosnia and Kosovo then reverted to just peacekeeping, for which the U.S. provided about 15 percent of the troops and the allies the rest, with practically no shooting and no combat deaths.

For most of the 1990s and until March 2003, the U.S. sustained no-fly zones over Iraq—call them “shows of force”—punctuated by a couple of quick bombing events, e.g., the four-day Desert Fox strike on Iraq in 1998. The U.S. also had, in effect, a big show of force on its way to Haiti in 1993 that convinced the current dictator General Cedras to flee, and that situation, too, settled into peacekeeping (that is, back into the “green” of the spectrum chart). There was a big show of force by U.S. carriers (and destroyers) after China’s show of force by test-firing missiles into the approaches to Taiwanese ports in March 1996—but no shooting. It was also over quickly. China has not repeated that kind of show of force of their own since then, so the U.S. show of force may well have had an effect—but then the Chinese show of force also had the opposite effect on the Taiwanese election (the party they preferred lost), which may be a better explanation.

Even Afghanistan looked to be a short combat operation after 9/11, when, from October 7, 2011, the U.S. began assisting the Northern Alliance with air strikes until the Taliban government collapsed 73 days later, and Osama bin Laden and his al Qaeda followers fled from Tora Bora in Afghanistan over the border to Pakistan.

The following chart shows the lengths of these major combat operations and some other characteristics.
The U.S. Marine Corps has been singled out on this chart simply to show that they may be a coordinated part of a joint operation, and not necessarily “the first to fight.”

The U.S. hoped for another quick operation to get rid of Saddam Hussein in March 2003 and to put in his place a new functioning government under Ahmed Chalabi, but the country quickly fell into chaos and insurgency and the U.S. took over governing. Thus, the U.S. was into a big and costly occupation, counter-insurgency, and attempted nation-building until it left by agreement with the Iraqi government nine years later.

By 2003, though, the situation in Afghanistan had also turned into widespread insurgency, especially in the Pashtun areas, and so the U.S. was drawn into occupation, counter-insurgency, and nation-building there as well. Whereas U.S. casualties had been few in all those other combat situations, by 2013, more than 6,500 U.S. servicemen had been killed and more than 50,000 seriously disabled in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars.

Thus, it is ironic that “the American Way of War” that emerged after the Cold War, as especially represented by Panama, Desert Storm, and even the Major Combat Phase of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF)—a way of war that featured increasingly accurate air and Tomahawk cruise missile strikes—turned into slow-grinding and inconclusive counter-insurgencies (COIN).

But across those 23 years, from late 1989 through 2012, there were no other occasions of war that might have utilized the formidable array of military capabilities the U.S. possessed—nor even elsewhere in the world were there classic military battles. One
thinks only of Ethiopia-Eritrea in 1999, Israel-Hezbollah in 2006, and Georgia-Russia in 2008 as two-sided wars that ended. Don’t we see some progress in history here?

It is the existing, i.e., American legacy, forces that have operated across this spectrum.

It is in these contexts, especially in its subordination to U.S. foreign policy, that the current, existing, legacy U.S. military establishment operates out in the world. That is, while ground forces have been preoccupied with Afghanistan (and the constant rotation of troops there), most of the rest of the U.S. military establishment is maintained at the ready in the U.S. and is currently operating only selectively elsewhere around the world—e.g., some bombing and then non-shooting support to allied bombing in Libya in 2011.

First of all, what the U.S. has as it faces the future are its existing forces—what I have been calling “legacy forces”—not some conjectured ideal forces out in the future. The U.S. never actually plans and programs brand-new forces from a zero-base, even though some zero-based planning exercises by the Joint Chiefs of Staff and studies by outside institutes may be conducted. In the U.S., the forces change only incrementally. Circumstances (like Iraq and Afghanistan) may shape those increments, including specialized adaptation and acquisition of equipment uniquely needed for these operations. Some people create future circumstances (“scenarios”—in which brilliant, perfectly equipped enemies appear, having worked up capabilities in secret like the Soviets did for the Olympic Games with their athletes in Siberia). Such situations then demand futuristic systems for the U.S., which, as we see in the difficulties in the developments of today’s acquisitions, are taking far longer than expected to deliver, and may still not work (e.g., F-22), unlike all those of our brilliant enemies, which are always assumed to work perfectly from the beginning, including those of North Korea (a joke, given their constant failures in launching long-range missiles). So, in the first place, the U.S. has been depending more on and extending the lifetimes of the forces in which it has already invested.

Defense Department papers and outside commentators tend to use the passive voice in saying that “The United States will be called upon…” to intervene here and there. They never specify who is doing this “calling upon.” Yet it is only the President and Secretary of Defense—i.e., the Administration—that decides and orders U.S. forces to do something, not the Congress, the public, “events,” or anything else. The President and Secretary of Defense are the only persons who have the authority to issue such orders. Various papers within DOD talk about commitments, obligations, and responsibilities out in the world, but they never list them. Most commitments tend to be those, like in the NATO treaty, for countries to consult with each other upon Communist attack. The only clear commitment may have been to send U.S. troops as part of the international MFO (Multinational Force of Observers) to the Sinai to keep Egyptian and Israel troops apart. The U.S. Army has always complained about having to meet that commitment.28

28. My staff in OASD/ISA/NESA planned the MFO in 1979 in accordance with the Camp David Agreement. There are only about 200 U.S. soldiers, from the Reserves, in the Sinai now.
There are great continuities in both U.S. foreign policy and in the posture and routines of U.S. forces around the world. The activities of U.S. forces in the world are only occasionally punctuated by wars or other situations in which U.S. forces take the most prominent role and the civilian representatives of the Administration (ambassadors) are in only a parallel role (as in Iraq and Afghanistan). Otherwise, it is the ambassadors as personal representatives of the President who are out front representing the U.S.

Basic U.S. forces—with their four Services-plus (Army, Navy, Marines, Air Force, plus Special Forces)—have essentially been the World War II force reconstituted for the Korean War and then sustained in competition with Soviet forces—though never matching the Soviets one-for-one in numbers. (The match in capabilities was another matter—U.S. forces, item by item, were generally much more capable than Soviet forces.) The Army, Navy, Marines, and Air Force, with the addition of a separate Special Operations Command in the late 1980s, are separate institutions with long histories and their own responsibilities under U.S. Code Title 10 for recruiting, training, providing for careers, buying equipment, and maintaining forces at the ready.

In addition, there is the U.S. Coast Guard, in peacetime under the Department of Homeland Security, whose functions are largely devoted to U.S. coastal waters, but who also have a very useful international role, even to the point of joining patrols like the Multinational Interception Operation (MIO) in the Persian Gulf, and in training other navies, most of which have only coast guard-type functions. The U.S. Coast Guard is assigned to the Department of Defense during time of war, but it is small and basically, its homeland defense responsibilities do not leave much time for its international activities.

For U.S. forces, an essential political and military objective has been maintaining their readiness at high levels, given the need to deter war with the Soviet Union all through the Cold War, notwithstanding the draining interlude of the war in Vietnam. A major motivation for the U.S. Government and the Services was the fear of Soviet surprise attacks, though that fear diminished over time, especially as the most proximate cause of war—issues over Berlin—was essentially settled by the mid-1960s. But readiness also became a value in its own right—for the pride of the forces in their professional skills and organization, cohesion, the sustained working of their weapons systems, and their ability to work together in joint (and combined) forces in planning, communications, and exercises.

During the Cold War, U.S. forces in Europe, Japan, and South Korea, and those deployed at sea were already “on the battlefield,” ready for battle at any time. The projected movement of reinforcing forces from the United States was dependent on the battle readiness of U.S.-based forces, as well as the readiness of airlift and sealift to deploy them, including to unit sets of equipment prepositioned (“prepo”) overseas.

After the “diversion” to Vietnam and its counter-insurgency, the draft was ended and the All-Volunteer Force (AVF) instituted—which also added to readiness, given the higher
selectivity and then service longevity provided by the volunteers. Upon the end of the Cold War, the Bush 41 Administration planned for this World War II and Cold War force to be shrunk by about one-third—this was the Cheney-Powell Base Force of 1990. The emphasis on jointness in the Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1985 and the experience of Desert Storm in 1991 was realized in General Colin Powell’s “surge” joint force. Connecting the several Services as the joint force received further emphasis and development across the 1990s, finally achieving its full flowering in the Major Combat Phase (MCP) of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF). This joint force was marked by far better communications and planning interconnections among the forces and the addition of precision-guided weapons (PGMs) to just about all weapons delivery systems, especially for air-launched weapons, but also including such new ground weapons as ATACMS and Javelin and the Navy’s sea-launched Tomahawk cruise missiles.

The bulk of U.S. forces—supported by the base DOD budget—is still these legacy forces—the Cold War force the U.S. had invested in and then evolved by successive Administrations. Most of the acquisition “programs of record”—the legacy acquisitions still under way—have related to “The American Way of War” as demonstrated in Desert Storm and the major combat phase of OIF, although some acquisitions turned more to counter-insurgency as the forces became bogged down in Iraq and Afghanistan (e.g., MRAPs and IED demolition techniques).

What did these legacy U.S. forces do in the world after the end of the Cold War until they got bogged down in Iraq and Afghanistan?

As described in the preceding paragraphs, when the Cold War ended in 1989 and the Soviet military had clearly collapsed, the U.S. itself took something of a peace dividend, especially as the country had accumulated a huge Federal budget debt across the 1980s during the Reagan Administration and his successors could afford to cut the defense budget to help reduce that debt. A similar reduction of forces is proceeding under the Budget Control Act of 2011 (BCA), again motivated by what the political system considers to be an intolerable national debt, but also representing something of a peace dividend upon the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Iraq and Afghanistan.

Initially after the Cold War, the defense community focused on “the four rogues” as the remaining enemies—Libya, Iraq, Iran, and North Korea. The Bottom-Up Review (BUR)

29. As one flag officer once said, “We have to keep our volunteers busy; otherwise they will walk on us.”

30. Lorna S. Jaffe, The Development of the Base Force 1989-1992 (Washington: Joint History Office, Office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, July 1993). The Base Force shrunk the Army by 40 percent, from 785,000 to 480,000; Marine personnel were shrunk only 19 percent, from 196,000 to 159,000, but then Secretary of Defense Les Aspin returned them to 172,000, a cut of only 9 percent; the Navy was to phase its ships down by 40 percent (and this turned out to be from 576 ships to 346 in Base Force II, suppressed before the 1992 election), but couldn’t sustain that in the budget and shrunk to 300 ships by the time of the 1997 QDR. The number is now around 285 ships, heading lower. (Air Force figures were not available.) Desert Shield/Desert Storm delayed implementation of the Base Force, but General Powell had put it on a glidepath to make the transition to civilian life easier for AVF personnel, and personnel numbers finally leveled out around 1997.
of 1993 used Iraq and North Korea as “examples” for sizing of U.S. forces (for two Major Combat Operations), but then those two “examples” became the concrete planning scenarios.\(^\text{31}\) Libya was regarded as a source of terror and a possible proliferator. Iran was regarded as a threat after the Shah fell and the theocratic revolutionaries took over, but mostly as a threat to close the Strait of Hormuz, given the tanker war experience in 1987-1988 out in the Persian Gulf, which happened as the U.S. was containing the Iraq-Iran war of 1980-1988.\(^\text{32}\) The U.S. also considered Syria and Cuba to be irretrievably hostile, but they posed no military or other threats to U.S. national security. There was, of course, the continued confrontation of China and Taiwan and thus with the United States, which nevertheless has long proclaimed a “One China” policy. But the U.S. has lived with that confrontation since 1949 and, except for the China missile-testing gestures into waters near Taiwan in 1995 and 1996, there were only a few incidents in the post-Cold War period that gave the U.S. pause about China’s peaceful intentions. These incidents have included its knocking down an American EP-3 patrol aircraft in 2001, harassing U.S. TAGOS surveillance vessels, a Chinese fishing boat bumping Japanese coast guard ships in 2010, and, lately, a lot of noise about how the South China Sea and its littorals are all historically Chinese territory, including their dispute with Japan over sovereignty of the Senkaku/Daiouyu islands in the East China Sea.

**U.S. forces’ operations were responses to situations as ordered by the President and the Secretary of Defense**

We at CNA studied the uses of U.S. forces in what we called responses to situations, i.e., those ordered by the President and the Secretary of Defense (not “responses to crises,” since few of the situations came out of the blue; most had been brewing for years, and the invasion of Iraq in 2003 was U.S.-initiated, not a “response”).\(^\text{33}\)

The Cold War had ended in early November 1989 with the fall of the Berlin Wall. Starting in December 1989 with President Bush 41’s invasion of Panama to remove dictator Noriega, we at CNA counted seven actual shooting occasions (even counting Haiti in 1993, which was only close to shooting with U.S. airborne troops in the air,

---

31. I heard Les Aspin, at a conference in 1995 after he had left the job of Secretary of Defense, say, “We were very conservative in the North Korea scenario: we assumed the North Korean forces were 1.0 compared to American forces (i.e., equal) and the South Korean forces were only 0.7.” This was absurd even then. Now the average North Korean is seven inches shorter than the average South Korean, something like 14 pounds lighter, malnourished, and sicker. These differences also make for a marked reduction in brain-power. They also have only old military equipment, except for new missiles of old Soviet design.

32. Some consider Iran to be the “most prominent state sponsor of terrorism.” This is not clear. It supports Hezbollah (Shia) and Hamas (Sunni) on either side of its arch-enemy Israel. Iran may well have attacked Jewish targets in Buenos Aires in 1992 and 1994, but there have been no other such prominent Iranian terror attacks around the world—though the suspicions are that Iran was behind the bombing of Khobar Towers in Saudi Arabia in 1996, killing 19 U.S. airmen among others. See Jacey Fortin, “Iranian Terror Goes Global: Bold New Tactics for Tehran’s Shadowy Quds Forces,” *International Business Times*, May 7, 2013.

before President Carter and General Powell persuaded General Cedras to leave) in which U.S. forces were involved: Panama, Desert Storm, Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia (counting the 18 days of bombing, not the post-Dayton Agreement peacekeeping), Desert Fox into Iraq in 1998 (four days of bombing), and Kosovo (78 days of bombing, not the post-war peacekeeping after Milosevich ceded control of Kosovo).

Added in the first decade of the 21st century were the initial defeat of the Taliban in Afghanistan by the Northern Alliance, with close air support provided by the U.S., and “the major combat phase” of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) in March-April 2003. Thereafter, as noted, the unanticipated and prolonged counter-insurgency campaigns in the two countries took place.

Altogether, we in CNA characterized this series of operations from 1989 through the major combat phase of OIF in 2003 as “The American Way of War,” without any other historical reference to how America might have been engaged in war, since it represented both technological transformation and learning in combat. We described its main points as follows:34

1. With the exception of Iraq and the pursuit of al Qaeda in Afghanistan, the U.S. got involved for reasons peculiar to the situations, not because it was pursuing some grand strategy.
2. The U.S. was particularly eager to get rid of obnoxious political leaders in the countries in which we intervened. Call it the “Queen Bee approach”: remove the Queen Bee and the whole hive will follow.
3. The U.S. was thus reactive until OIF—each situation before OIF had been festering for some time before the U.S. decided to intervene. OIF was the expression of a preemptive strategy to bring about regime change, but had been deliberated within the Administration for a year and a half before they went ahead in March 2003.
4. The U.S. generally sought international approval and the participation of other countries’ forces for these operations and got it—but not initially for OIF.
5. Given the great distances for the U.S. to deploy to the situations in the Gulf area and Afghanistan, it was remarkably successful in getting access to basing facilities in these areas and en route.
6. Operations tended to be under tight political control, with heavy iteration between Administration officials and the generals in planning and execution.
7. Those operations that were well-planned tended to go better than those not planned.
8. Operations were usually joint and combined (international).
9. Before OIF, and with the exceptions of Panama, Somalia, and Haiti, a most salient characteristic was for the U.S. to lead with air strikes. But air strikes proved to be insufficient by themselves to end or resolve conflicts. They required either diplomacy or ground forces for the U.S. (and its allies) to mop them up.
10. But then U.S. (and allied) ground forces couldn’t go home easily—as demonstrated in Bosnia and Kosovo (though no one got killed there while

peacekeeping) and in Iraq and Afghanistan (which have seemed to go on forever, with lots of U.S. and its allies’ soldiers killed, not so speak of other great costs).

11. The U.S. had the opportunity to test and evolve its war-fighting capabilities across these cases.

Aside from U.S. humanitarian assistance and peace-keeping in Somalia (which dragged on for two years until “Blackhawk Down”), the residual peacekeepers in Bosnia and Kosovo (most provided by U.S. allies), and the subsequent insurgencies in Iraq and Afghanistan, these combat operations were relatively short—which may have led to the deceptive expectation that the invasion of Iraq in 2003 would be short as well, and as Secretary Rumsfeld hoped. The Administration expected that Ahmed Chalabi would take over as president of Iraq, the Iraqi government ministries would continue to function, oil revenues would flow in again, and all that the U.S. would have to provide was humanitarian relief, as it did in Operation Provide Comfort in Kurdistan in the early 1990s. But U.S. forces stayed in Iraq until the end of 2011. The deadline to turn security over to local forces in Afghanistan is now set for the end of 2014. It remains to be seen whether that will hold.

One other mostly “potential-for-combat” operation across the 1990s, only terminated upon the beginning of OIF in 2003, was the maintenance of the no-fly-zones over Iraq beginning in 1991 and 1994—Northern and Southern Watches. To cover its part of these operations, the U.S. Air Force devised composite Air Expeditionary Forces (AEFs) and rotated them—a post-Cold War innovation. The U.S. and its allies also maintained the embargo of Iraq in the Gulf and the “Provide Comfort” humanitarian assistance in Iraq’s Kurdistan, across much of the 1990s. In addition, the U.S. prepositioned two Army brigade equipment sets in the Gulf area, one in Kuwait and one in Qatar. The Maritime Prepositioning Ships (MPS) were refilled after Desert Storm and returned to Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean, to Guam, and to the Mediterranean.

Other responses ordered by the President and Secretary of Defense across the 1990s seemed to involve a great deal of activity—we counted around 200 cases, including the eight mentioned above. They included shows of force (rare), NEOs (Non-Combatant Evacuation Operations—about one a year), humanitarian responses to natural disasters, what we in CNA called “contingent positioning” (i.e., where U.S. forces, particularly naval ships, were ordered to proceed to the area and hang around during a situation when the Administration had not yet made up its mind what to do about it), and support to other countries providing peacekeepers (e.g., U.S. Marine Corps logistic and communications support to Australian forces in East Timor).

But despite the appearances of much activity, we found that, in the 1990s, just about all the days of responses (without assessing the intensity of the conflicts and the size of the intervening forces) beyond the experiences of the 1970s and 1980s were accounted for by Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia/Kosovo, and Iraq-related operations. In contrast to the 1970s and 1980s, at least for the U.S. Navy, we also found that about two-thirds of the responses in the 1990s were joint and combined (i.e., involving allies as well).35

There was a growing recognition and concern about terrorism across the 1990s, but the full implications of what came to be recognized as al Qaeda terrorism were not realized until 9/11. It was only then that the series of events in the 1990s—the 1963 bombing of the World Trade Center in New York, the bombing of U.S. embassies in East Africa in 1998, the attack on the destroyer USS Cole in Aden Harbor in 1999 (but not necessarily the attack that killed 19 U.S. airmen in Khobar Towers in Saudi Arabia)—meant that Osama bin Laden and his al Qaeda people had been on the march. In the meantime, the Taliban had won the civil war in Afghanistan by 1996, and Osama bin Laden moved there from Sudan. The attacks on USS Cole and Khobar Towers led to much force protection activity for U.S. forces wherever they were overseas, but the only direct military responses by the U.S. were the Tomahawk attacks on Osama’s training camp in Afghanistan and on the pharmaceutical plant in Khartoum in 1998 that the U.S. suspected was supporting Iraqi biological weapons programs.

**U.S. posture at overseas bases after the Cold War**

Otherwise, across the 1990s and until the U.S. got fully engaged in Afghanistan and Iraq, U.S. forces continued to be stationed in and Europe and Northeast Asia and also continued to provide up to 700 soldiers in the Sinai for the Multinational Force and Observers (MFO), an international force requested by Egypt and Israel as a Sinai buffer as part of the Camp David agreements.\(^{36}\) Maritime Prepositioning Squadrons (three for the Marines, one for the Army) were maintained at Guam, Diego Garcia, and in the Mediterranean, each carrying equipment and logistic support for a reinforced heavy brigade. Only scattered detachments were maintained elsewhere in the world.\(^{37}\) U.S. forces continued to exercise regularly with allies. The U.S. Navy continued its regular deployments (“presence”) in three “hubs”—the Mediterranean Sea, Persian Gulf, and Western Pacific—and broke “OPTEMPO/PERSTEMPO” (i.e., violating the policy of rigorously keeping to six-month deployments) only for Desert Storm.\(^{38}\) It did not “patrol all the sealanes of the world,” as is sometimes said.

But these conflict interventions in carrying out “The American Way of War” and other activities by U.S. legacy forces, culminating in the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan, in effect showed that the U.S. had exhausted the opportunities to exercise “The American

36. The U.S. commitment of troops to the MFO may be the only precise treaty-based commitment of U.S. forces overseas.

37. It is said that the U.S. had “forces” in 120 countries around the world. Aside from the forces in Iraq and Afghanistan, I have counted only 5 countries where force units are still to be stationed on land (UK, Germany, Italy, Japan, and South Korea) and 5 other countries with 1,000-2000 personnel in headquarters (Belgium, Spain, Turkey, Bahrain, and Djibouti). The rest of the countries have mere detachments of U.S. military personnel.

38. OPTEMPO (operations tempo) and PERSTEMPO (personnel tempo) are, especially for the U.S. Navy, the experience-derived optimum length of time for deployments, based on maintenance needs, the morale of sailors absent from their families, individual training needs, and crew and equipment work-ups upon crew rotations between deployments. Standard six-month deployments used to be extended only when actual combat operations have taken place, but in 2013 have been typically seven or eight months, especially as the Sequester has led to reductions in maintenance and thus fewer ships available.
Way of War” both for ourselves and for others. That American Way of War—demonstrated especially in Panama, Desert Storm, the air war over Serbia and Kosovo, and to a lesser extent in the close air support to the Northern alliance forces in Afghanistan in 2001 and the major combat phase of Operation Iraqi Freedom—was essentially a combination of air strikes and quick ground actions for fast resolution of a situation. NATO allies, with mostly non-lethal support by U.S. air forces, but no ground forces, carried the burden of support to the Libyan rebels in March-August 2011. It is not clear now where such operations would be done in the future, though U.S. forces know how to do them if so ordered by the President.

The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and U.S. forces’ activities 2001-2012

For the U.S. in the period 2001 through 2011, COIN (counter-insurgency) in Iraq and Afghanistan has involved long, indecisive ground actions with limited air support. The U.S. increased ground forces by about 100,000 personnel for these COIN campaigns and took some real steps backward in exotic technology developments in order to field the appropriate technologies for COIN as well as having the troops do a lot of people-to-people work with the local populations. That was the evolution of the activities of U.S. legacy forces once Saddam Hussein and his Iraqi forces were wiped off the map and the Taliban was removed from governance in Afghanistan and insurgencies took their place.

This swing to COIN happened after 9/11 and the response a month later (October 7, 2001) by U.S. air strikes in support of the Northern Alliance in Afghanistan, followed by the collapse of the Taliban government and the Northern Alliance seizing Kabul, the Bonn Conference organizing new Afghani leadership, and the selection of Mohammed Karzai, a Pashtun, to head the new government. More regular U.S. troops followed, including the Marines into Camp Rhino in Helmand in late November 2001. There were only about 19,000-37,000 U.S. troops in Afghanistan for several years after that.

Afghanistan, a land-locked, mountainous country with poor access and infrastructure, posed serious problems for U.S. forces deploying there. Initially, en route bases were found in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. The U.S. lost the Uzbek base because the U.S. government insisted that President Karimov in Uzbekistan be more democratic. The U.S. also gained transit through Pakistan. The Marines staged through three Pakistani bases as they moved to Camp Rhino, where they were greeted by 1,000 SeaBees who had prepared the landing strip for the U.S. Air Force C-17s delivering the Marine troops and their equipment. Enormous truck traffic went through the Khyber and Kojak passes from Pakistan to Afghanistan, but that traffic was subject to attacks in both Pakistan and Afghanistan. Pakistan cut off those routes for many months in 2012 after the U.S. killed 24 Pakistani military personnel near the border of Afghanistan. After the U.S. said it was “sorry,” the routes through the passes were reopened in the summer of 2012. Other air deliveries were staged through Manas air field in Kyrgyzstan, crossing Russian and Central Asian territories on the way. F-15s and F-16s have also operated out of Manas. As part of the “reset” in relations between the U.S. and Russia, the U.S. organized what is called the Northern Distribution Network (NDN) so that major resupply can pass through both Manas and on the ground through Uzbekistan and other Central Asian countries as well as Russia.
The main focus in war on terror by the U.S. Government had shifted in 2002 toward Iraq instead of Afghanistan. The debate raged in the U.S. about whether Iraq had WMD programs and possible connections to al Qaeda, followed by diplomacy to get UN and IAEA inspectors back in—which was arranged. They found nothing. The Administration pressed for a UN Security Council resolution approving the use of force, including Colin Powell’s speech in February 2003 on Iraqi WMD. The Administration failed to get even a majority of the UN Security Council to approve U.S. military action (let alone the Chinese and Russian vetoes). So then the Administration carried out its planned attack to oust Saddam in March 2003, following a four-month buildup to about 100,000 U.S. troops. They rapidly seized Baghdad, and Saddam and his sons fled to the countryside. The Iraqi government collapsed and extensive looting took place in Baghdad and other cities (the U.S. protected only the Iraqi oil ministry). The American Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) took over rule, disbanded the Iraqi army, and excluded six levels of Ba’athists from government, including even teachers in the schools). The chaos in the country led to both Sunni and Sadrist insurgencies. So U.S. forces became bogged down in Iraq, eventually losing more than 4400 killed-in-action there.

Access to Iraq was much easier than for Afghanistan. The U.S., in both the initial attack and to sustain U.S. forces occupying the country, got plenty of base access, in Kuwait, Qatar, UAE, and Oman, all accessible from the sea. Turkey did not allow passage of U.S. ground forces to northern Iraq, but did allow overflight of strike aircraft.39

The turnaround in Iraq in 2006, called “the surge” because of the additional 30,000 U.S. troops deployed, was brought about by a complex set of factors. The biggest elements of the turnaround were created by the Iraqis themselves, not just by General Petraeus’s measures using his additional troops. They included:

- Most importantly, the completion of ethnic cleansing in Baghdad, aided by the walls the U.S. forces built to separate the communities. Most of the Sunnis were driven to the edges of the city (if they had not already fled the country to Jordan and Syria).
- The Sunnis in al Anbar getting aggravated by al Qaeda, which was trying to stop them from smoking and drinking.
- Moqtada al Sadr decamping to Iran to improves his religious standing, but demoralizing his Sadrist warriors in the process. He’s now back in Iraq and might eventually emerge as the Khomeini of the new Iraq.

These three elements made General Petraeus’s most important move possible—posting his soldiers out in the now ethnically separate neighborhoods, especially around Baghdad, and less vulnerable to improvised explosive devices (IEDs) than they had been during long road treks across the Iraqi countryside. He also organized and paid the Sunni participants as “The Awakening,” an initiative now falling apart, thanks to an inept and

39. One of the myths in the U.S. defense community after Desert Shield/Desert Storm in 1990/1991 was that “Saddam would never again give us six months in which to build up our forces in the area.” For Operation Iraqi Freedom, the U.S. took four months to build up a leaner force, but Saddam never seems to have noticed. So much for myths!
hostile Shia government. Finally, there was Maliki’s own initiative to suppress radicals in Basra—to our surprise. We then helped him consolidate his gains in excluding radicals from the local government there. Maliki’s initiative showed the new Iraqi government could take an initiative on its own.

The U.S. concluded a new Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) with the Iraqis in 2008 (the Iraqis must have been surprised by our willingness to negotiate), leading to the agreement to remove all U.S. combat troops by August 31, 2010, leaving 50,000 troops to train and assist the Iraqi military for another year (to the end of 2011). The U.S. proposed to keep some troops in Iraq beyond 2011 to train the Iraqis, but the Iraqi government would not give them immunity, and so all had to leave. Thus, Iraq has faded from the U.S. scope except for continuing military equipment sales.

In the meantime, the situation in Afghanistan had gone badly. There were not enough foreign troops, U.S. or allies, in that vast countryside. The Afghan central government organized by the U.S. and its allies turned out to be ineffective, corrupt, and lacking vertical reach-down to its countryside—which has been the history of Afghani central governments. The officials of the Karzai government have built their personal reserves in Dubai for their possible decampment if and when things fell apart in Kabul. Organization, recruitment, and training of the Afghan army and police were slow and ineffective. The Taliban regrouped. The Afghan presidential election in 2008 was full of fraud. The government has no visibility, much less credibility, with the people. The growing and export of opium boomed in these years.

Al Qaeda and the former Taliban leadership had moved to Pakistan way back in December 2011 after having been chased off Tora Bora mountain in Afghanistan. Osama bin Laden was killed by U.S. Special Forces SEALS, and other al Qaeda leaders have been killed in Predator strikes. But the Taliban, and especially the Haqqani group in North Waziristan and eastern Afghanistan, have established themselves in Pakistan as well as rising again in Afghanistan as part of the Taliban.

Because of U.S. military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan to combat the insurgencies, there was a huge shift of focus in U.S. military thinking to counter-insurgency (COIN). The tactics involved have evolved as well—ranging from Special Forces raids to kill or capture al Qaeda people in Iraq or Taliban leaders in Afghanistan to a priority in protecting the people, which at one point had become the dominant theme of COIN. New manuals on COIN were written and applied and U.S. troops trained in them before deployment. “Individual Augmentees” (IAs) were recruited from the U.S. Navy and U.S. Air Force to take support positions in order to generate more riflemen for the field. It is said that the Navy took IAs directly off ships’ crews. Moreover, the huge problem of IEDs laid on the roads and trails led to enormous efforts to defeat their use and the introduction of mine-resistant MRAP vehicles on a rush basis. Enormous logistic efforts, with thousands of contractors, were organized to support the forces, especially given the inaccessibility of Afghanistan across the mountains and from the steppes of Central Asia, and the meager transportation and infrastructure within the country itself, which came under constant attack as well.
U.S. forces’ activities outside Iraq and Afghanistan in the 2000s

Given the needs for U.S. ground forces in the Iraq and Afghan wars, U.S. military brigades in Germany were rotated to those wars; thus, overall, U.S. personnel in Germany were reduced to 59,000. U.S. military personnel in South Korea were reduced to 28,500 as an Army brigade was pulled out and sent to the wars. Just about all the equipment on amphibious ships and in the Maritime Prepositioning Squadrons (MPS) was offloaded for the land operations. The U.S. Navy continued to patrol the Persian Gulf while its carrier in the area alternatively supported forces on the ground in Iraq and Afghanistan with strike sorties.

The most prominent U.S. operation outside Iraq and Afghanistan was providing support to its NATO allies (and Sweden, Qatar, UAE) in support of the Libyan rebellion. As Qaddafi had threatened genocide in Benghazi upon the outbreak of the rebellion, the British and French took the initiative to respond—initially proposing a no-fly zone. With great U.S. diplomatic help, they got a UN Resolution passed to support the no-fly zone, with Russia and China abstaining (and Germany, too). Secretary of State Clinton took a leading role in the diplomacy. When the no-fly zone was instituted, the U.S. took an early lead in firing Tomahawks to destroy Libyan air defense sites. Then the U.S. stepped back, contributing mostly support flights (e.g., refueling and surveillance, then later some armed drone support), while other NATO countries and a couple of non-NATO countries did the bombing to protect rebel troops, as coordinated by NATO command facilities. The rebellion was over on October 20, 2011, with the assassination of Qaddafi, thus clearing the way for the Libyan Transitional National Council (TNC) to begin to set up a government and get Libya’s economy working again, including oil production.

The lessons learned about the Libya war (in the U.S. foreign policy and defense context) were “bombing doesn’t win by itself” (as it didn’t in Bosnia and Kosovo—both those prior situations were resolved by diplomacy), and that more and faster bombing wouldn’t have ended the civil war faster. In fact, the pace of bombing gave the rebels the time to develop organization and leadership in order to form more cohesive and decisive forces. It was the Libyan people who won and therefore the world won. So the lesson from Libya has been that U.S. doesn’t have to lead everything or provide the decisive fighting edge with its own forces. No foreign ground troops were necessary, though the Europeans may have provided some advisors. Some say this becomes “a model for subsequent warfare,” but Libya was unique. Every such internal conflict situation is unique, and we have no idea “where next,” though some Americans are tempted to invade Syria. On the other hand, with the collapse of the Qaddafi dictatorship, forming central government and “the monopoly of force” by brand-new government officials has proved difficult, and militias and the spread of arms from Qaddafi’s arsenals have spread across Libya and beyond, especially into the south and the Sahel.

Elsewhere in the world, the al Qaeda terrorists were pursued by the advanced countries (not just the U.S.). Many were destroyed by Predator attacks or captured, and so they became dispersed—a virtual network, with no particular direction from Osama bin Laden and Zawahiri, just inspiration—and now Bin Laden has been eliminated.
Incidents dropped off substantially, as did the number of casualties (e.g., the first terror attack in Bali killed nearly 200; the second around 50, and there have not even been any “50s” since then). Much of this success in containing al Qaeda attacks has been due to local (country) police and international intelligence and financial work, as well as restrictions on the sale of explosive materials, especially ammonium nitrate, which was also McVeigh’s choice in Oklahoma City and Breivik’s in Oslo. It continues to flow into Afghanistan from Pakistani fertilizer factories for the Taliban to make IEDs.

In Iraq, U.S. Special Forces relentlessly tracked down the al Qaeda “foreigners” who infiltrated from Syria and killed their most prominent leader, the Jordanian Zarkawi. After the U.S. left Iraq at the end of 2011, al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) has grown again, carries out bombings of Iraqi Shia, and is now also active in the Syrian civil war.

In Afghanistan, after Osama fled to Pakistan from his redoubt at Tora Bora, all the al Qaeda people in Afghanistan seemed to have moved to Pakistan, especially to North Waziristan. There they have been subject to Predator/Hellfire attacks. In those attacks, many of those killed and identified have been foreigners, Uzbeks and Chechens especially.

The Obama Administration has rightly directed U.S. defensive efforts against “al Qaeda and its affiliates.” That characterization can be fuzzy at the edges, but the Administration has been right not to imply it is targeting all the estimated 1.6 billion Muslims in the world, as some in the U.S. would otherwise have it. In addition to whatever small cells may be scattered around the world—though not in Northeast Asia and probably not in Latin America, despite some million people of Middle Eastern origin who have been living in Argentina, Paraguay, and Brazil for the past century—there have been three al Qaeda pockets outside Iraq and Afghanistan of major concern. Those areas are: Abu Sayyaf in the southern Philippines (down to maybe 200 on several islands in the Sulu Archipelago); AQIM (formerly GSPC) in the Trans-Sahel, which had been estimated to have 400, mostly Algerians; and AQAP in Yemen.40 Yemen collapsed as President Ali Abdullah Saleh clung to power and al Qaeda rebels took over a number of towns in the south. Now that Saleh is gone and Hadi is temporary president, the Yemeni army seems to have reorganized itself and is clearing out al Qaeda rebels, while the U.S. continues to pick off individual al Qaeda people (mostly Saudis) in Shabwa and Anbar provinces with drone strikes.

But the U.S. Trans-Sahel initiative in Mali seems to have collapsed since civil war broke out in that country and Ansar Dine, a Tuareg associate of AQIM, took over the northern half of Mali, including Timbuktu. It has turned out that a number of al Qaeda groups, especially originating in Algeria, now populate AQIM. As they began to pose a threat to the capital, Bamako, French forces intervened and rolled back AQIM’s occupation of northern Mali. With the help of especially Chadian and other Africa troops they have been tracking them down in the desert. These nomad groups are hard to eliminate, though, and the problem in Mali persists.

40. AQIM = Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (GSPC was “Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat). AQAP = Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula.
The U.S. has had around 600 Special Forces trainers and advisors assisting the Filipino forces and had an unspecified number, along with some French forces, assisting Mauritania, Mali, Niger, and Chad in pursuit of AQIM up through 2012.

The Administration also decided in November 2002 to deploy the Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA) to Djibouti, with a Special Forces detachment at its center, as part of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), i.e., the war on al Qaeda. This base was established because of the fears that al Qaeda had been setting up bases in Somalia and Yemen and to assist the surrounding countries to police for terrorists spilling over from those two countries. They also trained Ethiopian forces for their intervention in Somalia, which did not turn out well. Now the UN and the U.S. support Kenyans, Burundians, and Ugandans within Somalia. These new forces, with U.S. assistance, have driven the al Qaeda associate in Somalia, al Shabab, out of the cities and thus their threat has been greatly reduced, though not eliminated. The U.S. had also put about 100 trainers in Yemen several years ago, but they had to be pulled out because of the revolution going on there. Now that the Yemeni army has its act together, the U.S. Special Forces trainers are back in. U.S. military personnel also help with intelligence.

The U.S. also continues to deploy around 400 military personnel assisting the Colombians in their relentless pursuit of FARC and in associated anti-drug-traffic activities. As in the Philippines, U.S. advisors have no combat roles.

Then there are the pirates off Somalia. The high rate of piracy in the Strait of Malacca had long been a concern. However, Malaysia, Singapore, and a rejuvenated Indonesia have reduced piracy in Malacca to near zero, helped by the tsunami that struck Aceh province in Sumatra. But then came the wave of piracy off Somalia in the mid-decade, which has stimulated many of the countries who have concern for the safety of shipping through the Gulf of Aden and adjacent Indian Ocean waters to mobilize their naval ships—to include those from Russia, China, Pakistan, and even Iran—to patrol the waters and to aid merchant ships under attack.

It has become practically the chief occupation in maintaining the peace for many navies these days. These navies are also learning how to better cooperate with other navies, discovering the utility of interoperability. The U.S. may have 2 or 3 ships there on patrol, in a total force of 20-24 naval ships. The U.S. played a crucial role in organizing the operation and setting up communications. As of March 2013, Somali piracy was down to only a few attacks, and only 13 hijacked ships and about 100 hostages remained in Somalia. It is now a going-out-of-business business. Piracy off West Africa is also looming, but is of small scale so far. The U.S. Navy is sending ships from time to time to train the locals to police their own waters—the African Partnership Station (APS) initiative—but it has been sporadic and the U.S. doesn’t have the aid resources to provide the boats or the fuel for them that the locals really need.

The developments of long-range ballistic missiles by North Korea and Iran over the past decade have led to new plans for deployments of U.S. ballistic missile defenses. First, with specific reference to North Korea, big mid-course defensive missiles have been deployed in Alaska and at Vandenberg AFB in California. The Bush
Administration had planned to deploy “the third site” to Poland (defensive missiles) and the Czech Republic (radar). Given the search for better relations with Russia and the success of the U.S. Navy’s SM-3 anti-missile capability, the Obama Administration ended the “third site” program. Now the U.S. is to homeport in Rota, Spain, four surface combatant ships capable of missile defense to protect Israel against Iranian missiles (aided by a U.S. X-band radar deployed in the Negev Desert area of Israel). Shore-based versions of the U.S. Navy missile defense system are planned for Romania. Poland is to get the less-capable Patriot PAC-3 initially, with the U.S. Navy’s SM-3B missile defense system later. Aegis ships capable of ballistic missile defense have also been deployed off North Korea from time to time. The threat of North Korean missiles, especially if the missiles were to have nuclear warheads, has prompted Japan to invest heavily in its own missile defenses in a cooperative effort with the U.S. Limited additional U.S. forces have been deployed to Japan to assist this effort. The facilities in Japan also contribute to U.S. domestic missile defenses through their capabilities for early detection and tracking of any ICBM threats from North Korea.

In the first decade of the 21st century, the number of small responses to situations, as ordered by the President and Secretary of Defense—whether humanitarian, NEOs, or support of others’ peace operations—dropped off drastically from the experience of the 1990s. The responses to the tsunami in Southeast Asia, particularly in the Aceh Province of Indonesia, to the earthquake in northern Pakistan in 2007, and to the Haiti earthquake in early 2010 have involved quite substantial aid efforts, however. The U.S. was not alone in responding to these humanitarian disasters.

The state of the U.S. military establishment in 2013

The U.S. military establishment in mid-2012 is heavily invested in Afghanistan. It is out of Iraq. The number of military personnel in Afghanistan rose to about 100,000 in 2009 as the Obama Administration added another 30,000 troops, while around nearly 50,000 personnel from allied and other friendly countries were there as well. Some U.S. forces were drawn out of Afghanistan in 2011, with a total of 33,000 (the “surge” complement) drawn out in the fall of 2012. The Obama Administration plans to turn security largely over to the Afghan forces across 2013 and to phase down U.S. forces across 2014. It is unclear whether the U.S. and its allies will conduct a gradual phase-down or will “step off the cliff” with a rapid redeployment as the end of 2014 approaches. The Administration has concluded an agreement with President Karzai to continue support of the Afghan forces for at least ten years after 2014.

Whether all this will work to stabilize Afghanistan remains to be seen. The ability of the Afghan people to establish a modern central government system in any measurable time is questionable—given any Afghan government’s lack of revenues, its dependence on foreign assistance, and its rampant corruption. The alternatives are a quick Taliban takeover of the country after 2014 or civil war between the Taliban (Pashtuns) and the

41. The Poles have made it clear that their desire for a U.S. missile defense base in Poland has been driven mostly by their desire to have a tripwire presence of U.S. military personnel in uniform on their soil to deter a Russian attack rather than the missile defense capability per se.
other ethnic groups, notably the Tajiks. (It is estimated that around 42 percent of Afghanistan’s population are Pashtuns and 27 percent Tajiks.)

The dwell time for the forces (time at home in the U.S. between tours to Iraq or Afghanistan) seems to have stabilized and extended, but there are more reports of suicides and other ailments (e.g., PTSD) among returning or retired military personnel, not to speak of the long rehabilitation times ahead for severely wounded soldiers.

The Defense Department command and logistic resources are also heavily involved in sustaining the war in Afghanistan. Individual Augmentees (IAs) from the U.S. Navy and U.S. Air Force had been deployed in Iraq (14,000 from the Navy alone) and continue to be deployed in Afghanistan. C-17s and C-130s are being heavily used to resupply the forces (one wonders whether the useful life of C-17s is being used up faster than expected in these operations). Much acquisition effort has gone into MRAPs, UAVs/UCAVs, and IED detection and their removal, as well as massive security assistance to both Iraqi and Afghani military forces and police.

The supplemental appropriations in support of the wars had been running around $160 billion a year, on top of a base defense budget that rose from $318 billion in 2001 to $549 billion for 2011. The OCO budget for Afghanistan alone in FY12 was $115.1 billion and $88.5 billion in the FY13 budget. No figures are available for how much of the $549 billion base defense budget also supported the efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan, but it must have been substantial. The residual costs after the U.S. forces have left Afghanistan will be substantial.42

The total U.S. defense budget of $645.7 billion for FY12 was about 40 percent of all the world’s defense expenditures and about double the total of all the defense budgets of nations not allied with the U.S. The total FY12 investment budget (procurement and R&D) of $176 billion itself was around twice as much as China currently spends on its entire defense budget, though China’s defense budget is growing along with its GDP growth.

In light of the great pressure in the U.S. today to reduce the federal deficit, the defense budget will be under a continuing squeeze, aspects of which are discussed in the next section of this paper.

As a result of the wars since 2001, there has been some skewing of the allocation of the budget proportions among the services, especially because of the addition of 100,000 personnel to U.S. ground forces (Army and Marines).

- Across the 1990s, the allocations of the budget were about 32 or 31 percent for the Air Force and Navy (alternating depending on which Service’s major system had reached production), 24 percent for the Army, and 13-14 percent for defense-

wide programs (e.g., defense agencies, health, missile defense, chemical weapons demilitarization).

- The latest ratio in the base budget for FY14 submitted to Congress in April 2013, not including the supplemental, is 24.6 percent for the Army, 29.6 percent for the Navy (including the Marines) and 27.4 percent for the Air Force (which includes intelligence black programs), leaving 18.4 percent for defense-wide programs. The only change from the FY13 budget proposal was about 2 percent less for the U.S. Army.

- Because of unfortunate acquisition decisions, both Navy and Air Force unit numbers (ships and air squadrons) are shrinking. The Air Force staked its future on the F-22, a Cold War system, but its production numbers were terminated at 187.

- The costs of the F-35 (JSF), which is to replace F-16s, F-18s, and AV-8Bs, have been skyrocketing and its IOCs delayed, mostly because of troubles with the F-35B STOVL version for the Marines—it was put on two years’ probation by Secretary Gates in January 2011, but the probation was lifted by Secretary Panetta in January 2012.43

- The Marines’ Expeditionary Fighting Vehicle (EFV) program was terminated after $2.9 billion had been spent on R&D; the Marines otherwise would have faced a cost of $24 million a copy. Secretary Gates had earlier criticized it for its inadequate strategic rationale and designed capability defects.

- The Army, for its part, has had to dismantle its Cold War, Star-Wars Future Combat System (FCS) project, but still proceeds with designs for a “ground combat vehicle” (GCV); one version was to have weighed as much as a tank, without the gun.

- The U.S. Navy can’t complete its new class aircraft carrier (CVN-78, USS Gerald Ford) in time to replace USS Enterprise, despite heroic efforts to keep Enterprise going, and it’s still not clear that all the new on the new carrier will work. Enterprise ended its last overseas deployment in the summer of 2012 and was decommissioned in December 2012. Ford will not enter service until at least 2015, leaving the Navy with ten carriers in the interim.

- The Navy’s LCS and LPD-17 classes have had technical troubles. The Navy is also building three DDG-1000 destroyers for at least $3.5 billion apiece to provide shore-fire support for amphibious operations that no one thinks will ever take place.

43. The December 2009 Selective Acquisition Report (SAR) on F-35 put its ten-year average procurement cost at $113.6 million per aircraft, but estimates since then have been in the vicinity of $125 million.
• The Navy needs $22 billion a year for ship construction to keep a level of around 300 ships (per CBO calculations); however, it is budgeted for only $14.3 billion in FY14, rising to $19 billion in FY18, and therefore the numbers will continue to shrink, especially as the sophistication and therefore costs of the individual classes of ships to be built rise. One estimate by CBO and others is that the Navy could shrink to as low as 230 combat and combat support vessels.

• And, because the U.S. federal budget has had a huge deficit (which economically it can handle, since in May 2013 it was down to 4 percent of GDP, heading down to the standard 3 percent, but politically it can’t), and given the imposition of sequestration by the Congress, the defense budget will be at best stagnant for years to come.

So how have these present activities and postures of existing U.S. forces around the world now (2013) supported the current Administration’s foreign policy?

President Obama’s foreign policy, as stated briefly at the beginning of this chapter, has been one of reengaging with the world, including the “reset” with Russia. The atmospherics are good: President Obama may be more popular around the world than he is in the U.S.

Primary focus has been on achieving global economic and financial stability, as represented by the G-20 initiative and dialogues with Europe on its financial problems. The problem of the U.S. trade imbalance with China has loomed large over the past several years. The Administration has also been pursuing more and more sanctions against Iran because of its nuclear program, as well as keeping up pressure on North Korea’s nuclear and missiles programs, which do not seem to be making much progress despite a third nuclear explosive test and a lot of propaganda. The Administration has not been successful in improving Israeli-Palestinian relations, the biggest key to better U.S.-Muslim relations, and is constantly stymied by Israel’s insistence on expanding its settlements in East Jerusalem and the West Bank. During 2012, the main issue with Israel seemed to be over whether and when to bomb Iranian nuclear facilities. That threat receded when Prime Minister Netanyahu, in a speech at the UN, seemed to delay his “redline” to the spring of 2013, but now he is silent on the threshold. The P5+1 group had two short negotiation sessions with Iran win the spring of 2013, but nothing came of them.

In the meantime, the civil war in Syria has gotten worse, with neither President Assad’s or rebel forces turning the conflict around in their favor. Much debate has taken place in the U.S. as to how the U.S. can help the rebels, but it boiled down to non-lethal help to select rebel groups, if the U.S. could identify them and endless discussions of a no-fly zone. The U.S. contributes by far the most to humanitarian assistance in Syria. What the U.S. may do remains up to President Obama, who has been hesitant to intervene.
U.S. forces stationed and operating around the world have served foreign policy—as they long have—but pretty much on the fringes of the larger issues of world stability, most of which are economic and financial.

- U.S. forces exited Iraq by the end of 2011, in accordance with the agreement signed by the Bush Administration in 2008. The Obama Administration tried to negotiate retention of U.S. trainers in Iraq past that date, but, because the Iraqi government would not give them immunity, all U.S. military personnel were removed, except for those attached to the U.S. embassy.

- U.S. forces were surged in Afghanistan and greatly increased efforts in assembling, training, and employing Afghani security forces were undertaken.

- In addition to the forces in Afghanistan, some forces or assistance teams and their personnel are still stationed in Europe and Northeast Asia—and in Djibouti, the Trans-Sahel, Philippines, and Colombia.

- The Navy continued to regularly rotate its ships into the Persian Gulf and the Western Pacific, while also participating in the anti-piracy patrols off Somalia.

- Regularly scheduled exercises have continued with allies, as in the RIMPAC exercise off Hawaii, where 22 countries participated in 2012, including Russia, but not China.

- The continued U.S. security assurances to Japan have become more prominent as Japanese-Chinese frictions have risen, but these assurances are essentially diplomatic. U.S. forces are still based in Japan. The U.S. and Japan are collaborating on missile defense.

- U.S. forces are still ready and available to assist in humanitarian disasters, as after the earthquake in Haiti or the earlier earthquake in Pakistan (plus rescue efforts during the flooding in Pakistan in the summer of 2010). The main assistance event, though, was to Japan upon the tsunami of March 2011 and the consequent melt-downs in the Fukushima reactors.

These are all noble efforts, but they did not suggest that somehow U.S. forces are “the guarantor of world stability.” Much of the stability that has been achieved and maintained around the world since the end of the Cold War has been for two main reasons:

1. The Cold War itself—with the two juggernaut military empires of the United States and the Soviet Union, and in turn the combinations in these juggernauts of massive nuclear forces and high-technology conventional forces (more massive on the Soviet side)—discouraged the defense efforts in most of the rest of the world, and certainly in the advanced world. It meant that most other countries did not need many forces, unlike in the first half of the 20th century. This has persisted in the post-Cold War period; only the U.S. has maintained large, high-tech forces—though “the rise of China” and its forces are discussed in Section XI.
of this paper. It is to be noted that the U.S. has vast experience in operating its forces in war at this point in history; China’s only recent experience was its invasion of Vietnam in 1979 with only ground forces. They were repelled.

2. Economics has prevailed as the stabilizer of the world, especially as central government planning of economies disappeared with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the freeing of the economies of its erstwhile satellites, now independent states. The free market emerged as the main activity of economies around the world. As noted earlier, with U.S. encouragement, post-World War II West Germany and Japan turned away from military production to exports of consumer goods as the stimulus for their economies. Even China, with its authoritarian central government, embraced the free market from around 1979 on. Moreover, for free markets to flourish, the provision of social safety nets emerged as a central role of governments, and these compete with defense budgets. China lags behind in creating social safety nets.44

Indeed, the question of social safety nets has become a critical question in the U.S. now as its economy continues to be in the doldrums and its Federal debt grows. The debt grows mostly because of the stagnant economy and its consequent drops in tax revenues compensated by the automatic stabilizers, mainly unemployment benefits. But politically, the main culprits of debt accumulation are claimed to be Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid, and the defense budget, though Social Security by law does not contribute to the debt. Polling has shown that the public by a large margin says cut the Pentagon budget, not Social Security and Medicare.45

Although the U.S. economy officially came out of recession in June 2009, its economic growth is still too feeble to bring down the unemployment rate. As of April 2013, the growth rate was still around 2 percent and the unemployment a down only to 7.5 percent, while the proportion of the population in the work force had sunk from around 65 percent to 63 percent—that is, around 15 million people were leaving the work force.

What have the two decades of the post-Cold War period meant for the U.S. defense establishment within the context of U.S. foreign policy?

First, the U.S. defense establishment largely survived in its basic characteristics after the end of the Cold War, albeit with its roughly one-third reduction to “The Base Force”

44. China has not yet created social safety nets, i.e., social security pensions or health insurance. Thus, the people’s savings rates have been around 40 percent—which restricts their consumption and permits the governments to soak up the dollars their producers make, thus keeping their currency undervalued and, at the same time, inflation low. As of January 2011, inflation was increasing (around 5 percent as far more renminbi flood the economy). See Paul Krugman, “China Goes to Nixon,” The New York Times, January 20, 2011.

under Bush 41/Cheney/Powell. Substantially surviving the end of the Cold War meant that the U.S. defense establishment had a firm foundation within the American political system.\textsuperscript{46}

In the post-Cold War period, and given the great success of American forces in Desert Storm in 1991, the “joint surge force” became the essence of U.S. forces’ combined capabilities. Many of the tweakings of defense across the 1990s were devoted to improving these joint classic war-fighting capabilities, and these improvements were amply demonstrated in the major combat phase of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

But there was another strand in the evolution of U.S. forces’ capabilities across the post-Cold War period: involvement in what were really only a few messy internal situations in countries of no strategic significance for the U.S.—in Somalia and Haiti, in Bosnia and Kosovo as air strikes brought about diplomatic successes in pacification, followed by U.S. and other forces conducting benign peacekeeping (nobody killed), and then culminating in U.S. close-air-support assistance to help the Northern Alliance defeat the Taliban, driving them out of Kabul.

On the other hand, the aftermaths of 9/11 in Afghanistan and Iraq plunged the U.S. defense establishment into COIN campaigns from which there is no end until the end of 2014—at least in Afghanistan. It is a major joint and combined effort in Afghanistan, but with the emphasis shifting from air strikes as the main U.S. weapon to ground forces. But war has not been one of conventional ground forces fighting opposing conventional forces, but their fighting shadowy guerrillas hiding among the people of the country the U.S. has ended up occupying.

It is the confrontation between the quick joint surge force operations and the prolonged COIN operations that will be the debate of the future for the U.S. defense establishment. The first is the long-time role of U.S. forces as the contingent backup to U.S. foreign policy, while the second may promise only quagmires for U.S. forces in remote places probably not central to the larger pursuits of U.S. foreign policy—unless somebody thinks that otherwise the al Qaeda terrorists may threaten to run the world if they were not tracked down everywhere they may be suspected to be.

The purpose of having gone through U.S. legacy forces, legacy operations, and current operations is that those aspects of U.S. forces are the foundations upon which the future forces are to be built. It is the inherited forces with their existing uniformed personnel and their careers (the All Volunteer Force), the equipment they possess and have trained on, and their existing base facilities, not some zero base on which to build future forces against some abstract adversaries.

\textsuperscript{46} I once asked Tom Foley, former Speaker of the House, why defense had survived the end of the Cold War so well. He said, “Well, you know where the Republicans stand. The Democrats are so afraid of being labeled ‘soft on defense’ that they continue to support a large defense budget. But there is a third element: the American people consider the defense establishment to be the most respected institution in the country.” Fifteen years later, it is still the most respected institution. This has nothing to do with it being “the guarantor of stability all over the world.”
On military “strategy” in the Washington defense debate

A purely military strategy covers only a limited sector of human and economic existence. It is only one thing a state or nation does. Military strategy is a niche function, an insurance policy, a hedge on the unexpected, mostly lying in wait for something to happen. As the defense community used to debate after the Cold War, in the early 1990s, the view was that the U.S. should anticipate more the fireman function than being the policeman with the world as its beat. In fact, U.S. military strategy lies embedded in the following hierarchies of strategies that the U.S. utilizes in its relations with the world:

- First is the strategy of what the U.S. Government is going to do about the U.S. economy and the U.S. people and jobs and the ever-devouring monster of the wildly inefficient, ineffective, and costly U.S. health care system. That is, it is a strategy to turn around the internal decline of the U.S.—but no one knows yet how to do it in any politically feasible way.

- Second is the as-yet unclear strategy of the EU in trying to turn around the imminent collapse of their finance, currency, and production systems as the Euro and the European finance systems go belly-up. Who on earth is China going to sell to, given it is so resistant to selling to its own people —Africans?—thus to gain “influence”?

- Third is the need for a new strategy by the G-20 for a truly global management system of trade, finance, settlement of accounts, and so on. Actually, initiating the institutions for such a system was a great accomplishment of the Clinton Administration, especially as there weren’t many big military operations to undertake during those years. After it found that the Somalia and Haiti ventures were highly unrewarding and inconsequential, it turned to structural economics, with NAFTA, the Mexico bail-out, the evolution of GATT into WTO, the formation of APEC, the G-7 expanded to G-8 and then, under Bush 43, expanded to the G-20, with the notable additions of China, India, and Brazil, among others. The U.S. military had no involvement in most of these things.

- Fourth, there is the strategy of peace as part of security in its diplomatic aspect, which keeps U.S. presidents and the secretaries of State, Treasury, and Defense traveling around the world for high-level talks. Most prominent in this regard over the years had been the Middle East peace process. The Arabs say to the Americans, “You always fail at reconciling the Israelis and Palestinians, but we depend on you to continue to always fail.” That is, they know that the Americans are the only ones to keep the pressure on Israel. However, the peace process was completely stalled out as of end-2012, with no signs of any new initiatives.

- Diplomacy in pursuit of security is also what non-proliferation is all about. This diplomacy has really been quite successful, given the small number of countries that have proliferated over the decades—despite constant hand-wringing across those decades about the imminent wild growth in proliferation. Right now, all that is threatening anyone (not just the U.S.) with new nuclear weapons programs are
the rather pathetic North Korean and Iranian efforts. The military side—“counter-proliferation,” or bombing their nuclear facilities—is only an option as a threat, but likely to be ineffective in any case.

- Fifth, not just an American strategy, but one for the U.S., the Europeans, other advanced nations, and the involved countries themselves, has how to keep the Arab revolutions constructive, now in Libya and continuing in Tunisia, Egypt, and Yemen, and somehow extending it to Syria, especially since none of the advanced countries are going to invade any of those countries. Libya was the exception—but the military intervention was limited to NATO air support for the Libyan rebels on the ground.

- Then there is, of course, “the war on al Qaeda and its affiliates,” which is no longer going to take large invading forces (especially if it turns out al Qaeda is not there), but is being pursued (1) domestically, both in the U.S. and Europe and in other countries, with domestic intelligence and police work, as well as security barriers, and (2) with drone and Special Forces raids in the few places where al Qaeda remains and can be identified.

- Not even to speak of future energy shortages and coping with climate change—not that they’ve been very successful yet, but they certainly get more conferences and publicity than most other global security matters.

Within this much grander series of seven strategic areas in which to pursue improvements—all of which require any U.S. Administration to formulate strategies to the extent it is involved in these areas—the question of military strategy, i.e., security against military threats, assumes a narrower niche, especially when most of the world is at peace, despite the rhetoric to be heard around Washington of the world being “increasingly dangerous and uncertain, with many security challenges.” That actually has little to do with the world and much to do with politically propping up the U.S. defense budget—which has hardly been successful in countering sequestration. In any case, the role of the U.S. military is highly dependent on the progress in all the other strategic areas. In short, it tends to be the ultimate insurance policy in support of what are mostly global economic strategies.

This is quite unlike the Cold War confrontation with the Soviet Union, where it really did seem that the military side of overall U.S. (and allied) strategy was a full half of those grand strategies. The economic booms in Europe, Japan, South Korea, and Southeast Asia—the Tigers—were the other half. China itself, under Deng Xiaoping, was moving out of the Cold War framework from 1980 on.

In the post-Cold War world, there is little the U.S. military can do in any of the other strategies. We can’t shoot our way out of the current economic troubles in the U.S., Europe, Japan, and elsewhere in the world. At the same time, it isn’t clear that an economic/financial breakdown of “world order,” whatever that is, is either going to happen or that the U.S. military can do much about it in any case. To be sure, popular unrest grows where economies are breaking down, but the U.S. record of military
interventions in such cases is not one of success, and thus the U.S. now shows reluctance for any more interventions. The “strategies” in most of the other strategic areas are managerial, day-to-day, over time. Military strategy, other than keeping one’s powder dry (“readiness”), is more contingent, i.e., for whatever comes up.

The main point about the myth that military strategy leads the military budget is that, at whichever end you start, strategy or budget, you are going to end up iterating whatever you come up with at every stage. That is, if you start off with a military strategy, and then the defense budget you need for it is far more than you possibly can get, which is what always happens in planning, guess what—you are going to have to change your strategy—downward, less ambitious, or maybe even “discovering” that the scary scenarios you use to convince Administrations and Congress to keep budgets up may be less of a threat after all.

We can ponder the chart below on the “evolution” of American “strategic thinking.” The phases seem to have happened by accident as the U.S. found itself involved out in the world following changed circumstances, most of which seem to have come as a surprise to us or that we otherwise stumbled into (e.g., Vietnam, Iraq).

The last block—indicating that the U.S. might revert back to “the high-tech surge war” at which it seemed to be successful in Desert Storm in 1991 and the Major Combat Phase of OIF in 2003, but this time focused on “China as the New Peer Competitor,” is added merely to complete the symmetry of the chart. The problems for U.S. forces for the future, which the Administration must resolve, with all its dilemmas and choices, are addressed in Section XII.
As it turns out, although there is great American adaptability to what comes up, there are nonetheless some strong continuities in the way we Americans configure the forces—especially considering that both red blocks above have essentially been disastrous: they have taken enormous resources and got a lot of U.S. military personnel killed or maimed, all for dubious or non-existent strategic purposes. The blue blocks seem to be what American military genius is most comfortable with, especially, as history as turned out, better for avoiding war (i.e., deterring it) than prosecuting it.

Again, how does any of this history represent the U.S. policing the world or being the guarantor of world stability? The red blocks are interesting in this regard:

- For the Vietnam War, the Johnson and Nixon Administrations were clearly all wrapped up in its management—Johnson with the frustration of the futility of escalation, and Nixon with the frustration of the long process of getting U.S. forces out of there. The great fear as we got into Vietnam was that Communism would spread all across Southeast Asia. But the dominoes did not fall upon our withdrawal, and the process of arms control negotiations with the Soviets and the opening of relations with Mao’s China were set in train at about the same time. Did Vietnam distract the U.S. from anticipating and preventing the two Arab (really Egyptian)-Israeli wars of 1967 and 1973? No—they were happening on the other side of the world. Did U.S. distraction in Vietnam let the Soviets take advantage in order to invade Czechoslovakia in 1968? No—that was a problem internal to their “empire” and was actually limited as a threat to West Europe and was a diversion of Soviet forces to policing. They changed the regime in Prague in 1968 and at that point probably lost their Warsaw Pact allies (except for the ever-faithful East German regime) for any war against the West. By 1968, however, war in Europe was highly unlikely since the Berlin confrontation had been just about settled.

- For Iraq and Afghanistan, has the rest of the world gone to hell because of the distraction of the U.S.? Not really—except that the advanced world economies (U.S. and Europe) went into deep recession and now continued stagnation as the Bush Administration missed the huge housing market bubble that was forming, while China, India, and Brazil prospered. The terror problem after 9/11 got worse for a while (e.g., incidents in Madrid, London, Bali) but has come under greater control since the early 2000s. And internal conflicts, especially in Africa, have continued to recede in number.

These are all the setting for the U.S. defense budget within the U.S. economy and the future of U.S. forces within that budget, as discussed in the next two sections of this paper.
VIII. The Future of the U.S. Defense Budget

The preparation, Presidential submission, and Congressional appropriate of the annual U.S. defense budget had long been a routine affair unless wars had to be supported, wars (including the Cold War) ended and budgets reduced, or new Administrations wished to make a mark and increase the budget. Whatever the circumstances, the Congress barely ever changed the President’s proposed top line, though they may have made many puts-and-takes within the accounts. Nevertheless, over the at least the last four decades, final Congressional action on the budget slipped further into the new fiscal year, with final action just before Christmas, with Continuing Resolutions (CRs) at the previous year’s level filling the gap. Now, after the Great Recession of 2007-2009 and with the Budget Control Act (BCA) of 2011, the whole traditional budget process of the Federal Government has broken down, as will be discussed below.

America is in deep economic trouble, in economic stagnation, with high joblessness, a growing Federal budget debt (though the annual deficit is decreasing), insufficient stimulus by the government, deflation, deleveraging, insufficient growth (~2 percent) to create jobs, and so on. The U.S. defense budget has contributed to the national debt—especially the almost trillion dollars spent so far on the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Political paralysis from partisanship is not helping to resolve these problems, and economic growth will be slow for another 5 years at least. America is no longer #1 among the advanced countries, but more like 17-24th in most measures of the quality of life.

This is the scene for the United States as decisions by the President and the Congress have unfolded since the Great Recession hit. The question for the future of U.S. defense is what the roles of U.S. defense and U.S. forces are for U.S. national security in the future, especially in support of the foreign policy of the U.S., as the country tries to find a new economic approach in order to overcome the recession and to deal with the national debt that had accumulated from the previous Administration’s actions, including the lack of regulation that led to the recession and the loss of revenues that added even more to the national debt.

The traditional process of defense budget determination (since World War II)

The annual top line of the U.S. defense budget—as in every other advanced country—has always been determined by the overall annual budget deficit the country can tolerate.

47. CBO projections show that full employment in the U.S. is not likely to be restored before 2018. That means a surge in inflation before then is highly unlikely and thus the Fed is not likely to raise interest rates as well.

48. Assuming the country is not engaged in a big war—and now that big wars are no longer prevalent, having been erased by the defeats of the German “peer competitor” in World Wars I and II and then by the peace that came to the world because the U.S. and the USSR overwhelmed everybody else’s
The determination of the top line for U.S. defense budgets outside of wartime has never been based on any war-fighting analyses or on conjectured scenarios that try to determine force sizes independent of any budgetary or economic considerations. It is interesting that the most common goal in the advanced countries for a tolerable annual budget deficit has long been 3 percent of GDP. The deficit that was projected in the President’s budget submission to Congress for FY14 in May 2013 was projected to be about 4 percent of GDP—declining from a high of nearly 10 percent, but still above 3 percent.

OMB has traditionally determined the top line of the defense budget within the White House’s economic policy on the basis of overall economic and budget deficit considerations, that is, what the nation’s economy can afford as deficit in a given year under the given circumstances of growth in the economy. Unless a new Administration has taken office and wishes to increase the defense budget, or reduce it as circumstances may dictate or allow, OMB’s defense budget determination tends to be based on last year’s budget, plus a deflator (about which it has tended to be a little optimistic, as compared to CBO estimates) and maybe a little real growth. Wars and the supplementals to pay for them tend to upset any annual calculations. It is ironic that the base budget for defense is dependent on the fighting forces not fighting—that is, if an Administration orders them to go fight somewhere, they are supposed to add supplemental funds for it (unless the costs are easily absorbed, as for Bosnia and Kosovo, or even for the no-fly zones maintained over Iraq in the 1990s until 2003).49

Over time, secretaries of defense may have tried to bargain with OMB over OMB’s “passback,” as it is called, upon its review of Defenses budget submission. Secretary of Defense Gates got an extra $10 billion (2 percent more) for his FY10 budget, but on the basis of his absorbing items that had been funded under the supplementals for Iraq and Afghanistan that otherwise belonged in the base budget since they were not directly related to the two wars (e.g., two F-22 aircraft).

As for the Congress, its budget committees have not themselves tried to make an independent assessment of what the defense top line might be, but have simply adopted the top line in the President’s annual budget submission. The budget committees in turn have passed this top line on to the appropriations committees after deducting mandatory expenditures. Even though there are many puts-and-takes by the Congressional appropriations committees within the top line the budget committees have given them, the net outcomes of appropriations have usually been only plus-minus 1 or 2 percent different from the President’s original budget submission. Even the $78 billion over five years in the FY12 budget, by which the Obama Administration originally planned to reduce the defense budget, amounted to only a 2-percent reduction. The minimal Congressional changes have often included additions to the Administration’s proposed pay raises for military personnel (which the Congress then usually matched for civilian personnel) and other benefits for military personnel, which the Services then have had to contemplations of big defense budgets with their massive conventional and nuclear weapons budgets and associated technological advances, not to speak of their need to provide social safety nets for their people.

49. Desert Shield and Desert Storm in 1991 were funded largely by the $62 billion that Germany, Japan, and Saudi Arabia contributed to the U.S.
swallow within that top line that was originally determined by OMB. This had been the reality in the decades up to the BCA of 2011.

**Alternatives for future Department of Defense budgets discussed before the BCA**

Before the BCA, there were perhaps three alternatives for the future of the U.S. defense budget, all of which depended generally on the course of American politics in cutting the deficit.\(^{50}\)

1. The defense budget might have escaped any drastic budget cuts as a contribution to deficit reduction, but would remain essentially flat, not even including the “real one percent increase” former Secretary Gates had wanted. The supplementals for Afghanistan (and residually for Iraq) would continue.

2. The Administration would require the base defense budget, with the acquiescence of Congress, to absorb the war supplemental—$115.1 billion for FY12 and $88.5 billion requested for FY13, having declined because the U.S. left Iraq at the end of 2011.

3. The base defense budget would be required to cut at least $100 billion a year, as per the various proposals by at least two of the deficit commissions. A cut from a $550 billion annual budget to $450 billion would have left it $125 billion more than the pre-9/11 base of $325 billion. The war supplementals would continue until the war in Afghanistan would be phased down after 2014.\(^{51}\)

As a matter of fact, as discussed below, in mid-2013, the third track (#3) seemed to be the one the U.S. and its Defense Department would be following once the U.S. is out of Afghanistan.

**The defense budget situation in 2013**

As the year 2013 began, the U.S. economy still was growing only slowly, not producing adequate revenues, and the overall Federal debt had become a big political football.

There has been much talk on the political circuit about the need for the defense budget to

\(^{50}\) But do not particularly depend on what those, not actually involved in the politics of deficit resolution, trumpet as risks to U.S. national security—risks that, in fact, are not so bad, as is described in more detail in the next section.

\(^{51}\) Some people in Washington argue that, as the base defense budget is “only” about 4 percent of GDP and the overall national debt, if not corrected, is around 60 percent of GDP now, going to 90 percent, cutting it would make only a small contribution to deficit reduction. As noted earlier, the U.S. Government does not budget on the basis of GDP, especially as one does not know what GDP is until it happens. It budgets on the tolerable annual deficit, i.e., the difference between projected revenues and expenditures. But I reiterate the basic point: the top line of the defense budget is determined external to the Defense Department, not by any calculations within the department.
contribute to deficit reduction, along with cuts in Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid, as well as substantial cuts in the non-defense discretionary accounts—but no imposition of more taxes on the rich (the top 7 percent of Americans own 63 percent of the nation’s total household wealth). 52

Given the financial nature of the recession of 2007-2009, history has shown that it may take 5 to 10 years before overall economic growth rates in the U.S. preceding the recession can be resumed. 53 That means that the United States cannot soon grow its way out of the current debts as projected, and thus would not realize the additional revenues from taxpayers. In turn that means that more government stimulus would be necessary to get the economy growing again. But that stimulus would add to the debt—and yet if full employment, as projected, were not to be reached before 2018, interest rates would remain low, especially as inflation remained low given the stagnant demand for goods by the mass of the people, whose incomes continue to be stagnant.

On the other hand, if the President and Congress were to be more fearful of the national debt and would continue to passively allow the economy to stagger along at a reduced output, huge Federal budget cuts would be necessary, especially for health care support (i.e., imposing a far greater burden on American individuals to pay for their own health care)—but with the consequence (as in education) that economic growth would be further impaired, with subsequent loss of tax revenues, making large defense budgets even more unsupportable. That is a picture of American decline. The situation is quite desperate.

The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have been covered by supplemental appropriations (Overseas Contingency Operations, or OCO). They had been running at around $160 billion a year, while the base defense budget was increasing from $335 billion for FY02 to $530.6 billion enacted for FY12 (the original FY12 request was for $549 billion). OCO for FY13 was budgeted at $88.5 billion, but the bill for FY14 had not been determined as of April 2013—it depends on Administration’s plans for the phase-down of U.S. forces in Afghanistan across 2013 and 2014.

The Budget Control Act of 2011

The whole debate across the year 2011 in Washington was about the U.S. deficit, i.e., the difference between revenues and planned budgetary expenditures (outlays), in the midst of continuing disappointing news in the economy, led to endless commissions and ad hoc Congressional committees (e.g., “The Gang of Six”) seeking proposals for cuts and for increased revenues, but none were officially adopted. The semi-official Simpson-Bowles Commission (which included members of Congress) had the most comprehensive solution but could not get the super-majority vote it needed to refer its recommendations to Congress. The whole issue came to a head when budget decisions became coupled


53. Reinhart and Rogoff, This Time Will Be Different, Op. Cit.
with the raising of the then-$14.3 billion debt limit. After dancing on the edge of U.S. Government default on its borrowings as the debt limit was approached, the Congress and the President reached a compromise recorded in the BCA on the first of August 2011.

Under the BCA “stage 1”, the U.S. defense budget would be cut by $487 billion over ten years, 2013-2022. This cut was from CBO’s previous projection of the defense budget, as extrapolated from the FY12 budget, assuming previous real growth estimates. What was left was essentially a flat defense budget, barely keeping up with projected inflation. The total cut was 8.3 percent from CBO’s previous projection of the budget over ten years.

For its second stage, the BCA set up a Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction, which was to formulate and recommend to the whole Congress at least $1.5 trillion in overall budget reductions over the fiscal years 2013 to 2022. This committee’s proposals were due to Congress before the end of November 2011. The Committee was referred to as the “Committee of 12,” or “Super Committee,” and it was composed of six members from each House, equally divided between Democrats and Republicans. It was thought that they were likely to keep the $487 billion defense cut, though they could add or subtract from it. It would take a majority vote (seven) to forward their report to both Houses, and then both Houses were to approve or disapprove it on an up-or-down vote, without any amendments.

As a third stage, if the Super Committee were to fail to achieve a majority, or if one or both Houses were to turn down its proposals, a “sequestration” procedure was to take over, whereby $1.2 trillion in discretionary budget funds (half defense and half non-defense) would be “sequestered,” that is, accounts were to be cut across the board. It originally was to take effect on January 2, 2013. If the sequester were to kick in, it was initially estimated that an additional $492 billion would be cut from the defense budget, that is, $54.5 billion a year for nine years, unless Congress were to take prior action to amend the BCA. The sequester would cut another 9.4 percent of the projected defense budgets.

The Super Committee failed to take action, so the sequester action, though delayed for two months, was to take place on March 1, 2013. However, the Administration and Congress agreed to defer it while they passed a Continuing Resolution (CR) for the rest of FY13 based on the FY12 budget levels, with some modifications—but still including the FY13 tranche of the sequester, that is, $85 billion, of which the estimate for the defense budget was $37 billion (not $54.5 billion). The FY13 CR was signed by President Obama on March 27, 2013. It included the BCA sequester, which had technically gone into effect on March 1. However, the sequester took effect after nearly half of FY13 had passed, expending funds from the CR that had extended the FY12 levels of the defense budget, thus severely squeezing what might be left to be spent in the remaining half of FY13 (which would end on September 30, 2013).

54. As of April 2013, the National Debt was $16.8 trillion, of which $12 trillion was held by the public (including foreign countries) and $4.8 trillion as intra-government debt (including $2.7 trillion borrowed from the Social Security Trust Fund).
Moreover, the sequester mandated cuts across the board, by “program, project, and activity” (PPA). Since the President and Congress agreed that personnel accounts (pay and benefits) would not be cut, the whole of the sequester cuts fell on O&M (Operations and Maintenance), that is, “readiness,” and on acquisition accounts. Acquisitions were not initially affected much (and thus industry work forces were not cut much) because much of acquisition expenditures draw on prior-year appropriate funds, which the Defense Department had already obligated. But the O&M sequester meant the curtailment of maintenance, especially of naval ships, cutting sailing days and flight hours, and prospective furloughs of civil servants and the government wage-workers who perform the maintenance and other functions.

The PPA restrictions in the BCA sequestered budget applied only to FY13. For subsequent years, the gross caps apply across the Federal discretionary budget accounts, but the PPA restrictions do not. That would mean that the Federal departments would have the flexibility to apply the gross levels of their lower budgets in more efficient ways.

The CBO has projected the Defense budget out through 2022. The following chart shows the previous BCA1 project, and then the BCA2 sequestered projection, i.e., the lower level “forever.” Note the assumption that both levels would rise with projected inflation, but not in real terms.

The Obama Administration did submit an FY14 Federal budget, including the Defense budget, to Congress on April 10, 2013. The Constitution calls for the President’s budget to be submitted to Congress in February, but the extension of the FY12 CR the lack of a
The legislated FY13 budget was not resolved until March 27, 2013, when the FY12 CR became the FY13 budget with modifications and the sequester. However, the President’s FY14 budget submission added $50 billion to the FY13 budget and, in effect ignored the sequester. If it were ever passed, it would restore the defense budget to the upper BCA line shown in the chart on the previous page. As of the end of April 2013, however, given the paralysis of the Congress under the deep partisan divides—essentially a great conflict between reducing entitlements vs. imposing more taxes on the rich—meant total uncertainty as to whether the President’s FY14 budget submission would ever be passed. It is likely that, until the great paralysis is unwound, possibly not until after the 2016 Presidential election, the process of appropriations will be “Continuous Resolutions” (CRs) based on the last legislated budget, FY12, as modified by the FY13 hybrid CR with modifications on the margins.

The case had been made that the cuts imposed by the BCA sequester could be absorbed without deleterious effects on American defense. In contrast to the previous defense drawdowns after World War II, the end of the Vietnam war, and the end of the Cold War, which were all about 30 percent, the sequestration would boost the now-planned and programmed BCA cut to defense from around 8 percent to about 18 percent. It would reduce the defense budget back to its 2007 level, and nobody thought the budget was inadequate then. Under any calculation, even with the sequestration cut, the U.S. defense budget would remain by far the largest defense budget in the world and U.S. forces would remain the most formidable.

Final observation on the process of defense budget determination

The basic defense budget process, as it has been known since at least 1961, was straightforward: the Administration in office worked up the President’s budget submission, and the Congress literally “marked it up,” making only a plus-or-minus 1-percent change in the top line of that submission, since at least 1992. As time has passed, though, the Congress fell further behind the October 1 beginning of the fiscal year and resorted to Continuing Resolutions to spend at the previous fiscal years’ levels (and not permitting new program starts) until finally passing a full-year budget several months later. Over 2011 and 2012 and into 2013, even that regularity was thrown into great confusion because of the recession in the U.S. economy of 2008-2009, the inadequate recovery of the economy so far, and the enormous disputes between Congress and the Administration over finding solutions to both deficits in annual budgets and the accumulation of national debt requiring extensions of the debt ceiling. Whether “Regular Order” in Congress, as Majority Leader Senator Harry Reid has described it, can ever be restored remains a mystery.

For the rest of this paper, though, I assume the essentially flat (barely keeping up with inflation) budget represented either by the BCA1’s $487 billion ten-year cut or the lower level with its additional $492 billion sequester—for total reductions through 2021 or 2022 of about one trillion dollars—will be the operative level for the U.S. Defense Department. However, the war in Afghanistan continues and U.S. forces will still be there through at least the end of the year 2014, and possibly beyond, so there will also be the continued OCO (Overseas Contingency Operations) budget supplementing the Base
Budget. Once that war is over, at least for U.S. forces, the “flat” budget at the new lower levels would represent a post-war decline comparable to those after the Korean War, the Vietnam War, and the end of the Cold War. Those prior reductions ran about 30 percent down from the high budgets. In 2013, the reductions are estimated at 18 to 23 percent. On the other hand, if the stagnation of the U.S. economy and the Congressional process continue, there may well be further reductions in the defense budget, down to perhaps the 30 percent level less than the high, still not counting any further OCO costs.
IX. The Future of U.S. Forces in the Flat Budget

The U.S. has substantial legacy forces….How will they evolve, given at best a flat defense budget or even less?

Any evolution, shaping, change, transformation, efficiencies, personnel management, and proper balance between U.S. legacy forces and some kind of modernizing forces still await the resolution of Afghanistan and its costs, both for the operations there and the effects of those operations on the base defense budget and the forces and their personnel. This problem is particularly important for the resolution of the number of ground forces the U.S. retains—though the major change planned is for the ground forces personnel to be reduced by 100,000.

A level, i.e., stagnant, defense budget is difficult for the Services to manage, especially as personnel costs (including health) and acquisition costs for replacement equipment rise. Their force levels would continue to shrink under the budget constraints and costs of new systems (unless they were simply to continue existing production lines), whatever QDRs say—QDRs are forbidden by law to consider the availability of resources.

- It is hard to set priorities under a stagnant budget—if you have 50 priorities and can hardly fund any of them, or at least adequately, their order is forever changing.55

- And there can be a temptation to starve the funds for the repairs, spares, and maintenance for the claimants at the bases on which they actually operate and maintain the forces in which the U.S. has already invested.

- Alternatively, bases can’t be closed for political reasons and thus the forces are inefficiently distributed.

- There is always a lot of complaining by the Services and the Joint Commands that they don’t have enough for this or that, or that the risks are increasing for national security—except that nobody ever gets very specific about what they mean about risks—the only risks cited in JCS documents are “serious risks” or “grave risks.”

But, as is being repeated endlessly in this paper, whatever the cuts, the U.S. defense budget will remain by far the largest in the world, the forces probably the largest, except for the mass mobilization ground forces in a few places around the world. U.S. equipment is the best and we know how it works (the Chinese don’t for theirs); and U.S. ground forces are battle-hardened or maintain high operational rates, especially given their war experiences; and the U.S., with its air and sea lift and logistics, is still highly expeditionary—for all the Services (not just the Marines).

55. I am indebted to William D. O’Neil for this insight.
In the 1990s, the U.S. defense budget was actually flat, following the roughly one-third reduction of forces in accordance with the Bush 41 Administration’s Base Force of 1990. Yet the joint war-fighting capabilities of the forces grew greatly because of continuing technological investments, as demonstrated by the great improvements in joint performance made between Desert Storm in 1991 and the Major Combat Phase of Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003. The Services took their one-third force reductions gradually after 1991, in order to make the separation from the forces of AVF personnel as gentle as possible, while clinging to as much force structure as they could. But their forces began to shrink more when major replacement acquisition programs ran into huge cost and performance troubles early in the 2000s as designs of the 1990s reached engineering development. Some of the same evolutions can be anticipated in the post-Iraq and Afghanistan years, whatever cuts may be made in the defense budget.

The initial steps for the new era of the flat defense budget

Beginning back in September 2011, after the BCA was passed, President Obama, Secretary of Defense Panetta, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff together worked out a new strategy and new approach to the allocations of the constrained defense budget. That new strategy was published on January 3, 2012.56 Assuming eventual withdrawal from Afghanistan, mostly at the end of 2014 (and having withdrawn from Iraq at the end of 2011), the Administration would give priority to rebalancing its posture by sustaining it in Asia, continuing some presence in the Middle East, especially to deter Iran, and reducing presence in Europe. It would reduce ground forces personnel by 100,000 over 4 to 7 years. The strategy also says that the U.S. would avoid any more massive counter-insurgency, occupation, and nation-building operations, but would pursue the war against al Qaeda and its affiliates with the much smaller Special Forces and drone raids, while continuing training and other assistance to allies and partners around the world.

The U.S. would also sustain its strategic nuclear forces, in balance with Russian strategic nuclear forces, under the New START ratified in December 2010. The reality is that U.S. nuclear forces will be locked into balance with Russian nuclear forces for a long time to come. The U.S. would also continue its program to add regional ballistic missile defenses, especially to defend Israel and Europe against putative attacks by Iranian missiles. The Administration in its foreign policy and diplomacy would continue to press non-proliferation, especially in the immediate cases of North Korea and Iran. U.S. military forces would maintain capabilities for “counter-proliferation” options in the cases of North Korea and Iran.

Within the new strategy and within the Defense Department, the Obama Administration also said that it would:

- Maintain a broad portfolio of military capabilities
- Keep up readiness (“no hollow forces”)

• Keep pursuing efficiencies (The DOD Comptroller set a target of $61 billion in efficiency savings for FY13-17, split evenly between the Services and Defense-Wide accounts.)
• Take care of those who have served in war (i.e., in Iraq and Afghanistan, to include “wounded warriors”)
• Maintain the global networks supporting U.S. forces, including the interneting of U.S. joint forces, based on lessons learned in Iraq and Afghanistan
• Rebalance among active and reserve forces
• Sustain the defense industrial base.

The strategy also talks about maintaining capabilities to regenerate larger forces—referred to as “reversibility.” But there are no details yet as to what “reversibility” might entail.57

Once the BCA budget levels were set and the Administration and the Joint Chiefs of Staff worked out a strategy, the Services prepared their revised FY2013 programs (the previous FY13 budget had been submitted in February of 2012), covering FY13-FY17 as based on the allocations of the top line to the Services from the Secretary of Defense. The following observations may be made about the tasks they face in the coming years (at least in the period FY 13-17):

• A flat or stagnant budget is the most difficult for which the Services must plan, especially as they try to sustain current forces despite continually rising real costs for personnel and maintenance. There are no indications that those rises will not continue. Personnel costs will rise in pay and particularly in health care, reflecting the out-of-control health care costs in the whole of the U.S. economy. Operations and Maintenance (O&M) costs have also long risen in real terms as well. These real rises in personnel and O&M costs would squeeze funds for acquisitions—until the Administration completes the total cuts of 100,000 ground forces’ personnel after all but some small number of U.S. troops are phased out of Afghanistan by the end of 2014.

• U.S. forces, and in particular ground forces, will have to recover and reconstitute their units, heal their personnel, and catch up on maintenance of other forces (e.g., naval ships) that may have been neglected with the priority given to COIN operations and their support. In short, peacetime readiness will have to be restored.

• As noted, the Services’ most difficult tasks will be to fit those “thin edges of wedges” for their acquisition programs into the squeezed budget with its rising personnel and O&M costs. But, given the acquisition problems in each of the services, with higher costs and longer delivery times for replacement equipment, force unit numbers will

57. The concept of “reversibility” is reminiscent of the concept of “reconstitution” set forth in the Bush 41 Administration’s Base Force of 1990, based on any possible resurgence of the Soviet Union. In the event, the former Soviet forces quickly disintegrated as the new Russia suffered great economic collapse, and the “reconstitution” never had to be planned out.
shrink—repeat—shrink as older equipment reaches the end of its lives. This is where the Services’ ambitions to confront conjectured future wars fought against conjectured exotic technologies and tactics of poorer countries will come up against sustaining the size of their forces, their unit structures. It may become a matter of the Services deciding whether to buy exotic new systems versus “going retro,” continuing to buy what they know works and know how much it costs, that is, if they are to balance between sustaining unit numbers (“force size”) while introducing new equipment that is inevitably going to be more costly and thus in lower numbers than the equipment it replaces, given the flat budget now projected over the next ten years.\(^{58}\)

The first FY13-17 anticipated all these changes. The difficulties laid out have been compounded by the execution of BCA2 sequestration in March 2013. The President’s budget submission to Congress for FY14 (if passed, to take effect on October 1, 2013, a highly unlikely prospect) would ignore the further sequestration cuts of as much as $50 billion a year—but the difficulties listed above would persist and have to be coped with.

### A first effect of defense budget cuts

The return of U.S. forces from Afghanistan will plunge U.S. defense and its forces right into the troubled state of the U.S. economy. They will have to recover, and their equipment will have to be repaired, replaced, and updated. Then the Administration will have to take a new and serious look at their size, configurations, war-fighting orientations (COIN vs. conventional war), readiness, and residual global posture, all within a budget that is being reduced as part of the reduction of the national debt, and given that the American people do not want their taxes increased for any reason.

In all the various budget-saving proposals, favorite targets have been the closing of overseas bases, especially in Europe, cutting or terminating the usually mentioned cost-overrunning systems (e.g., F-35, EFV, V-22, and Army vehicle programs), increasing TRICARE premiums, across-the-board cuts of R&D, salary freezes, cutting staffs, making efficiencies, and so on. None of these makes much difference in really cutting the defense budget. The only solution may well be cutting force structures and their associated personnel.

William O’Neil has noted some real difficulties that would arise in managing the reduced defense budget:\(^{59}\)

- **The money is in the manpower.** In the President’s FY14 budget submission military personnel was 26 percent of DOD’s Total Obligational Authority (TOA). Another 39.8 percent was O&M, which mostly goes to pay civilian salaries; 31.7 percent would go to acquisition, which has a fair chunk of civilian manpower as

---

\(^{58}\) This would not be a new phenomenon. In much of the post-World War II period, more capable and likely heavier equipment replacements have resulted in lower total numbers of such equipment in U.S. forces.

\(^{59}\) Personal correspondence, edited.
well. And Military Construction (MILCON), which has its own manpower, would be 2.1 percent. All told, something like 60 to 70 percent of DOD outlays go to pay the salaries of government personnel or body-shop contractors. One simply cannot cut DOD TOA much without cutting a fair number of these people. Whether it makes sense to put them on the street now to add to the ranks of the rapidly becoming unemployables is debatable, but, until we do get rid of them, we are not going to reduce DOD TOA by a great deal.60

- **The only way to save in acquisition is not to buy “stuff.”** Everyone always wants to make acquisition savings by buying smarter “stuff” or being smarter about how we buy it. This is good and laudable in itself, but it has never saved anything significant in recorded history. To save very much money you have to stop buying and either let your forces get older or cut forces. Although technology can be used to effect savings—as private industry proves constantly—it would take major changes in the U.S. military acquisition system to apply technology systematically to achieve savings and then actually to capture those savings.

- **Efficiency is good for the soul, but not much for the budget.** Former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates and his subordinates put a lot of stress on “efficiency,” and Secretary Panetta continued some of this. Most of this is virtuous, but has limited promise for savings. It might save a few percent—very few, so far as past experience has shown. There are no big savings there.

- **Don’t expect huge cost growth in acquisition to stop anytime soon.** Most of the things that lead to out-of-control problems in acquisition are baked in at the very beginning of programs, but the problems only come to light years later. We’ll be suffering for the sins of the Bush 43 (and Clinton) Administrations for some years yet. And, because so many of the “reforms” being made in acquisition now are things that have not worked when tried in the past, future Administrations will suffer for the sins of the current one. Most programs will continue to do reasonably well (as they always have), but there will continue to be spectacular exceptions, especially with the high-end systems like aircraft and ships.

- **Pulling back from overseas bases is not likely to save much unless the forces removed are demobilized.** Basing forces overseas for the most part has added little to costs in itself. And the U.S. has had longstanding host-nation support (HNS) agreements, e.g., with Japan and Germany, that make overseas basing cheaper in net. (End of comments by William O’Neil.)

Assume U.S. forces have left Afghanistan (and Iraq). Assume that most of them come back to the United States (CONUS), while some are left overseas, presumably in the places they were before they were deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan, but in lower numbers. Assume that most of them are settling back into the U.S. onto bases that exist for them,

---

60. These percentages have been updated from the FY12 program, but have hardly changed since then—a measure of the inertia of the defense budget as it supports legacy forces and programs.
i.e., that the reposturing doesn’t require a huge investment in new facilities. Those are the forces that must be supported in future budgets.

**What are these legacy forces?**

The legacy forces are the four Services (Army, Navy, Marines, Air Force), plus the Special Operations Command (SOCOM—about 65,000 military personnel under its command and supervision, but who are still paid and their personnel files maintained by the Services whose uniforms they wear), plus the defense-wide functions (e.g., Joint staff, staffs of Combat and Specified Commands, defense agencies, health programs for the military and their families and retirees, etc.). The four Services and SOCOM have their legacy infrastructure and equipment, that is, the equipment, facilities, trained career personnel that are a sunk cost and are sustained. They have associated Reserve and National Guard units and personnel. Their acquisition and R&D budgets (programs-of-record, or POR) represent new equipment funded, in R&D, and in production, but not yet delivered (or fully delivered) to operating units.

Their recent history is well-summarized in an article from *Federal Times*, October 17, 2010, by Winslow Wheeler of the former World Security Institute (edited down):

- “Since 2001, Congress has given the Pentagon more than $1 trillion to fight the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Over the same period, Congress and the Pentagon have added another $1 trillion to the non-war (base) part of the Pentagon budget. You’d think all that added money would give us larger forces, a newer hardware inventory and better-trained people. Instead, the windfall made our forces smaller, older, and less ready to fight.

- “At $707 billion, the defense budget is higher than it has ever been since the end of World War II. That has been true since 2007 [future statement omitted since the budget situation has changed];

- “Since 2000, Congress and presidents have funded the Pentagon with $7 trillion out to the year 2011. Of that amount, $1.3 trillion has been for the wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere. Thus, the non-war parts of the Pentagon budget will have received $5.7 trillion.

- “The Army received a plus-up of $297 billion, a 53-percent increase. Brigade combat teams grew from 44 to 46, an increase of 5 percent—but it was a 53-percent increase in money that bought a 5-percent increase in combat forces. Still, CBO tells us that major Army equipment inventories are mostly older.

- “The Navy budget received an additional $293 billion; 2011 funding increased over 2000 by 44 percent. Yet the size of the Navy’s combat fleet dropped from 318 ships and submarines to 287, a decline of 10 percent. This is not a smaller, newer fleet; it is a smaller, older fleet—about four years older, on average, according to the Congressional Budget Office (CBO). Moreover, for the past year,
the press has reported on severe maintenance problems throughout the fleet, and Navy combat pilot training has remained at historic lows.

- “The Air Force received an increase of $320 billion, an increase of 43 percent. But from 2000 to 2011, the number of active and reserve fighter and bomber squadrons went from 146 to 72, a decline of 51 percent. Like the Navy, its fleet is also older—about nine years older, on average, according to CBO. Air Force budget data tell us that fighter pilot air training hours are only one-half to one-third of what they were in the 1970s.” [End Winslow Wheeler observations.]

Each of the Services has also had severe troubles with acquisition programs:

- The Army started developing the elaborate Future Combat Systems (FCS) program, but Secretary Gates forced it to scale it back to some of its individual components. After all, with all its interconnections, it seemed more suited for El Alamein than Afghanistan. Now the Army is struggling with defining the program for the massive (70-ton in one proposal) ground combat vehicle (GCV), which doubles as tank and APC, among other functions. But it still has about 6,000 M1A1 and M1A2 tanks (many of which have been upgraded), which are the best in the world (even in the M-1A1 version). It has also kept and upgraded around 4,400 Bradley armored fighting vehicles.61

- The Marines were unsuccessful in developing their Expeditionary Fighting Vehicle (EFV), last estimated at $24 million a copy, but still not working and unsuitable for other than a long ride to the beach from offshore—except that even Secretary Gates had wondered whether the U.S. would ever make that kind of amphibious assault again—the last being Inchon in 1950. It was terminated, and the Marines embarked on the design of a new landing vehicle with reduced capabilities and cost. However, on experience, it is unlikely to be of modest capability and of reasonable cost.

- The Marines’ insistence on priority for the F-35B STOVL version of the Joint Fighter Program and its troubled lift-fan apparatus is responsible for much of the delays and cost rises of the overall program, as well as adding weight and thus lower payload and shorter range for the F-35B.

- The Marines also keep building the MV-22, which is even more expensive than the F/A-18E/F, and it has emerged as a maintenance nightmare. The overall build program continues, however.

- Both the Army and Marines had MRAPs shoved down their throats by Secretary Gates. They had resisted since they said there was “no validated requirement.” About 28,000 were purchased. As then-Under Secretary Ashton Carter said, though, “We acquired, then later required.” Now they say that “after”

---

61. Russell Rumbaugh, *What We Bought: Defense procurement from FY01 to FY10* (Washington, DC, Henry J. Stimson Center, October 2011.)
Afghanistan and Iraq, they will simply be storing them—which may be just as well, since this country is going to be reluctant to engage in another Afghanistan for a long time to come (more on that later). But it is an available capability, just like all those parked M-1s will be.

• If the U.S. is ever able to get out of Afghanistan, the plan is that ground forces are to be reduced to close to their pre-2003 levels, i.e., the Army to 490,000 personnel (it was 480,000 in the 1990s) and the Marines to 182,200 (172,000 in the 1990s). The levels could even be reduced below those numbers, depending on the state of the U.S. economy and debt and likely further squeezing down to the defense budget. The reductions in ground forces’ personnel would also alleviate the growing personnel costs as a proportion of the DOD budget—costs that are otherwise squeezing the acquisition budgets, which have their own troubles of costs, development problems, and thus delivering fewer systems in the end.

• The Navy had been getting about $15 billion a year for new ships, whereas CBO analysis showed it would need $22 billion a year if it were to get to 313 ships sometime in the future (though it has never been clear where the 313 number came from), assuming continuing the present rather costly mix of ships the Navy has been procuring. Given rising costs and delays, it is thus delivering fewer ships, and the overall combat fleet has been shrinking in numbers. The Navy’s mistake may have been changing nearly all types of ships at once—a completely new design for a carrier, a huge DDG-1000 to support those vanishing amphibious assault operations (but then limited to 3 to be built), the Littoral Combat Ship (LCS) with its 40-knot speed (for what?), and the LPD-17 class of amphibious vessels, which, while a useful concept, turned out to be poorly designed in many details and shoddily built, though its problems may have finally been fixed.62 The SSN-774 as a scaled-down version of the Seawolf, and the evolution of the Arleigh Burke DDG-51 destroyers to become an anti-missile defense mainstay represent incremental improvements of essentially legacy capabilities, though the new improved Arleigh Burkes may cost $2.2 billion apiece. The cost of each SSN-774 is now a steady $2.7 billion apiece, practically rising only with inflation—a remarkable case in an era of rising costs.

• The Navy has also been funding its air modernization at around $17 billion a year (including VF-22). It has been lucky that the production lines for the F/A-18E/F and its adaptation as a jamming aircraft, EF-18G, have been extended to fill the gap until the F-35C is ready. The P-8 Poseidon is replacing the elderly P-3 reconnaissance aircraft.

• The Air Force bet everything on the F-22, but its production was terminated at 187 aircraft—still the finest fighter in the world, but nobody could figure out where it might be used (more on this later, when I discuss how the evolving U.S. legacy forces relate to an evolving world military threat situation). But the F-22s had a nagging oxygen supply problem, which essentially kept them grounded for

62. The prototype of the class, USS San Antonio, LPD-17, took three years after its first cruise to fix, and thus became known as “Building 17” at the US Naval Station, Norfolk.
some time. The Air Force has completed its buy of C-17s, but these aircraft must be using up a lot of their projected lives in the constant support of the logistics line to Afghanistan (and before that, Iraq). The Air Force shares the F-35 program with the Marines and the Navy, and thus shares the rising costs of that program. As the B-52s, B-1s, and B-2s fade away (even the B-2 is now 15 to 18 years old), there is talk of a new long-range bomber, but, if the recent acquisition experience in DOD continues, it is likely to be wildly expensive, prolonged in delivery, reduced in numbers, and uncertain of working well. It is also unclear as to who and what it is to bomb, except the talk is all about bombing on the Chinese mainland. This neglects the fact that China is a nuclear power, and so that bomber capability seems strategically idiotic. The program at Boeing for the new KC-46 tanker proceeds. (I do not cover satellite acquisition problems in this paper.)

- U.S. missile defense programs are proceeding at a measured pace. Thirty long-range (mid-course interception) systems have been deployed in Alaska and six at Vandenberg AFB, with another 14 to be added after the latest North Korean nuclear test, so the U.S. will presumably be defended against North Korean missiles and their putative nuclear warheads. The Obama Administration voided the plan to put a comparable missile defense in Poland and has planned to station PAC-3 in Poland instead, to be eventually replaced by SM-3 missiles. X-band radars have been stationed in the Israeli Negev, in Northern Japan, and in Turkey, and four missile-defense-capable Aegis ships will be home-ported in Rota, Spain to help defense Israel against Iranian missiles. The U.S. is planning to place land-based SM-3s in Romania as well. The NATO MEADS system is barely alive, through proof of capability phase, but does not have much support in the U.S. Congress. All these missile defense systems are intended to intercept Iranian missiles, though it is not clear why Iran would be lobbing missiles into Europe and at what. The defense of Israel is another matter.

- The level of U.S. nuclear forces will continue to be subject to the New START treaty with Russia, which will reduce the forces to 700 delivery systems and 1550 ready warheads. Minuteman could be sustained forever, and the Ohio-class Trident submarines can last as long as 2037, but design work for a new SSBN has begun—with a cost of as high as $6-7 billion apiece, though great efforts are being made (on paper) to get the cost for all but the first boat down to $4.8 billion. B-52s can be maintained for a while longer, but it will be some time before a new long-range bomber will appear, and how nuclear-capable it might be remains to be determined at the policy level, though Congress wants it to be nuclear-capable.

- One possible program that keeps popping up as a proposal is for “prompt conventional long-range strike,” essentially an ICBM or SLBM, or even a hypersonic UCAV with a guided conventional warhead meant to deliver a strike anywhere in the world within 30 minutes. It was meant to hit Osama bin Laden whenever he was discovered, the slow cruise missiles having failed to do that in 63. The North Korean long-range ballistic missile program has had difficult development problems, and it is not clear they can build compact warheads that would fit on such missiles.
1998. But Osama bin Laden was killed by other means, which also delivered the corpus delicti to U.S. officials, confirming his death. It is an absurd proposal, including contemplating the cost (last heard, one possible candidate, the Trident missile, for instance, costs $125 million apiece these days), but mostly because of the uncertainty of the intelligence that would permit such an expensive strike, aside from the confusion caused in the world as to whether the U.S. had launched a nuclear ICBM or SLBM.

- There is a big new effort in cyber warfare as well.

- By the way, it is to be noted that all U.S. forces are “expeditionary,” given their development for World War II (and, of course, it was the “American Expeditionary Force” or AEF that the U.S. sent to World War I), and then for the Cold War. That is, U.S. forces have long been designed and equipped for operations overseas, and especially given the great emphasis on building sealift and airlift that began in the Kennedy/McNamara Administration.

The National Guard and Reserves

Each of the Services and the Coast Guard also has reserve components in addition to their active components. The reserves include the National Guard. These are long-standing institutions that, in addition to their capabilities for reinforcing active forces, provide relations with the states and with local communities that keep the U.S. military in touch with the public. Successive Administrations have greatly imposed on them to contribute to the counter-insurgencies in Iraq and Afghanistan. Some of them have been on the front lines while others have been providing rear support functions. They have also faced multiple tours in Iraq and Afghanistan, like the active forces. These burdens do not seem to have restrained their recruitment. Reserves also fly practically all the airlift and other supporting aircraft.

After Iraq and Afghanistan, there is also sure to be a reexamination of the role of reserves within the overall force structure of defense. The Cold War rationale for the reserves has gone away (that is, providing combat support and service support troops to be called up for the great war with the Soviet Union—which was also supposed to mean Administrations had to get real public support for war and thus maybe impose some hesitancy about their going to war). Now most of the talk seems to be about their guarding the Arizona border (as an example) against immigrants—which the states not near the borders providing the reserves seem to resist. There is also much discussion and planning for homeland defense missions in the case of natural disasters (e.g., Hurricane Katrina), pandemics, and in the event of a catastrophic terrorist attack (which seems more and more difficult for al Qaeda to bring off). The Northern Command (expanding the old Continental Air Defense Command) was formed to provide Defense Department assistance to what are generally considered to be state and local emergency homeland defense functions.

But does the U.S. really need overseas strategic missions for what seems to be the great national institution of Guard and Reserves, other than to train other nations’ military
personnel? Most of the discussion above applies to the ground forces. Sustaining the Air Force reserves may be more a matter of whether we have enough replacement aircraft for them in the future. Their fighter squadrons are as capable as active-duty squadrons. They also do yeoman duty in flying the C-17 and C-130 transport aircraft, as well as tankers. The Navy has essentially only individual augmentee reserves.

What, then, may be the evolution of U.S. legacy forces?

Legacy forces are what the United States has and carries forward into the future. They represent deep investments in equipment, career paths, installations, readiness practices, and other institutional aspects—in short, their sunk costs. Their leadership is all co-opted from the ranks by their predecessors; so they carry their Service traditions and practices with them into the future. Secretaries of Defense examining the next submissions of POMs are always frustrated—they find they can make only something like 2-percent changes in the legacy forces in the budgets they are presented with during annual program reviews. So, over the FYDP period, this may represent only 10-12 percent change compounded—if that. In any case, in the U.S. Defense Department there has never been budget planning from some kind of zero base, creating some brand new forces to be delivered in some unknown future for unknown purposes.64

The current legacy forces have nonetheless been strongly affected since 9/11 by more than 11 years of war in Afghanistan, Iraq, and then Afghanistan again. The ground forces have been most affected: the active forces have grown by nearly 100,000 active personnel, and Guard/Reserve personnel have also been deeply involved in the wars. Their base pay is covered in the base budget, but their combat pay is covered in the supplemental. The Navy and Air Force have contributed their Individual Augmentees (IAs) out of active combat units—despite both those Services also having pared their personnel down to a minimum given how the rising costs of personnel cut into their acquisition budgets. These personnel diversions had adverse effects on readiness, as had been seen.65

Secretary Gates forced the Army and Marines to buy MRAPs and UAVs/UCAVs, as well as replacement or new systems that might be regarded as “retro” (e.g., more CH-47 Chinooks and the MC-12 surveillance aircraft). Much doctrinal work has been done on counter-insurgency, led by General Petraeus, and training and orientation for the repeated tours of ground forces in Iraq and Afghanistan have been based on them. Even medical care for the wounded has been modified with experience, resulting in fewer deaths, but

---

64. Not that there haven’t been lots of staff papers and outside reports written from a zero-base perspective, reaching out to some desired force 15-30 years hence, as if they could possibly know what the world would look like out there. For example, see the CSIS report by Clark A. Murdock et al., Interim Report—Planning for a Deep Defense Drawdown—Part I: Proposed Methodological Approach, May 24, 2012.

65. An unauthorized transport of nuclear weapons from one Air Force base in the U.S. to another back in 2007 happened because of lax management at the top of the Air Force coupled with manpower reductions. Secretary Gates fired the Secretary of the Air Force and the Chief of Staff and put a floor on their manpower reductions.
many more long-term “walking wounded” military veterans who will need care for their lifetimes.

Whether all these innovations for COIN stick in the legacy forces remains to be seen—over time. It is not as if all that experience against insurgencies in Iraq and Afghanistan is simply going to be forgotten the day the troops leave, and all specialized equipment for counter-insurgency stored, sold, or junked. Yet, as people say, lessons learned are not necessarily lessons institutionalized in training curricula or the development of new equipment. For instance, while granting that the situations in Iraq and Afghanistan have been different from each other in many ways, there seemed to have been little systematic transmission of lessons from Iraq to Afghanistan, except through the individuals who had served in both places.

If the Iraq and Afghan wars had not intervened, the defense community, especially the National Guard and Reserves, might have been far more deeply involved with planning for homeland defense against the terror threat or in deployments to the U.S.-Mexico border for the control of illegal immigration from the south.

**Summary on legacy forces**

So this is where U.S. legacy forces stand. They may shrink in gross numbers or capabilities because of the acquisition mess-ups and the personnel costs as well as the post-Afghanistan reductions, but they remain the best forces in the world, bar none, and are battle-hardened to boot, in a way the armed forces of no other country are—except maybe the Taliban.

As noted repeatedly before, a major lesson for the future, as it was in the past, but especially now under a slow-growing economy and high national debt, is that the top line of the budget has historically been assigned top-down by the Administration, that is, from outside DOD. In the near future, at best it will be flat, barely keeping up with inflation. It might be squeezed down further given higher priorities—no higher taxes on the rich on one hand, and slashing the earned benefits of the middle class on the other. But, as noted in the previous section of this paper, considerable uncertainty now exists about when and how Congress may provide appropriations for the annual President’s fiscal year budget submission given the months of drift before Congress acts. Indeed, the process may turn into one of endless Continuing Resolutions, which makes starting new programs very difficult. Financing for operations in Afghanistan continues. Whatever planning of their forces the Services may do still has to fit the top-line money, not the other way around, whatever planning for an unknown future may be done within DOD.

There are also the constant complaints by each Service that the defense budget is distributed mindlessly by one-thirds—each Service always wants a larger share and thinks the others should be cut.

- In the first place, it is not quite so—as noted, across the 1990s it was 31 or 32 percent each for the Navy and Air Force, and 24 percent for the Army, with about 13-14 percent for defense-wide (at one point in the Bush 43 Administration,
defense-wide rose to 19 percent). With the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, there has been a shift in the base budget (that is, not including the supplementals) of about 2 percent from the Air Force to the Army. The supplementals have raised the gross defense budget considerably for the ground forces.

- For the FY13 Base Budget (not including OCO) submitted pursuant to BCA1, the shares were 25.6 percent for the Army, 29.6 percent for the Navy Department, 26.7 percent for the Air Force, and 18.1 percent for defense-wide. Those proportions changed only slighted in the President’s FY14 budget submission.

- Secondly, the Navy budget includes the Marines and the Air Force budget includes the black procurement programs for the Intelligence Community. The Air Force budget also contains most of the space assets that support the entire defense community.

- But the main point is that the splits as shown above are the product of continuities in the legacy forces—recognizing, as stated earlier, that, per the complaints of successive secretaries of defense, they can change the Service budgets only incrementally year-by-year. The Navy and Air Force have usually gotten a higher proportion than the Army because they are more acquisition-intensive (the Army provides equipment to its manpower; the Navy and Air Force man their equipment).

- It is difficult for the individual Services to argue for a greater share of the defense budget at the cost of the other Services because (1) they know nothing about the programs of their fellow Services so as to argue that those other Services should have less, and (2) so far there are no clear strategic directions for the future, as is discussed shortly—unless the U.S. really wants to be involved in more Iraqs and Afghans without end, which seems doubtful—that would otherwise indicate any radical changes in Service shares.66 One possibility would be for the U.S. to go to a completely isolationist foreign policy, withdrawing from the world, which might be of some benefit to the U.S. Navy, but such a foreign policy seems unlikely in the globalized world, remembering that almost all human activities happen on land.

- In summary, there are no over-arching strategic considerations that drive either the top line of the budget or the allocations among Services—except upon catastrophic changes in history like Sputnik and the huge surge in strategic nuclear forces (which came at the cost of a larger Army) or the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan (which brought about at least a temporary shift in favor of ground forces).

The major point of this section has been reflections on where U.S. forces have come from—that is, the legacy forces, with their experiences in operations since the end of the

66. As CNO Admiral Frank Kelso once said, “A five percent shift would still not help me much.”
Cold War and the evolution of their capabilities. Perhaps the most important evolution has been in their joint connections and joint operations in their evolution from Desert Storm (itself a high demonstration of U.S. jointness) to the Major Combat Phase of Operation Iraqi Freedom (where they were truly integrated). The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan had the benefits of these technological improvements, with the notable addition of drone operations, which contributed both to intelligence and depended on intelligence for their strikes at terrorists.

In the meantime, however, there has been a stalling out of the major acquisitions undertaken by the Services in the 2000s, which may well lead to reductions in future force structures, compounding the reductions emerging from the squeezes on future defense budgets. This great problem in major defense acquisition programs (MDAPs)—including FCS, EFV, F-35, not to speak of the troubles of F-22, the enormous costs of CVN-78 and DDG-1000, and the frustrations of making missile defenses work—may pose the largest threat in the near future to sustaining the force levels of the more equipment-oriented Services, that is, the Navy and Air Force. The ground forces, however, will perforce shrink as the U.S. phases out of Afghanistan and cuts ground force personnel back closer to the numbers of personnel it had in the 1990s or even less.

All of this is unfolding in the future of, at best, a flat defense budget—an almost better outcome than could have been expected given the deep financial debt the Federal Government has fallen into from unwise deficit spending through 2008, to include the wars and the lack of regulation that let the financial community throw the U.S. economy into recession, escaping a depression only by huge interventions by the Federal Reserve Bank and Treasury Department in 2008 and 2009.

Moreover, the legacy forces, particularly ground forces and also their long-distance logistic support have been drained by the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The ground forces have had to take on a different character in counter-insurgency and counter-terrorist actions in Iraq and Afghanistan, with different training and equipment, all to a large extent improvised. The institutionalization of COIN may be difficult to sustain, not least because the Obama Administration desires not to engage in such operations in the future. And new dimensions have been added to all the forces with drone warfare and the growth of cyber warfare. However, the Services’ adaptability for evolution has been demonstrated by the personnel of these legacy forces—the All-Volunteer Force—and represents real strength that may be a challenge to sustain. These legacy forces are the pride of the nation.

In any case, the institutions of the Services—Army, Navy, Marines, Air Force, and now Special Forces (since the mid-80s, and because it has its own acquisition budget and controls units from each of the services, including 2600 Marines at least for now)—represent the finest traditions and organizations of the defense establishment. They are the “Title 10” forces, which recruit, man, provide training and careers, and maintain the force units. They have their own Reserve components. They are the All-Volunteer Forces. They provide identity to their personnel and in turn get their loyalty—few people ever serve in more than one service. They have their devoted alumni—their retirees. The Service establishments decide on their own organizational
structures and their equipment acquisitions unless national decisions are made for completely new directions in equipment and coordination—as for strategic nuclear weapons and space and joint communications in the past and now cyber in the present. They control 81 to 87 percent of the defense budget (the rest is “defense-wide”). They have long histories and are the repositories of military experience. This country is proud of them and is going to keep them. They are what the public knows of the U.S. military.
X. U.S. Forces Will Probably Sustain and Evolve a Range of Capabilities into the Future.

This discussion describes how U.S. legacy forces may evolve after Afghanistan. Rather than tailor them first to specific situations and enemies looming on the horizon, I look at the evolutions that may take place within the forces and then later relate them to what the United States (not just the forces) may face for their use out in the world in the emerging future. Note the cross-hatching in the chart below that correlates military activities out in the world with the capabilities U.S. forces maintain.

Again, first and last on this spectrum of capabilities maintained are the outliers on foreign policy, that is, homeland defense and sustaining U.S. nuclear forces (which are now all “strategic”).

- The defense of the American homeland is what national defense, national security, are supposed to be about, and there could be greater needs for that homeland defense in the future. Indeed, if there were another substantial terror attack on the United States, U.S. national security would become much more a matter of homeland defense—even to the extent of the U.S. Navy doing much more patrolling off the U.S. coasts. However, in general, the U.S. is pretty secure
behind its two oceans and two benign neighbors—except for the drug traffic problem to the south.

- Missile defense is also a matter of homeland defense, but, as a matter of foreign policy, the U.S. taxpayer is also supposed to support the missile defense umbrella for other countries that are threatened by potential North Korean and Iranian nuclear weapons. In any case, missile defense for the U.S. mainland seems to be set, with some minor additions in Alaska, while the next U.S. efforts will be for regional (that is, overseas) missile defenses.

- A growing sense in the U.S. is that the homebound National Guard and Reserves of the U.S. Army may be increasingly called upon for immigration control on U.S. borders and in reserve to respond to great domestic catastrophes—e.g., hurricanes and other violent storms as global warming continues—especially since American society is weakening and some people think that society may be more subject to panic upon such events.

U.S. strategic nuclear weapons are also really a matter of homeland defense, as they were during the Cold War and remain today. Their numbers are still correlated to the numbers that Russia maintains—although Russia in its current economic and industrial situation has had difficulties in sustaining its numbers of strategic nuclear forces. U.S. strategic nuclear forces have also served, across the post-World War II era, to discourage or obviate the necessity of other countries “going nuclear,” and, indeed, nuclear proliferation has always been much more restrained than expected. That is, 43 countries have nuclear power reactors, but only 9 have nuclear weapons (assuming North Korea has forged its fissile materials into weapons). The U.S. will sustain its nuclear forces at the levels it agrees with the Russians—it is as convenient a measure of nuclear force sizing as any other that might be dreamed up (especially “targets”).

67. Japan is buying its own missile defense capabilities, with technological assistance from the United States. Europe will rely on the U.S. stationing its missile defenses in the area, with the Europeans providing connections. Israel has developed its own missile defense systems (both Arrow and now the anti-short-range rocket defense Iron Dome) with much U.S. assistance, and this is being augmented by a U.S. X-band radar and Aegis ships that will be home-ported near the Mediterranean.

68. There are some in the U.S. who still want a global missile defense system, which can be poised to defend against only the strategic nuclear forces of the Soviet Union (now Russia).


70. The U.S. keeps an estimated 200 B-61 bombs in NATO allies’ countries—the residual of the more than 7,000 warheads maintained in the NATO area during the Cold War. They are the only U.S. nuclear weapons deployed on land overseas. (At sea, the only nuclear weapons the U.S. deploys are the SLBMs on the SSBNs.)
The second level of capabilities the U.S. would maintain and evolve is shown on the spectrum as “maintain service institutions” and “capabilities-based planning (incremental).”

Note that these two categories are still essentially in the green portion of the spectrum. That is, the forces are mostly home, maintained, evolving, not deployed, not being engaged in war overseas. Of course, they may also deploy for professional training and interactions with allies—as naval ships do regularly. (Other interactions overseas are discussed in the next categories on the chart.)

The continuity in the Services, their continued existence, also depends on their balancing the programming of their manpower (and their training), maintenance (operational readiness), and acquisition within the fiscal guidance provided by the Secretary of Defense. If any of these three elements are stunted, the forces of Services would not be ready, i.e., they would be “hollow.” It then depends on those programs they have constructed surviving review by the Secretary’s office as to their feasibility prior to their being included in the Services’ budget submissions for inclusion in the President’s annual budget submission to Congress.

The acquisition element has become particularly challenging since the end of the Cold War, that is, in the past two decades. Particularly for the Navy and Air Force, equipment ages and must be replaced or modernized to extend service lives unless it costs too much to maintain (e.g., the carrier USS Enterprise, finally retired) or becomes dangerous to its operators. How that replacement or modernization takes place raises the question of capabilities-based planning. As equipment ages, advances in technology, threat considerations, new ways of thinking about warfare, or other considerations may mean “and now for something completely different” in the American military culture.

But, as we have seen when imaginations run riot, that means F-22s, V-22s, F-35Bs, EFVs, DDG-1000s, new catapults for aircraft carriers, airborne lasers (ABL), and so on. These new systems may never work and usually take too long to develop and deliver; costs soar; and the numbers affordable mean fewer replacements. Therefore, the forces shrink because they have less equipment to operate.

In the forthcoming tight or decreasing budget situation because of the U.S. Federal debt, the question becomes instead, “What is good enough?” This could mean looking for only evolutionary, incremental improvements to what was possessed before, or even going “retro,” reopening lines of capable equipment that still serves—e.g., F-15s, F-16s, and F-18s forever. They are, after all, still the best aircraft in the world. In a way, the U.S. Navy made a crucial decision of that nature back in 1993, when it abandoned the stealthy, carbon-fiber A-12 or a derivative thereof and went with the F/A-18E/F, which has served very reliably in Iraq and Afghanistan, superior to any foreign strike fighter, and has a production line that can fill the gap until the F-35C is ready. It has also produced the EF-18G to replace the aging EA-6B jamming aircraft that have been flown by the Navy.

71. Health care for U.S. military personnel is funded under the “defense-wide” budget since the services always tended to underfund it.
and Marines in service to joint forces. The EF-18G has not made any news with development difficulties.

The fact is that opportunities for breakthroughs in military capabilities have really leveled off. Fifth-generation aircraft, like the F-22, which the Russians and Chinese are now trying to replicate, have capabilities that have no useful purpose in the more down-to-earth conflicts that seem likely to persist in the world, if there is even much of a possibility of those kinds of classical combats at all. There are dreams of missile defense, or space shoot-downs, or distant laser shots, or electric rail guns (requiring enormous electric power) that seem to offer no strategic decisiveness in the rather messy conflicts the U.S. might face—and, in any case, wouldn’t have rescued the disasters of U.S. action in Iraq and Afghanistan. Just about the only dire new system around the world would seem to be the Chinese anti-ship maneuverable ballistic missile it is now fielding. The missile threats from North Korea and Iran, which are in cahoots in their programs, are evolutions of the old Soviet Scuds. China and Iran have also long had shore- and ship-based anti-ship cruise missiles, for which defenses have long been evolving in the U.S. Navy. But the notion of some kind of great sea battle occurring where a lot of these weapons get fired is far-fetched.

No one in the U.S. defense establishment seems to talk these days about “the revolution in military affairs,” or “transformation”—concepts that were pretty vague in any case, though cyber warfare now counts as a revolution. On the other hand, in the major combat phase of OIF in 2003, the U.S. demonstrated remarkably better interconnectivity among its forces, especially given satellite connections, than what had been available for Desert Storm in 1991. Great technological improvement to the forces took place during the 1990s, despite a declining or flat defense budget during that decade. Precision-guided munitions also benefitted from this interconnectivity. But those transformations did not help much with the hard-grinding work of countering IEDs during the insurgencies in Iraq and Afghanistan, which have taken billions of dollars in development since 2003.

So the question remains as to whether the U.S. Services should really be reaching for the sky in new breakthroughs or should stick to incrementally improving their forces—especially if they do not want the size of those forces to drop precipitously because they have no timely replacements. As said above, it might mean “going retro,” i.e., continuing F-15 and F-16 lines, just as the Navy has continued its F/A-18 line—that is, if the U.S. really still needs more fighter-bombers. After all, it used to take four sorties to take out a single target; but, as demonstrated in OIF/MCP, one aircraft could take out four targets.

---

72. Recent reports have been of a North Korean knock-off (the Musudan) of the old Soviet SS-N-6, a single-stage missile with a possible range of 3000km, and now rumored to be sold to Iran. The SS-N-6 was the production missile for Soviet Yankee-class SSBNs. A retired CIA officer told me the SS-N-6 guidance system was the worst ever developed.

73. This author worked closely for a while with the late VADM Arthur Cebrowski, who got the job as the main advocate for “transformation” during Rumsfeld’s service as Secretary of Defense (though the “two Andys”—Marshall and Krepinevich—have a claim to its initiation). Cebrowski used to say, “Don’t try to define it, just do it.” I gathered from listening to him that he meant that the U.S. military (and civilians) must always be in an evolutionary mind-set about the capabilities of the forces, as opposed to expectations of “revolutions” in military affairs.
per sortie. But where is the U.S. going to do that kind of targeting in that kind of war again? More on that later—I am talking only about capabilities within the service institutions now.

The preceding discussion says that the U.S. Services, at home, are the essence of the U.S. defense establishment. They provide the basic capabilities—personnel, units, equipment, readiness (preparedness)—from which the Administration in office decides on their use (including keeping them in reserve for use it as yet un-envisioned scenarios). The next paragraphs talk about how they might relate to the world along the spectrum shown—again, always depending on current U.S. foreign policy.

The third set of U.S. forces’ capabilities-to-maintain covers the third and fourth items in the spectrum: “evolve capabilities for interoperability jointly and with allies,” and “keep flexible expeditionary capabilities”—though still in “the green” part of the spectrum.

Unless the U.S. were to retreat strongly to homeland defense, its armed forces will all remain expeditionary, especially as U.S. forces’ postures around the world are reduced after the U.S. leaves Afghanistan. All U.S. forces are expeditionary, i.e., for use overseas, unless specifically tied down in homeland defense. U.S. nuclear forces are all intercontinental. The capabilities for large-scale deployments were first demonstrated in World War I and then multiplied with a vengeance in World War II, continued for the Korean War, followed by the permanent overseas stationing of large numbers of force units in Europe, Japan, and South Korea, but not anywhere else. Massive forces were deployed to Vietnam and then later brought home.

After the Cold War ended, two-thirds of the forces in Europe were brought home, but the forces deployed in Northeast Asia, including ships homeported there, stayed about the same. Expeditionary deployments from the United States were made to Panama, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia, and Kosovo, while organizing U.S. Air Force Air Expeditionary Forces (AEFs) to deploy to Turkey and the Gulf region for maintaining the no-fly zones over Iraq. The U.S. Navy also participated in the southern no-fly zone from its carriers in the Gulf. Then of course came Afghanistan and Iraq. More deployments took place to Afghanistan as operations in Iraq wound down.

The point is that all U.S. forces are expeditionary, not just the U.S. Marine Corps. The U.S. has bought the sealift and airlift to move the forces across the oceans. It is organized for, and has deployed massive logistic efforts in support of, the deployed forces, whenever and wherever deployed. Air-refueling tankers (weaned away during the Cold War from sole support to SAC intercontinental bombers) have been critical to both deployment of Air Force combat aircraft and the support of both Air Force and Navy aircraft over combat zones. C-17s (C-141s before them) and C-130s carry both U.S. Army and U.S. Marine Corps personnel and equipment. Ninety percent of equipment goes by sea, as organized by the Navy’s Military Sealift Command.

74. The U.S. Air Force recently announced that it will extend the lives of its KC-10 tankers for another 30 years. And the decision was made in February 2011 for Boeing to build the new KC-46A (as variant of the civilian Boeing 767) to replace KC-135s.
The U.S. Navy continues to deploy its ships and submarines on a regular basis (with some homeporting in Japan and more to come at Rota in Spain, the Persian Gulf, and Singapore). That is especially the U.S. Navy’s way of maintaining its professionalism, readiness, and understanding of global sea environments (“I joined the Navy to see the world”) and is valuable to sustain if only for that reason.

Even if most U.S. forces come home after Afghanistan, by what is now tradition, the U.S. is likely to maintain these expeditionary capabilities, including the airlift and sealift, especially when their costs have been sunk and given that the equipment lasts a long time (e.g., as KC-135s have, though they are now finally to be replaced by the KC-46).

But the U.S. Services do not go out at their own discretion into the world. They are ordered out only by the President and Secretary of Defense, and they report to the regional Combat Commanders (COCOMs) for their overseas assignments. The COCOMs also don’t go to war unless directed to by the President and Secretary of Defense, but they sustain routine operations and arrange exercises with the forces of U.S. allies.

**Jointness**

If U.S. forces fight, they are going to fight jointly and often combined, that is, with allies as well. In the 1990s, we found that 66 percent of U.S. Navy responses to situations were joint and combined. Those operations in which the U.S. Navy participated jointly were the largest and most significant responses the U.S. had decided to undertake.

In the future, if U.S. forces are to be engaged in a major combat operation, it is going to be joint. U.S. forces are not likely to be committed piecemeal in some invasion of another country—they never have been. This has long meant they have to be coordinated among each other under joint command.

In this paper, the emphasis for the future of U.S. forces has been on the preservation and modernization of the legacy forces of the four Services and the Special Operations Forces. That is because the current (2013) dire economic and Federal budgetary situations in the United States are likely to last for several years beyond 2013. The professional integrity of U.S. forces is very much at stake as the defense budget is straitened.

The Combat Commanders, especially the regional ones, have the responsibility for the coordinated battle plans. They have had this responsibility since 1958, and then it was reinforced in the Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986. U.S. forces during the Cold War had to be jointly coordinated, especially under the nuclear umbrella—for which the targeting of the Air Force strategic bombers and missiles and the Navy’s SLBMs were combined by 1960 in the JSTPS (Joint Strategic Target Planning Staff) under CINCSAC in Omaha. Also during the Cold War, while U.S. forces stationed overseas were, on one hand, concentrated in Europe and South Korea, on the other hand there was a sense that, since the Soviet Union had a global reach and we thought that any war with it would be global,
U.S. forces and commands had to be scattered around the world, to the point that the Services could sometimes plan and exercise as if each had its own counter-Soviet strategy e.g., the U.S. Navy’s Maritime Strategy of the mid-1980s.

With the end of the Cold War and the disappearance of global Soviet forces, U.S. joint forces found that they were all piled into one spot for Desert Storm, and, although the operation was a grand success, driving the Iraqis out of Kuwait, there were coordination and deconfliction problems. The Navy in particular had difficulty contributing to the air operations. Thus, a strong theme for U.S. Navy improvements in the 1990s became “joint, littoral, enabling,” as enunciated by Vice Admiral Leighton Smith, their planner soon after the end of the Cold War. The improvement to that end paid off handsomely in the Navy’s participation in the next major combat operation that “piled into one spot”—the major combat phase of Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003.

Thus, this need for the Services to be able to communicate with each other and to receive orders from the higher commands is now well-established within the overall American military culture. The Services are dependent on common communications nets. This situation improved greatly over the 1990s. They also have to figure out how to communicate in a classified manner with allies if coordinated operations with other NATO members and with the Japanese and South Koreans were to be most effective. We call this “interoperability.” Further refinements in interoperability, for much more diverse participation (including Russia and China) were developed for the operations against Somali pirates in the Indian Ocean. For effective combined operations in any wars in the future, these capabilities would need to be maintained and expanded—especially in the coming era of possible cyber warfare as part of a real war.

At present, joint and combined operations are essentially taking place in Afghanistan. Later, I address the new Air-Sea Battle (ASB) concept against anti-access/area denial (A2/AD). It is advertised as a uniquely joint Navy-Air Force cooperation, though the Army and Marines are seeking a role in it.

**Two possible evolutionary tracks for U.S Forces**

As noted on the left side of the chart below, U.S. legacy forces have evolved since World War II. In their evolutions, they had to fit with (1) the evolution of the U.S. economic, social, and political system, and (2) that of the evolving world. That evolving world is not just a matter of war, conflict, trouble, etc., but also to prevent wars through deterrence and cooperation. We can depict the future in the two extremes shown below: (1) all going pretty good in the world, and (2) all going to hell in the world. It leans to “pretty good” by 2013—except for the lingering wars in Afghanistan and Syria and the continuing pockets of al Qaeda terrorists. There are also the problems of economic stagnation in the U.S., Europe, and Japan.

---

75. “Deconfliction” entailed command efforts to make sure U.S. combat aircraft did not collide with each other during their missions, and especially to avoid fratricide.
Extreme 1: The U.S. in its military posture and utilization stands back from the world and goes back to abstract (hypothetical) enemies and scenarios, applying high technology in the evolution of its forces’ equipment. The forces would be mostly back in the U.S., prepared for expeditionary deployment, working on technological improvements in the interim.

The classic balance (in budget distribution) among the Services would be maintained, since that is how they evolved from World War II and during the Cold War and especially if there is no readily apparent strategic reason to change that balance. The historical value of each of the Services counts for something—their institutionalization represents history and lore, carried on by successive generations of leading officers. The foreign policy pursued by U.S. Administrations would be mostly on economic matters with the U.S. military ready in reserve—though also maintaining relations and conducting exercises with its old allies as may be practical, which is a major contribution to U.S. relations with other countries, though only one part of those relations (most are economic).

Extreme 2: U.S. forces would be actively engaged in support of a very active U.S. foreign policy around the world that is meant to help the poorer nations establish and maintain connections to the global economy, helping them to suppress conflicts and to
ameliorate the conditions that may lead to conflicts. This means that U.S. forces would be active in COIN and nation-building—though, as repeated throughout this paper, it is highly doubtful that the U.S. will be undertaking quasi-colonial occupations, i.e., nation-building, given its experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan, for perhaps as long as another generation—see the 30 years that passed between U.S. forces leaving Vietnam in 1973 and the invasion of Iraq in March 2003.

In the Extreme 2 model, the balance among the services might be shifted toward more ground forces, but with all services contributing as much as possible to COIN, including to constabulary, humanitarian, and nation-building roles, leaving their highly technical equipment behind.

The two sets in the spectrum at the beginning of this section of what U.S. forces are likely to sustain and improve have to do with: (1) evolving and practicing COIN capabilities; and (2) continuing to evolve high-tech capabilities and connections among the services and the joint community and with allies, too.

Another way of portraying the extremes for U.S. forces is shown in the following chart, that covers the two tracks U.S. forces might follow in the future—depending heavily, of course, on the choices of the Administration-in-Office.
As the two tracks are portrayed, Track I at the bottom is the traditional post-World War II and post-Cold War track that U.S. forces tend to follow. But track II at the top has been the absorption since 9/11 and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, with the emphases on COIN and the smaller-scale and scattered pursuits of Al Qaeda terrorists and their associates wherever they may be.

For budgeting and the evolution of U.S. forces, the chart notes the huge gaps between the top functions and the bottom functions.

- First, there’s been a huge gap between having a great proportion of U.S. forces occupying another country (including 3x rotations—one third preparing to deploy, one-third in the country, one-third back home recovering) or supporting those occupations vs. being back home in the U.S., maintaining readiness for anything that comes up.

- Second, there’s the gap between being continuously active around the world (which implies lots of numbers of force units) vs. improving the forces technologically back home (which implies pouring more money into research and development and acquisition, at the expense of maintaining lots of manpower out in the world).

- Third, there’s a huge gap between pursuing the global war on al Qaeda terrorists and their associates, including some new invasion of a harboring country (with their emphases on ground forces) vs. planning on a great war, that is, a Major Combat Operation like Desert Storm (with its emphasis on high-tech, joint forces, all piling into one spot).

- The usual tendency in U.S. force planning is show on the cart as “mixed priorities, as in the 1990s.” That is, for U.S. forces (and for their Administration masters), not knowing which of any of these emphases to prioritize, nor knowing what might pop up in the future, there would be a tendency to keeping supporting a little bit of everything, especially in straitened budgets.

In the 1990s, roughly the same proportions of ground forces, naval forces, and air forces were maintained and improved (within rather flat budgets), technological improvements were pursued, contacts were sustained with allies, and these routines were punctuated by the occasional major operation—Panama in December 1989 (the Cold War had ended on November 8, 1989), Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia, Kosovo, several quick strikes on Iraq plus the maintenance of the no-fly zones over Iraq. There was growing talk in the Defense Department across the later 1990s, and up to the time of the invasion of Iraq, in 2003, about the “revolution in military affairs” and its related “transformation,” to prepare for future unknown enemies and scenarios. This talk was essentially a standing-back from the world in pursuit of a technological future. Then the decisions to invade Iraq and Afghanistan intervened and futuristic thinking faded into the background, to be pursued on the margin.

After Afghanistan and Iraq, the U.S. will not want to engage in another one of these horrible insurgency situations for another generation, just as happened after Vietnam, when the emphasis in DOD swung back to the great confrontation with Soviet forces, especially in Europe. But this time, there may be a determination within the Services,
especially within the Army, not to lose the lessons learned from the COIN experiences of Iraq and Afghanistan. Those lessons may well be institutionalized, at least in U.S. ground forces, in order to be prepared in case some future Administration wants to do such operations again, however inadvisable it may seem to be when the country has been exhausted by the Iraq and Afghanistan experiences. This determination is reflected in the chart above within the category of “mixed priorities.” Although the U.S. is going to be reluctant to get into another Afghanistan for a long time, experience is what feeds the educational and training curricula in U.S. armed forces, so that, just with other capabilities, the forces are ready and capable when the nation calls.

However, one lesson from experience may be dominant. It makes a huge and perhaps total difference for any U.S. decision to intervene in a country ONLY if a real, workable local government exists there. The opposite—a complete lack of a functioning government and political system—was what doomed the U.S. to long and frustrating experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan. In short, the major rule is, “Don’t embark on any such assistance to a country unless there is a legitimate and workable government that the U.S. can support.”

In any case, low-tech and flexible capabilities would be available to carry out lesser missions than a full-out counterinsurgency, including disaster and other humanitarian relief efforts—if that’s what an Administration wants U.S. forces to do.

On the other hand, perhaps American preferences in the post-World War II, Cold War, and post-Cold War era are to take advantage of America’s skill in incorporating high-technology weapons and electronic connectivity in joint surge forces—highly mobile, able to bring General Powell’s overwhelming surge force to bear on a classic enemy. Of course, there was also an implication in the Powell/Weinberger doctrine that such wars would or should be short, which proved to be false in the cases of Iraq and Afghanistan.

My prediction would be that the U.S. will end up with a mix of both conventional war-fighting capabilities and COIN. COIN will probably be institutionalized in Professional Military Education (PME) since so much learning material has been generated from Iraq and Afghanistan, but it is hard to exercise it in the field. Thus COIN may be left mostly to Special Forces.

On the other hand, the U.S. may no longer have a classic enemy to oppose, so it may be hard to envisage a great war requiring big, technologically sophisticated joint surge forces. At the same time, such forces may be easier to train and exercise than COIN forces.

Which brings us to the last item in the spectrum chart at the beginning of this section, the complete war-fighting package—bundling all the services and their ranges of capabilities into a consolidated package representing the totality of U.S. military strength between homeland defense on one end and nuclear weapons on the other. In a way, that was the force assembled for Desert Storm in 1991 and the smaller version for OIF-major combat phase in 2003. It would be joint and connected. Some might also want to compare the gross numbers of all these capabilities—personnel, ships, aircraft, tanks, etc.—to those of
other countries in the world. But the numbers are really irrelevant. It is really the capabilities that count. That is, the spectrum, as laid out, provides for a range of ways to support foreign policy, including being as ready as possible. Nevertheless—as is discussed shortly—the chances for big wars even “after the smoke clears from Afghanistan” are actually very low, and we Americans can take a new look at what’s going on in the rest of the world, as reflected in the Obama Administration’s strategy of January 2012.

Any prior attempts at force-sizing never drove the budget; force size is merely an end-product in the evolutions of the forces.

In the likely constrained budget situation, with a deeply stagnant U.S. economy likely to persist for many years to come, especially given political paralysis, the questions of force “size” will arise—that is, the number of units the Services can maintain and configure that add up to the total force the U.S. owns and evolves. The answer to what force “size” the U.S. can maintain is simple: whatever will fit the budget while maintaining the readiness (preparedness) and expeditionary character (aflight, sealift, and the global and satellite connectivity) that would enable U.S. forces to go wherever an Administration may send them—or to stay at home to defend America if necessary. Moreover, the U.S. has always emphasized quality over sheer numbers of ships, tanks, aircraft, or numbers of battalions. It is fighting quality, not sheer mass, that the U.S. likes.76

For instance, when Secretary of Defense Cheney and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Powell constructed the Base Force back in 1990, they had reduced the size of the force overall by one-third. They put those reductions on a glidepath so as to protect the contracts the country had with its AVF personnel. The bottom in the reductions was reached around 1997. In the 1990s, the Services adjusted accordingly and focused on keeping the best-quality forces, especially in their readiness, but with incremental improvements to capabilities. And yet these “enhanced capabilities” (along with all the enhancing auxiliary enabling capabilities like communications, satellites, and reconnaissance that had been reaching technological maturity during this time) represented merely incremental changes to previously known system-inherent capabilities, since the numbers of combat units otherwise meant nothing in the abstract, i.e., if not taking into account their equipment capabilities and the infrastructure to support their readiness, not to speak of the quality of people U.S. society generates through its families and education systems.

Whatever the case, as noted earlier, there are no force-size calculations that drive the top line of the budget since that top line is determined outside the Department of Defense. The exception would be the full mobilization of the U.S. in the event of the equivalent of

76. By the way, those people in DOD who work up scenarios, ostensibly to “test” the forces planned, tend to multiply scenarios instead of examining the intensity of the few war situations in which the U.S. might engage its forces. In multiplying scenarios (e.g., 80+ JCS “vignettes”), they have missed the depth of actual situations—as the U.S. has found out at great cost in Iraq and Afghanistan.
World War II, where debt would not count anymore, especially if the war is considered to be of not infinite duration (which wars involving insurgences otherwise threaten to be).

Upon new Administrations taking office, there are some historic exceptions where they raised the top line of the defense budget left by the previous Administration, but, in those cases, the new Administration did not do so on the basis of some calculation of force size. Rather, the new Administration’s mandate seems to have been just to dump more money into the defense budget, not specifying the size of the forces to be bought. The Services still have to do the fit—and, for example, the first thing they did when they got an extra $35 billion from the incoming Reagan Administration in 1981 was to “get well,” i.e., restore their readiness, before gradually increasing force size at the new higher level of the defense budget.

Another abstract sizing idea that has not proved useful is through multiplication of simultaneous scenarios—the most notable example being the concept of Two Major Regional Combat operations (MRCs) in the Bottom-Up Review (BUR) of 1993. The BUR forces claimed to be derived from “analysis.” Data run through old Cold War models at RAND proved to be unaffordable within the budget assigned by the Clinton Administration, so significant manipulation took place in order to fit the forces into the budget. For instance, an arbitrary number of 346 ships turned out to be 300 affordable, and even that figure was not sustainable as the Navy moved to more expensive ships. In one respect, the drive for enhanced capabilities per unit overrode the number of ships that were supposedly the base. A major point is that anybody can pick numbers, for both the enemy’s capabilities and the forces the U.S. might need for the scenario. It certainly is not high-level officials picking such numbers. In the end, nobody knows where the numbers came from.

These facts of life will also disappoint those who want to do force-sizing based somehow on matching large comprehensive forces of some putative enemy. But China is really the only imaginable case today, though the Japanese did not do very well with a million-man army trying to take over all of China from 1937 on.

As noted earlier, improvement in capabilities are to legacy forces, with the occasional addition of something like UAVs (which have required their own global system connections to be useful). The Department of Defense programming process does not begin with zero-based forces—it does not begin with some kind of clean slate at some point in time, like the present—but is really simply some incremental extension and revision of legacy forces. The main driver of change in capabilities occurs when replacement of systems becomes necessary as the older systems use up their service lives. Such planning often begins as long as ten years or more before the replacements can be available.

77. For an example of a zero-based approach—however conscientiously done—see Clark A. Murdock, Interim Report—Planning for a Deep Defense Drawdown—Part I (Washington, DC: CSIS, May 24, 2012.) The difficulties of planning for the year 2024, for example, are evident: what is the state of the U.S. economy and society then, what is the state of the world—economy, threats, wars, energy supplies and climate change, etc.—then, what has happened to all these factors between now and then?
In recent history—and putting aside for the moment what the U.S. had thrown into the Iraq and Afghan wars (since for these operations, there has been a lot of the Services’ having to make things up as they went)—in the incremental changes the Services have been making to the forces within the budget top lines, the spectrum of capabilities in U.S. forces has been very wide and represents the best forces in the world, still of considerable size as compared to all the other countries’ military forces in the world (except perhaps the rabbles of insurgencies or of the Iranian IRGC). They are also now battle-hardened unlike any other forces in the world, again except for those insurgents in Afghanistan (the IRGC not having had any combat experience since the 1980-1988 war with Iraq).

However, given the combination of budget limitations and trying to keep a broad range of capabilities, U.S. forces will seem to end up having a little bit of everything, but maybe not what seems to its owners to be a huge force. This will lead to endless wringing of hands and fears of risks throughout the defense establishment.78

**So what does the U.S. need a huge force for?** Some possibilities are discussed in the next section, which addresses concrete situations in the world. However, in the first place, most of the war-fighting situations that have come up since the end of the Cold War and the subsequent reduction by one-third of overall U.S. forces in the 1990s could still be handled by the residual U.S. forces that would remain after Afghanistan. The added ground forces personnel—100,000—are going to be disbanded once U.S. forces are all removed from Afghanistan, but even the U.S. Navy and U.S. Air Force are likely to continue to shrink because of the bolluxed-up acquisitions of new ships and aircraft in the search for greater and more exotic capabilities.79

Of course, at the moment, operations in Afghanistan (and Iraq before that) have badly strained the expanded U.S. ground forces, given the prolonged number of rotations they have been through and the casualties they have suffered, not to speak of the enormous costs. These ground forces are going to take a long time to recover. The enormously long global logistic system supporting them has also come at great cost, including what must be a considerable gobbling up of the service lives of C-17s, C-130s, and other vehicles. And those ground forces could be further reduced in total personnel upon their return (maybe even below the post-Cold War numbers), given the sequester, the huge Federal debt and an American economy that is going to be stagnant for years to come, not to speak of the paralyzed U.S. political system.

Aside from Afghanistan, from which most U.S. forces will be out by the end of 2014, and unless the Obama Administration were to decide to continue the fight until complete victory over the Taliban, the next huge such ground forces efforts to be contemplated—and backed away from, if there is any sense left in American government decision-

78. It reminds me of what Soviet Prime Minister Kosygin once said to his staff when they brought him an unworkable proposal (to deny pay raises to anyone with an advanced degree): Kosygin said, “Do you know what it’s like to shear pigs? You get an awful lot of squealing, and very little wool.” One can expect the same in the future within DOD and in commentary from the defense “expert” community outside.

79. The U.S. Army had its program for a Future Combat Systems (FCS) disrupted by the two wars, and even the FCS components had development problems to boot, but it was not clear for what world and what battles the FCS program might be needed.
makers—could be hypothetically Yemen and Somalia, or even Syria. It is unlikely that the U.S. would attempt such occupations with the initially minimal forces the Bush 43 Administration provided for Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq in 2003. One would think each or either situation would require at least 400,000 U.S. troops on the ground—and then for 10 to 20 years. That’s ridiculous—how vital would it be to preserve the national security of the United States by deploying such massive occupations in places of no threat to us?

That leaves The Great War With China, the new Peer Competitor, which is the new awesome Soviet Union—whatever did become of the Soviet Union?—as discussed in the following pages on “future disruptions.”
XI. What Enemies and Conflicts Might the U.S. Encounter in the Coming Years?

....Other than rather abstract security problems....and those problems that are better handled by means of U.S. foreign policy other than direct kinetic action by the U.S. military?

A reminder: The world is mostly at peace

The conflict situation in the world is not really getting worse, despite dire fears extending from “weak and failing states” (usually unspecified, unless specifically Somalia, Yemen, and now Mali) to “rising China” as the new equivalent to the former Soviet Union’s former supposed military juggernaut. The U.S. removed its forces from Iraq at the end of 2011 in accordance with the SOFA (Status of Forces) agreement President Bush signed with Iraqi Prime Minister Maliki in 2008. However, the situation in Afghanistan is essentially a quagmire, including spill-over into Pakistan. Pakistan’s own terror and political situations have become very messy.

The residual al Qaeda terrorist threat from Afghanistan is mostly in the Pakistani tribal areas and very dispersed to Yemen, Somalia, and the Trans-Sahel and among single radicalized Muslims in Europe and the United States. Al Qaeda terrorism is wraith-like, scattered about some of the most desolate places in the world. The incidents they have mounted have been few and scattered, whatever their aspirations may have been, though they may have come close in 2013 to taking over a state in the case of Mali—until France intervened and drove them back into the desert. This scatter has come about in large part because the U.S. drove them out of Afghanistan, killed many of their leaders in Pakistan and Yemen, and finally killed Osama bin Laden. The most immediate national security threat to the U.S., aside from individual terrorists, may be the drug war next door in Mexico.

Two-state wars have practically disappeared. The possible two-state wars the United States worries about—North Korea invading South Korea, China attacking Taiwan, Israel fighting Arab states—have been only potential, i.e., deterred, contained, restrained, for decades, though recent incidents remind us that they are still confrontations. The confrontation of the U.S. and most of the rest of the world with Iran over its nuclear program and its threats to try to close the Strait of Hormuz has seemed lately to bring the U.S. and Iran to the edge of war, especially with Israel threatening to provoke it. The U.S. itself seems ever more reluctant to bomb Iranian nuclear production facilities. Sanctions may well be working, but the Obama Administration maintains the military option as a last resort. China threatens incidents in its adjacent seas, but as yet has not shot at anybody.

The last three “two-state wars”— Israeli-Hezbollah for 34 days in August 2006, and Georgia-Russia for five days in August 2008, and now Israel-Hamas for two weeks in November 2012—are rather pathetic reminders of the grand tradition of classic wars.
Hezbollah has said it was a mistake to provoke the Israelis (despite the rest of the world saying Israel suffered a strategic defeat, as they are saying with regard to the battle with the Gaza Hamas in 2012). Egypt forged a truce between Israel and Hamas, but their rockets vs. air strikes exchanged have assumed a periodicity of their own.

The Georgia-South Ossetia (and Abkhazia) confrontation had been brewing for 19 years before 2008, but the world and, especially, the United States, hardly noticed. Most of the world now says Saakashvili made a mistake in attacking South Ossetia, while Russia suffered both from the bad performance of its forces, which finally stimulated its long-delayed military reform. Russia also suffered economic losses upon capital flight and the reluctance of foreign entrepreneurs to invest in Russia after the war. Then-President Sarkozy of France negotiated a quick end to the war in five days.

The number of internal conflicts is way down, especially as the insurgency in Sri Lanka is now over. Within Africa, Somalia, Eastern Congo, and the Niger Delta have the worst continuing conflicts; a civil war in Cote d’Ivoire has been peacefully concluded. But recently there’s been the rise of al Qaeda-affiliated Boko Haram in Northern Nigeria and a confrontation in Mali between the disorganized Malian army and the Islamist Ansar Dine and other Islamist groups claiming their adherence to al Qaeda, which took over Timbuktu and other northern Mali towns. South Sudan peacefully separated from Sudan, but war over oil wells on the disputed border seems always at the brink. Somalia is pure chaos, though al-Shabab seems to be weakening and has lost Mogadishu and Kismayo, and pirate operations out of Puntland into the Indian Ocean may be drying up.

There has been the Arab awakening, with demonstrations in Tunisia and Egypt leading to regime change. Chaos has characterized Yemen, with advances therein by al Qaeda, but the removal of President Ali Abdullah Saleh and his interim replacement by Hadi seems to have revitalized the Yemeni army and, with the aid of U.S. Special Forces’ intelligence and communication and some Predator strikes, it has pushed back al Qaeda. In the meantime, there was the revolution in Libya, a civil war, the end of Qaddafi, and for now a successful election of moderates. That leaves the disintegration of Syria, which has generated at least 70,000 killed by April 2013 and 3,000,000 refugees, both within Syria and in neighboring countries. The situation in mid-2013 seems to be one of total chaos, with neither side gaining control and radical Islamist groups becoming the strongest the rebels. There have been only border incidents with neighbors spoiling over from Syria. Iran and Hezbollah are bolstering Assad’s forces.

A major point about most of the internal conflicts is that few have any strategic significance, i.e., most are very local, maybe with a little spillover to adjacent countries. They present sad humanitarian situations, but not threats to U.S. national security or to the functioning of the global economy.

Some in the U.S. say that Russia is “resurging” through assertive foreign policies and in its military reform. This is nonsense; the Russians do not use such a term themselves, and their military reforms are leading to greatly reduced forces and a territorial defensive posture.
In any case, within DOD, in its QDR and other documents, North Korea, China, Iran, Hezbollah (e.g., waging “hybrid asymmetric warfare”) and the al Qaeda terrorists and some constellation of “weak and failing states” are identified as threats for U.S. forces to plan against, though it is not clear that U.S. Administrations may want to get deeply involved in those “weak and failing states” for some time to come.

Despite the worldwide economic recession, economic troubles (including growth, food, oil) around the world are not yet generating any war-like conflict, with the possible exception of the situation between Sudan and South Sudan. Little is heard from Darfur these days.

The U.S. and European countries’ defense budgets have been severely straitened, essentially since the end of the Cold War, and now by the Great Recession. China seems to be the exception, with a rising defense budget and lots of new equipment. China is building what may look like sophisticated systems, but whether it has the maintenance culture to go with them remains to be seen. It is also streamlining (i.e., reducing) its gross numbers of force units in the process as it moves from the peasant army for internal defense to more Western-style conventional forces. The strategic reasons for China’s defense budget growth are debatable, but one principal factor is that China has a growing economy that can support more defense spending along with other expansion programs, including massive investments in infrastructure. Other major nations, if they are lacking strong economic growth, have no compelling need to divert resources to defense from other needs, especially when their economies are in recession and there are no external threats.

All that follows assumes the U.S. is able to remove most of its forces from Afghanistan by the end of 2014, leaving only “trainers and assisters” behind, unless the Afghan government refuses to give them immunity as Iraq did, in which case they will all come home.

**Challenges to the security of the United States are finite.**

Discussions in various U.S. defense fora cover only seven threat areas:
1. Al Qaeda and its associates (per the Administration characterization; all other terrorists are local; the U.S. is not in pursuit of all “radical Islamist extremists”)
2. Mexico and the drug war
3. North Korea
4. China
5. Iran
6. Hezbollah
7. Weak and failing states.

The Defense Department discusses three other threat areas, but they are not really threats:
1. “The Commons” (except for cyberspace)
2. “Uncertainty and complexity”.
3. Russia—which is simply not “resurging,” in particular in its military.
Al Qaeda terror

Al Qaeda terror is the greatest threat to the United States itself, given its determination to hit the U.S. again. The Obama Administration in its NSS has identified global terror as that represented by al Qaeda and its associates, rather than some broad and vague term like “Islamic jihadist extremism.” Their base had been in Afghanistan and moved to Pakistan upon the U.S. response in Afghanistan after 9/11, but its prime cadres may be in Yemen (AQAP, or al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula) and now northern Mali and southern Algeria (AQIM, or al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb). The U.S. has been attacking al Qaeda and Taliban leadership in Pakistan, and AQAP and al Shabab in Somalia with Predators. It is stationing drones in Niger for operations in the Sahel.

Osama bin Laden was killed in April 2012, and Al Qaeda now has essentially no center, no central direction, and its adherents are greatly dispersed. Zawahiri, successor to Osama bin Laden, is in isolation somewhere in Pakistan. If there’s any center, it could be al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) in Yemen, where al Qaeda types from Saudi Arabia have set up camp. This dispersal also means it has difficulties in assembling explosives as weapons and exposes it to local authorities who may discover its plots. Wherever it is, it is being relentlessly pursued by intelligence agencies, police, and other security institutions.

The number of international terror incidents is way down, especially with regard to the U.S.—though the Fort Hood, Texas, massacre was shocking and should have been prevented, and on April 15, 2013, two radicalized Muslims attacked the Marathon in Boston. Financing has been very difficult for the terrorists, e.g., the Madrid bombers had to engage in the drug trade. There have been no repeats of the London and Madrid commuter attacks—except in Russia (but that’s Chechens and other Caucasians, not al Qaeda). As Steve Coll has noted, Osama bin Laden and Zawahiri have lost their political and military battles and have control of only their narrative left. That is, they have their internet connections and get a lot of publicity.

Now the second bombing incident within the United States, in Boston on April 15, 2013, essentially revealed that al Qaeda’s influence had devolved onto isolated, disaffected individuals getting their motivations from the internet and at least one relative (their mother). This is entirely different from the global network that al Qaeda had set in train. It becomes a particular domestic problem rather than part of a global strategy for the U.S.

Otherwise, around the world, is some al Qaeda attack able to disrupt economies and world trade? The answer is no. And terrorists do not go to sea, except for transits between islands in the Philippines and the curious incident of the attack on a Japanese supertanker in the Strait of Hormuz, in which the tanker was dented.

80. In this connection, in early August 2012, the al Qaeda bomb-maker in Yemen, al Masri, was reportedly killed by a drone attack. He had prepared the underwear bomb for the Christmas bomber in 2010, and a new version of PETN he had designed was spirited away by a Saudi plant in 2012.

So al Qaeda has been thinly spread from the Sulu Archipelago in the Philippines to AQIM in the Sahel in Africa. Some individual terrorists are found in Europe. A number of al Qaeda aspirants have been discovered and tried in the U.S., and we worry about some naturalized Americans, like Somalis in Minneapolis, who go to join al Shabab, which has sworn allegiance to al Qaeda, for training in the hope they can sneak back into the U.S. and carry out an attack. But al Shabab is suffering setbacks in Somali—it has been cleared, at least for the moment, from Mogadishu and Kismayo—though two years ago it did conduct attacks in Uganda because Ugandan troops have been in Somalia as peacekeepers under UN auspices.

Al Qaeda terror aspirants are deterred from entering the U.S., especially because of controls on those who board aircraft bound for the U.S. and within the U.S. itself, though the Christmas day bomber almost brought down the plane headed for Detroit in 2010. They are also hounded by police, intelligence, and financial officials in the advanced countries and in Egypt and Saudi Arabia, among other places. They seem to have become much more active in Iraq in 2012, attacking Shi’ites. There is a evidence, though, in 2013, that some al Qaeda have made their way from Iraq to Syria to take advantage of the chaos there. And it is said that some Libyans who had once been in Afghanistan are making their way down to Mali to join Ansar Dine and the other groups associated with AQIM.

For the U.S., deterring, finding, and eliminating terrorists is, at one extreme, homeland defense. The basic instrument for this is actually controlling entrance to the U.S., particularly by air. There seems to be no great concern with terrorists crossing the Mexican and Canadian borders, nor their arrival from the sea like boat people from Haiti and China used to try to do. A particular concern is American citizens of Yemeni, Somali, or other country origins who have American passports and who go to those countries or Pakistan for terror training in the hopes they can return to the U.S. and conduct attacks. However, like for the Pakistani Times Square bomber, it was not easy for them to find explosive material and construct effective explosive devices.

Altogether, it was remarkable that no serious terror incident has occurred in the U.S. since 9/11, except for Major Hasan’s massacre at Fort Hood, Texas on November 5, 2009, the Times Square aborted bombing by a Pakistani on May 1, 2010, the Portland Oregon bomber of Somali origin trapped on November 26, 2010, and Abdulmutallab the underwear bomber on the Delta airliner on Christmas Day 2011. Now the second actually realized bombing incident, in Boston, essentially revealed that al Qaeda’s influence had devolved on isolated, disaffected individuals getting their motivations from the internet and at least one relative (their mother). This is entirely different from the global network that al Qaeda had set in train. It becomes a particular domestic problem rather than part of a global strategy for the U.S.

Although these persons were in both virtual and physical contact with al Qaeda sources, they were essentially lone operators. The British and others keep breaking up plots, and, otherwise, incidents in Europe have practically disappeared. But it takes continuing
vigilance and cooperation among all authorities, at home and internationally, to keep track of suspected individuals.\(^\text{82}\)

The primary focus on al Qaeda terrorism for the U.S. abroad is now in the tribal areas in Pakistan and Yemen. There are no U.S. troops in those areas, except occasionally some Special Forces trainers, but there has been much CIA drone activity to kill terrorists. Aside from the U.S. fighting in Afghanistan in order to prevent the reappearance of a significant number of al Qaeda there, the campaign against al Qaeda has taken minimal U.S. military forces elsewhere. There is the occasional Special Forces raid. There are the drone strikes, which take an extensive intelligence and control network all the way back to the “pilots” in Nevada or Syracuse who actually fly them.

The U.S. has 600 advisors and trainers in the Southern Philippines to help the Filipinos hunt down the remaining estimated 400 Abu Sayyaf terrorists there and Special Forces trainers in Yemen and the Sahel to train the locals to go after al Qaeda—though that effort has failed to prevent Malian rebels who swear allegiance to al Qaeda and have set about imposing Taliban-like strict “Sharia” justice on locals in north Mali. There was one Special Forces quick raid into Somalia to capture one of the 1998 embassy bombers and the several retaliations into Yemen after the Christmas Day bomber incident, including the killing of Awlaki and later the killing of bomb-maker al Masri. There may be others that have not been publicized.

Altogether, though, the pursuit of al Qaeda is not a U.S. military force-builder except for some additions to Special Forces. It has generated lots of other U.S. Government employees, as in the National Counter-Terrorism Center (NCTC), TSA (Transportation Security Administration), and within the rest of the intelligence community.

The larger problem at the root of terrorism for the U.S. (and really most of the rest of the world) is the long-term trajectory of the Arab world—to which may be added Iran, Pakistan, and Afghanistan—in terms of their stability, evolution of their economies so as to create jobs, and evolution of their ossified, military-dominated, governing and political systems. At the end of 2012, “the revolution of the Arab people”—beginning in Tunisia, and spreading to Egypt, Bahrain, Yemen, and then to civil wars in Libya and Syria, with demonstrations as well in Algeria, Morocco, Iran, and Oman—has not had only a restrained Islamic cast, that is, they do not seem to have opened opportunities for al Qaeda (though they lurk in the depths of Yemen and may be growing in Syria). The monarchies in Jordan and Saudi Arabia are nervous about all this, but their countries remain calm. The stability of Iraq, too, remains settled—but it seems to be a Shia-dominated country and Sunni suicide bombings and attacks on Shi’ites continue there.

Incidentally, Iran is labeled by some as “that state most supportive of terrorism in the world” (sic). It certainly has fostered revolutions in Sudan and Bahrain in the past, though totally unsuccessfully; provided material support to Hezbollah and Hamas against Israel; supported the Sadrists in Iraq; and currently (end-2012) trying desperately to

sustain Assad’s rule in Syria. But in the classic dispatch of terrorist bombers that we associate with contemporary terrorism, it does not seem to be doing much at all.  

A part of al Qaeda’s reasons to destroy America is U.S. support to Israel. The U.S. pressure for reconciliation between Israel and the Palestinians—the “two-state solution”—is a necessary component of the war on al Qaeda terror, even if it is not sufficient for U.S. relations with the Islamic world. Again, this is a diplomatic task for the Administration, not for U.S. forces—though the U.S. military has assisted in the training of the militia in the West Bank. But, in 2013, the whole subject seems to have been in limbo, but it is a constant irritation to civilization as we have known it. However, it may well be that the Obama Administration has a new opportunity to press Israel for peace with the Palestinians, given the frightening events in Syria.

Mexico

Mexico’s drug war is a huge threat to the U.S. as it spills across the border. More than that, it threatens the existence of the Mexican state itself as police and military are assassinated and officials are bought off by the traffickers. This is not yet a force-determinant for U.S. forces, though it could become one if more and more National Guard and Reserve troops were needed for border patrols. One could even imagine a situation that required regular active troops being deployed there.

Seven thousand gun stores in the United States may be the main supplier of arms and ammunition to the Mexican drug traffickers. But the U.S. is unlikely to stop that, since nothing is more sacred in the U.S. than the protection of gun rights under the Second Amendment. Oddly enough, Mexico’s economy is growing strongly—as much as 7 percent a year. A lot of Mexicans are now able to adopt what Americans think of as a middle-class life style. The number of immigrants from Mexico to America has dropped off considerably, partly because of the U.S. recession and local of jobs, because of more effective border controls and possibly because of greater opportunities for employment in Mexico itself.

But the drug war goes on indefinitely because the market for the drugs is still robust in the United States.

North Korea

The next possible threat of war in which the U.S. might be engaged is North Korea attacking South Korea. No one ever relaxes about the possibility of its attacking South Korea out of the blue, and yet North Korea has passed up many opportunities to attack in

83. The Iranians have been suspected of attacks on Jewish centers in Buenos Aires in 1992 and 1994, but I have been told that there are some doubts as to whether it was the Iranians who carried out the attacks. They were also suspected of carrying out the bombing of the Khobar Towers apartments in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, in 1996, during which 18 U.S. Air Force people were killed, but the attack has never been officially declared an Iranian attack. There was also the weird case of the Iranian used-car salesman in Brownsville, Texas, who seemed to have been promised $1.5 million by an Iranian official to hire a Mexican drug gang to blow up the Saudi Ambassador at a restaurant in Washington back in 2011. He may have been some kind of self-promoter who tricked an official back in Iran into wiring him a $100,000 down payment.
the past 60 years while U.S. forces (and even South Korean forces deploying to Vietnam augment U.S. forces) have been distracted elsewhere. Moreover, North Korean forces continue to deteriorate, with aging equipment and malnourished soldiers.

What China, South Korea, Russia, Japan, and the U.S. may worry about more is sheer North Korean collapse, though China has the most at stake and would win any race to Pyongyang to settle any such collapse and take control. The North Korea that would emerge after collapse cannot possibly be as evil a dictatorship as under Kim Il Sung, Kim Jong Il, and the new monarch, Kim Jong Un, especially as China would be in firm control.

North Korea has been collapsing for decades. Its people are at least seven inches shorter and 14 pounds lighter than their South Korea counterparts, and they are malnourished and sick, which has to affect their cognition. Although North Korea hasn’t conducted a major attack for more than 60 years, there have been a few incidents, e.g., the sinking of the corvette *Cheonan*, which was the worst incident (killing 46 South Korean sailors), and then its attack on Yeongpyeong Island with 200 artillery rounds, killing four South Koreans. If it attacked south now, across the DMZ, with whatever artillery it has poised to fire at Seoul—a vast city of 14 million—the attack wouldn’t last more than a couple days before it runs out of food and fuel. Moreover, 40 percent of the ammunition it sold to Iraq “duded” in the 1991 war, and its current ammunition is probably comparably defective. North Korean provocations have been loud, its actions few. They do a lot of bluffing—though military planners keep their power dry and their readiness up.

The North Korean nuclear proliferation problem is discussed later in the section of this paper on proliferation overall. However, it has been estimated to have only 60 kilos of plutonium (by one estimate; the original estimate was 83 kilos). It does have at least 2,000 centrifuges enriching uranium, but it is unknown how much it might have accumulated. Although North Korea has conducted three nuclear tests as of mid-2013, using up some of its plutonium and possibly some highly-enriched uranium, its progress in weaponization, much less its miniaturization for mounting on a ballistic missile of limited payload, is not known. It tested a long-range ballistic missile in April 2012, but the flight lasted only a minute-and-a-half. In December 2012, it launched a satellite into orbit, demonstrating a long-range capability, but of uncertain range. It has been actively supporting Iran’s missile program, which is mostly based on the North Korea No Dong missile, an evolution of the Soviet Scud; so Iran may be effectively testing for them.

If the Pyongyang regime were to fall and chaos to prevail (which no one quite sees happening for some time because of the solid control by the regime), South Korea would be reluctant to move north because it would be reluctant to take on the economic burden of supporting the North Korean population, having watched West Germany try to absorb East Germany, a much more advanced and relatively smaller country. China would rush

84. The United States has long maintained a stockpile of ammunition in South Korea for rapid transfer to the South Korean army if war were to break out, but it has been meticulous about checking its quality periodically since such ammunition tends to deteriorate in storage. Whether North Korea does the same is not known.
in because it doesn’t want the North Koreans flowing into its country; it has enough North Koreans there already, and neither the U.S. nor South Korea would like to end up in a clash with China in the middle. China putting North Korea under its complete supervision would probably not be a bad thing—it would certainly end North Korea’s proliferation.

In any case, the United States is not going to invade North Korea, unless in a benign humanitarian effort upon North Korean government collapse, and then in close coordination with the South Koreans and Chinese (who would be able to get there much faster than the Americans). In a way, the U.S. is mostly concerned with those 60 kilograms of plutonium and the centrifuges, which would be awfully hard to find unless we had reliable information about their locations. Or, to put it another way, a U.S. military invasion for that sole purpose, without close coordination and cooperation with the Chinese, would be very dangerous.

China

One gets the impression that China is becoming the richest country in the world—at least it has the most walking-around money. It currently seems to have the most efficient government in the world—one that really runs the country. It is advancing its technology. It has been acquiring a modern navy, though building of new ships and submarines seems to have become mostly one-for-one replacement of older vessels. It has become the most strategically clever country in the world—everything seems carefully planned out. It has become “assertive,” especially in talking about controlling the seas and their islets to their east (within “the first island chain,” as they describe it). It threatens to attack Taiwan if it were to declare independence, though its existing amphibious ship force seems inadequate to the task. It is now beginning to deploy maneuvering anti-ship ballistic missiles (DF-21D), which, if effective and effectively targeted within a comprehensive ISR system (which is not yet clearly evident) would force the U.S. Navy to stay far away if China went to war to take over Taiwan or to war to assert what it thinks are its rights to rocks in its adjacent seas. It is a nuclear weapons power, though it seems to have been restrained in its build-up of ICBMs.

As for U.S. relations with China, the situation seems more confrontational than cooperative, as frictions have existed over China’s exchange rate (now moot), incidents in the South and East China Seas, the handling of obstreperous North Korea, and sanctions on Iran’s nuclear program. Attempts to set up military dialogues are constantly

---

85. By “walking-around money” I mean that the Chinese government has ready cash—dollars, in fact, gained from exports—that it has leached from its economy in order to keep inflation down. These dollars may be used to purchase U.S. Government bonds, finance projects in other countries, and even bribe foreign officials. The U.S. Government has no such walking-around money. Its foreign assistance funds are severely restricted in Congressional appropriations, and foreign aid expenditures in programs are severely controlled, i.e., not for bribing local officials—though this seems not to have been the case in Afghanistan. This situation has prevailed since U.S. foreign assistance shifted off Europe to the rest of the world back in the early 1960s. Notwithstanding, the U.S. has done extremely well over the past 50 years in building relations with many countries around the world, in part with the help of foreign aid on a shoestring.
being disrupted. The expansion of G-8 to G-20 puts China (and India) more in the grand picture of world economic and financial management, though G-20 is not a decision-making organization.

As for China’s constant threat to invade Taiwan upon its declaration of independence, this standoff has been going on for 60 years, with extremely few incidents. China and Taiwan have been converging in economic relations for at least the past 20 years, and the current financial and economic crisis in the rest of the world has not disrupted that, or at least not in such a way that China would be somehow more tempted to attack Taiwan.86

China is highly dependent on exports of consumer goods and now highly dependent on imports for 60 percent of its oil (and this percent will continue to grow), as well as other raw materials and tooling. It should be noted that Chinese industry adds only 15 to 35 percent of value to the products it exports.87 Attacking Taiwan could jeopardize both its exports and those critical imports. Those outside China who have become bored with the Taiwan scenario, but are worried about Chinese military modernization, are seeking to postulate a Chinese desire to “project military forces” consistent with what they say is a desire among the Chinese to be a “great power,” or to deploy naval forces to protect its mines in Africa or elsewhere. But this may be a matter of outsiders mirror-imaging the old colonial ventures of the West rather than simple mercantilism on the part of the Chinese.

By dint of diplomacy with China and U.S. support for Taiwan, a Chinese attack on Taiwan has been deterred for 50 years.88 The U.S. persists in its diplomacy with China, especially on the economic side—it negotiated China’s entrance into the WTO and led the expansion of G-7 (8) to the G-20, to include both China and India. The U.S. has been less successful in establishing military-to-military relations. Work to persuade China to play fair in the world economy continues, including on global warming.

China’s recent “assertiveness” has scared its neighbors who in turn have moved closer to the U.S., following the Obama Administration’s reaffirmation of American support for them. U.S. and Vietnamese cooperation is especially notable in this regard. The U.S. has also reinforced its security reassurances to Japan.

The talk in the U.S. is that China, with its assertiveness and new military capabilities, is intend on driving the U.S. out of the Western Pacific area, while intimidating the countries in the area, including Japan and Vietnam. There is also fear of China

86. Or, to put it another way, Taiwan is not likely to declare independence under the current circumstances. It is too tied to both China and the global economy to do that. The status quo is working well, and polls of the population seem to show a preference for that status quo.


88. Up through 1959 the U.S. had to deter Taiwan from attacking the mainland, but that threat went away as Taiwan prospered and Taiwanized the Kuomintang Party, way ahead of China’s economic take-off—and that take-off has been assisted in some measure by Taiwanese entrepreneurship on the mainland; there may be a million Taiwanese living on the mainland.
establishing naval bases in the Indian Ocean, thus to “take over” that area, whatever that means. China has also been threatening India about the border demarcations in Arunachal Pradesh, scene of its 1962 attack on India. It has been grabbing up some scarce mineral resources around the world with a view toward monopolizing them. It is feared that it can do whatever it wants and the U.S. cannot stop it.

Yet China is deeply intertwined in the world economy, dependent on markets overseas for the sale of its products, especially to the U.S. and Europe. It is still dependent on others’ designs for its products, though over time one presumes it will develop its own designs. Right now, it is struggling to build “Chinese copies” of old (1980s) second-rate Russian military equipment. It is dependent on import of German machine tools.

And China has a huge population (1.3 billion) that is restless and takes a good deal of government attention and management, though government efforts are complicated by corruption. Pollution is great and a source of public unrest. It is running short of water, in part because its pollution adds to greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, which, among other consequences, is melting the Himalayan glaciers on which its water supply depends. All of these internal factors should create incentives for the government to act in a civilized manner in its relations with the outside world so as not to jeopardize its economic growth, which is still dependent on export of goods and imports of commodities. Some in the U.S. say it should adhere more faithfully to international rules, but, aside from WTO and UNCLOS, it is not clear what rules those commentators have in mind.

**How the military confrontation and competition with China might drive the future configurations of U.S. forces**

So, is war between China and the U.S. likely? Would the U.S. attack targets on mainland China and follow up with an invasion of ground forces in order to effect regime change? China has nuclear weapons, and any such aggressive American moves would seem to threaten World War III, to the utter devastation of both countries and both economies—and very likely the end of most higher life on the planet, in light of the current estimates of the environmental effects of even a fairly limited number of nuclear detonations.

The fear of the Great War With China continues to drive U.S. military technological aspirations—some think the U.S. is getting a new peer competitor to replace the Soviet Union and thus creating a need for the U.S. to keep a big defense budget to pay for a highly sophisticated force—would that our economy were not in such dire shape, with a new basis for U.S. economic growth not yet clear. The immediate fear of China being a peer competitor seems to be mostly because of Chinese development of anti-ship ballistic and cruise missiles, anti-space warfare (though they have conducted only two such space tests), and cyber warfare.

The U.S. Navy and U.S. Air Force are now developing an air/sea battle concept (ASB) to defeat Chinese defenses, which they call “anti-access/area denial” (A2/AD). But the Chief of Naval Operations and the Chief of Staff of the Air Force have said, in presenting the concept, that it is not a battle plan or strategy, and it is not directed at any particular
scenario or country, and might not even be for a military situation, but for humanitarian
disaster relief. (An example cited was U.S. assistance to Japan upon the tsunami that
wrecked the nuclear reactors at Fukushima.) And that it is simply a matter of developing
the joint capabilities between the two Services.89

Whatever it may be, the strong impression is that it is being developed so the U.S. can
strike Chinese or Iranian targets from far away, beyond the reach of Chinese or Iranian
missiles. But, while enhanced capabilities for missile defense, defeat of on-land air
defenses, and anti-submarine warfare (ASW) are considered by the U.S. acquisition
community, the questions still remain as to what the U.S. would strike as targets on the
Chinese mainland, besides air defenses, and to what strategic effect, considering that
China presents a vast and rich target environment and possesses nuclear weapons to boot.

Perhaps a new concept of deterrence ought to be developed. Deterrence is a strategy of
the weak. If there were perfect defenses, the word “deterrence” would not occur to
strategists at all. The greatest threat to China if war were to occur lies in the damage to its
economy if no container ships were able to venture forth from its ports and Hong Kong,
and ships bringing oil and other imports to China and supertankers were deterred from
trying to approach Chinese ports through the battle space. The question of strategy for the
U.S. would be how to give China pause in those respects, given its dependence on
international sea trade.

In the meantime, there is no reason that the U.S. Seventh Fleet and its carriers and other
ships cannot sail up and down and around the Western Pacific as they always have, just
as they did in the Mediterranean in the Cold War despite the Soviet threat. It is highly
unlikely that China, out of the blue, would try to shoot us out of there. If it did, it would
be a ragged way to start a war, probably to U.S. advantage, and the Chinese would lose
much of its new navy, even if the U.S. were not attacking targets on the Chinese
mainland. If these scenarios and their avoidance are any indication, why would the U.S.
need a new long-range bomber or have long-range stand-off weapons launched from
carriers standing out of range of Chinese missiles? And what would those stand-off
weapons be aimed at in China, to what strategic effect?

However, the U.S. is not going to invade China. The Japanese tried, unsuccessfully, in
1937-1945. They won every battle and slaughtered a lot of Chinese people, but could not
subdue and control the whole country. And diplomacy has worked well since the Korean
War truce and international relations have moved mostly into the global economic sphere
(unlike relations with the Soviet Union during the Cold War), where China now has a
much greater stake if it is to keep its population happy. For the U.S., the military merely
backs up the prime effort of the U.S., which is diplomacy on the one hand with China,
especially given its economic component, and on the other building solidarity among all
the neighboring countries that may be threatened by China.

89. Their presentation at the Brookings Institution, May 16, 2012; author’s notes.
Iran

The threat of war with Iran has long been associated with Iranian government threats to close the Strait of Hormuz, thus to curtail oil shipments from the Persian Gulf. Lately, the Israeli and American threats to bomb Iran’s nuclear enrichment plants to stop them from building nuclear weapons have taken greater prominence.

In the case of attacks on Iranian nuclear facilities, officials in the U.S., from the President down, and especially including senior military officials, are reluctant to do this, especially considering the way the U.S. conducts such attacks (e.g., taking out all the Iranian air defenses first), because of the anticipation within DOD of the unanticipated severe consequences of such an attack, including closure of the Strait of Hormuz, extensive attacks on U.S. and other naval vessels in the Persian Gulf and Arabian Sea, and acts of terror in unpredictable places. The anticipation in the U.S. of these unanticipated consequences of an air strike on Iran are as extensive as any such set that has ever been laid out by those in America who fear the worst. Israel may have been trying to lure the U.S. into such an attack by threatening one itself, but they seemed to have backed off, as of mid-2013.

The United States is not going to invade Iran. Taking account of the difficulties the U.S. had had in the insurgencies in Iraq and Afghanistan, it is necessary to contemplate what an invasion into Iran would encounter: Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) irregular forces; a substantially larger and more sophisticated society; a vast, rugged, mostly arid territory; a capital deep inland. It would be a tremendously difficult country to conquer, with great U.S. losses. The U.S. can ask the Iraqis, who got only a few kilometers into Iran in a surprise attack in 1980, despite their Soviet blitzkrieg training.

There are fears that Iran would seize some opportunity to close the Strait of Hormuz. It threatens it constantly as retaliation for any attack on its country. But that would cut off its own oil shipments and imports of refined products and food, that is, it would be suicidal for its shaky economy.

There is constant fear that Iran will subvert other states around the Persian Gulf. Although it has been trying to do so since 1979, it seems to have gotten nowhere (except with Hamas and Hezbollah). Iran is supposed to be the biggest state sponsor of terrorism around the world, but what terror, where?

As a threat to the rest of the Middle East, Iran can be contained. It is Persian and Shi’ite. Most of the rest of the Middle East is Arab and Sunni. Iran’s economy is already showing vulnerability to sanctions, with a collapsing currency, high inflation, high unemployment, and great difficulty in selling its (heavy) oil given its loss of access to Western banking and settlements facilities. The U.S. has persuaded Europe not to buy Iran’s oil and persuaded China, South Korea, and Japan to reduce their purchases as well. Iran is also highly dependent on the import of refined petroleum products and food (wheat). It has never invaded its neighbors and has been unsuccessful since 1979 in spreading its revolution—not for want of trying. It is going to run out of oil to export by
2015, thereafter needing to import all its oil for domestic consumption. It has the second-largest reserves of natural gas in the world, but it has never been able to strike a deal with other countries to develop those gas fields.

While politically the threat of air attack is being sustained by U.S. officials, deterrence and containment is the other option. The containment of Iran can be done by the continued presence of the U.S. Navy in the Gulf, as well as by the continued sanctions and the continued good relations between the U.S. and the Gulf Arab states, bolstered by U.S. arms sales to them, particularly in missile defense. This might not help with a Shia-dominated Iraq, and Iraq’s own defenses will remain weak for years to come, but the Arabs of Iraq do not want to be taken over by Iranians, however close the relations they may prudently maintain with their next-door neighbor. Iran’s conventional forces are essentially rubbish, not modern, not apparently in good shape. Its IRGC forces are its real defenses, but essentially are a rabble army and a rabble small-boat navy. It could cause some real damage in trying to close the Strait of Hormuz, including even sinking some U.S. Navy ships, but it would be suicidal for its own economy and wouldn’t last long.

As for deterrence, even if Iran did build nuclear weapons, any threat to use them would be idle, given the Israeli and American threats of nuclear retaliation—after all, both Israel and the U.S. will have massively more nuclear weapons. Moreover, nuclear weapons wouldn’t be a good diplomatic weapon for Iran: Iranians can’t walk into a meeting with the other Gulf states and say, “You have to do what I say because I have nuclear weapons.” Indeed, given its inferiority in nuclear weapons and their likely unreliability, any really serious threat by Iran to use them would still run a terrible risk of inviting a massive preemptive—but conventional—attack by Israel and/or the United States. It is highly unlike that either the U.S. or Israel would preventively or preemptively use nuclear weapons.

So the U.S. Navy and economic sanctions pursued by diplomatic means will continue to be the instruments for containing Iran. Such naval containment will be carried out mostly by destroyers, as it has been since around 1949, with a carrier lurking not far away in the Indian Ocean. There also tend to be many naval ships of other U.S. allies in the Gulf, along with the craft from the Arab Gulf states. Will containment work to forestall any Iranian aggression? Except for some strange harassing maneuvers by a few IRGCN small boats a few years ago, there have been no real attempts “to cross the line.” The Iranians lost most of their navy once before, in the tanker war of 1987-1988. The Iranian support to the Assad regime in the Syrian civil war is another matter.

**Hezbollah**

U.S. military and military “experts” in Washington are concerned about Hezbollah posing an awesome new generic threat (to Israel, not to the U.S.) of “hybrid” warfare—that is, mixing insurgent methods of defense with “sophisticated” weapons. The weapons cited include the C-802 anti-ship cruise missile, obtained from Iran (and originally from

China), and the Russian Kornet anti-tank guided missile. Both weapons date from the 1980s. In 2006, a C-802 struck the Israeli Saar-class corvette, \textit{Hanit}, and killed four sailors, but the ship made it back to port on its own power and was back in service 24 days later. Like USS \textit{Stark} in the Persian Gulf, attacked by Iraqi Exocet cruise missiles, \textit{Hanit} had not turned on its anti-cruise missile defensive system. Nonetheless, the U.S. (and Israel) have to take into account their possession of such cruise missiles.

Is Hezbollah an enemy of the U.S. and a threat to U.S. national security? It would hardly seem so. Any U.S. Administration would be concerned with the possibly combined Iranian, Syrian, and Hezbollah threat to Israel—with Hezbollah in the lead firing rockets supplied by the others. But Hezbollah is a threat to Israel only if Israel were to be so foolish as to attack into southern Lebanon again, as it did when Hezbollah seized two Israeli soldiers in August 2006. Hezbollah cannot conduct a ground attack into Israel—it would be wiped out. Hezbollah could fire lots of rockets again, as it did in August 2008, but those did minimal damage and had no effect on the functioning of the Israeli economy. If it had truly guided rockets next time, they might cause more damage, but it is not clear that such weapons exist.

Whether Hezbollah represents some new and challenging type of warfare is mostly irrelevant to the U.S., though, because it is Israel’s problem, and Hezbollah was simply defending its own territory back in the August 2006 war. Some make a great deal about Hezbollah’s connection to Iran, from whom it gets its arms (as does Syria), but the connection is not that solid, especially given the lack of geographical propinquity.

Is the U.S. going to invade Lebanon in the event of another Hezbollah-Israeli war? It is doubtful. There are still some in the U.S. who remember the bombing of the 1982 bombing of the U.S. embassy in Beirut and the Marine barracks in 1983. U.S. Administrations at the highest levels are the ones to keep up the diplomatic pressures on all sides to avoid incidents, as well as keeping up efforts to achieve peace between Israel and the Palestinians next door.

In mid-2013, however, it is the Syrian chaos and its spillover into Lebanon (there have been a number of incidents) that could affect Hezbollah’s future. The loss of Alawite rule in Syria and thus the weakening of Syrian-Iranian connections would leave Hezbollah vulnerable and thus add further restraint on its attacking Israel. Thus, it appears to be taking a larger role in the Syrian situation. Possibly egged on by the Iranians.

All this business of Hezbollah takes place within the larger strategic context of the frustrations of the pursuit of peace between Israel and the Palestinians.

\textbf{Weak and failing states—most simply do not pose strategic problems for the U.S.}

The U.S. has long been concerned with “The Third World” and the failure of those economies to “take off.” Especially in Africa, the countries there have long been plagued by corruption, coups, and internal conflicts, sometimes spilling into adjacent countries.
The most prominent worry for the U.S. Administration and U.S. national security about weak and failing states is that they could be havens for new al Qaeda terrorist camps.

First and foremost among terrorists’ havens right now is Pakistan, which is fighting its own Taliban and other terror groups who are shifting away from the confrontation with India over Kashmir and thus into Punjab. The Pakistani political situation, in its confrontations at the top between corrupt civilians and the army, and because of rising internal religious conflicts, remains extremely tenuous. It is a country with a small, rich land-owning elite versus a poor, under-educated population, not to speak of the Pashtuns and other tribal peoples in the mountainous tribal areas who have been living in 15th century conditions like their Afghani counterparts on the other side of the mountains. And Pakistan has nuclear weapons—although the assurances keep coming that the Pakistani army has them under firm control, with some technical security help from the U.S.

Al Qaeda terrorists are already in Somalia and Yemen. The U.S. is providing assistance to Yemen to track down terrorists and taking out some ourselves. But the U.S. and any other countries have little access to Somalia—Ugandan and Burundian troops are guarding only a portion of the capital, and Kenyan forces have taken Kismayo in the south. Yemen had begun to collapse internally, following Tunisia and Egypt. The situation in Yemen was not helped by President Ali Abdullah Saleh (and his family) clinging to power. But he is gone now, and his former vice president, Abdo Rabbo Mansour Hadi, has taken over, which seems to have helped the Yemeni army get its act together, despite continued harassment from the Saleh family, and has been driving back Islamists who had taken over towns in the south. The U.S. is helping with Special Forces intelligence and advice and is taking out al Qaeda leaders with drones, as tipped off by the local Yemenis.

Over 2012 and into 2013, al Qaeda associates proliferated and became alive in Mali. They took over Timbuktu and Gao and other northern towns and began to march on Bamako until stopped by French air and ground forces, taking along with them the residual Malian soldiers. Before that, U.S. Special Forces had been providing military assistance on a shoestring to the Trans-Sahel countries in the pursuit of AQIM (al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb), which was thought back then to consist of as few as 400 terrorists. The countries in which AQIM had been floating around included southern Algeria, Mauritania, Mali, Niger, and Chad, all of whose populations are Muslims. But there was a constant clash between the Malians and the Tuaregs living on the territory of Mali. Following the fall of Qaddafi and his government in Libya, his Tuareg mercenaries headed home and they and other groups dipped into the vast stores of munitions that Qaddafi had bought. The Tuaregs became the Ansar Dine Islamists and took over all of northern Mali, including Timbuktu, as the Mali government fell upon a coup by their military—so much for U.S. military training. Then AQIM struck the Amenas gas plant in Algeria in January 2013, adding a new dimension to the chaos in the Sahara and Sahel. It appeared a number of groups claiming al Qaeda association were operating in the area. The Ansar Dine Tuaregs decided to break off their al Qaeda association. Hunting down the remaining innumerable terrorists in the area has remained a continuing and formidable task.
The lesson from the appearance of a new al Qaeda “sanctuary,” if that what it is, in the Sahel is primarily that of the weakness of the Malian state itself. That is, training troops for defense requires the vertical links back to the ministry of defense in the country and to the government itself. Mali had supposedly become more democratic because of the decentralization of authority to the country’s villages some years before. But incompetence and corruption still characterized the central government and they were vulnerable to a simply army coup. But that left the country wide open to the al Qaeda associates. The UN has approved continued patrolling by African troops, supported by the French (and by American surveillance operating out of Niger), but the situation is likely to fester for some time to come.

Beyond that, and even though Muslims or mostly Muslim populations are to be found in other African countries, e.g., Kenya, Tanzania, Burkina Faso, Cote d’Ivoire, and Sierra Leone, there is no evidence of al Qaeda penetrations into their societies. Most of the conflicts in Africa have been resolved over time, chiefly by UN peacekeepers, and, as noted in an earlier chapter, most of the countries are showing real economic growth, helped inter alia by the U.S. Millennium Challenge and the PEPFAR HIV/AIDS programs, though the programs are likely to be reduced as the U.S. foreign aid budget is reduced.

As for the rest of the “weak and failing states,” I’ve kept track of internal conflicts in the states of the developing areas since the late 1980s—examining whether they pose any strategic threats to their neighbors, their region, the rest of the world, and the U.S. They do have troubles like poverty, HIV/AIDS, emigration, etc., which are of a humanitarian nature, not a strategic nature. The number of such internal conflicts has gone down greatly across the past two decades, as recorded by The Human Security Institute in British Columbia, by the University of Maryland, and now by George Mason University.

In my own count in 2012 of about 52 countries suffering internal conflict since around 1990, there are only about 9 cases where actual shooting is still taking place, although another 14 have scattered uprisings with violence. These continuing trouble spots, some of them still chronic (i.e., lasting decades) include the following:

- Colombia’s conflict is chronic, but the FARC is much less powerful these days, even though it may sometimes have gotten sanctuary and even some material support from Venezuela.
- Mexico’s drug war is getting worse.
- Russia’s North Caucasus is falling apart with scattered Islamic rebellions.
- In Yemen, the Shia Houthis of the north have been subdued, but the clashes that developed between the Yemeni army under President Saleh and the south grew and then al Qaeda took advantage of them to lodge itself in several southern and eastern towns. Upon Saleh’s departure, the Yemeni army seems to have become more effective, and has been rolling back al Qaeda and other rebels, with some technical assistance from U.S. Special Forces and selected U.S. drone strikes.
- Pakistan’s own war with the Pushtun Taliban and other extremists (Lashkar-e-Tabah, or LET, especially) may be ramping up, but Pakistan’s government has its own disarray.
Uganda is still pursuing the Lord’s Republican Army (LRA), and the U.S. has sent 100 Special Forces assisters (not fighters) to help the locals find the LRA leader, Joseph Kony. They ended up operating mostly in the Central African Republic, but since that country has had its own coup, LRA may have moved across the border into Sudan, and the U.S. Special Forces contingent has retreated to Uganda.

And then there’s the chronic anarchy in Somalia, where al Shabab has been driven from the main cities of Mogadishu and Kismayo in southern Somalia, the pirates that have been operating out of Puntland are close to going out of business, and Somaliland in the north remains peaceful.

The war in the Eastern Congo was probably the worst of internal wars after Syria at the end of 2012. It continues to ravage the countryside, and Rwanda’s complicity (in supporting Tutsis) has drawn international pressure on them to stop.

Darfur seems to have quieted down, but there could be a new war between Sudan and South Sudan as they sort out their new independence and who controls the oil wells.

One of the most chronic internal conflicts—in Sri Lanka—ended in 2010.

India has internal problems with its Maoist-Naxalites in the badlands of eastern India, not to speak of Kashmir (somewhat quiet) and the northeast, as Bangladeshi refugees continue to flow in. After the terrorist attack from Pakistan into Mumbai in November 2008, India has been especially alert for more attacks.

As a matter of fact, few of the internal conflicts in those 52 countries have any strategic significance, i.e., by spreading elsewhere in the region, threatening to disrupt global commerce, or posing any threat whatsoever to the U.S. itself. The main strategic threat to the U.S. is whether any of those countries are harboring or may harbor al Qaeda terrorists. Such al Qaeda activity would be seen in setting up training camps and then preparing for international strikes from there. There is also the continuing problem of the drug trade from Mexico and Colombia, which has now also entangled Central America.

The list of al Qaeda sanctuaries is down to Pakistan, Yemen, Somalia, and Mali.

But Boko Haram has arisen in northern Nigeria, claims allegiance to al Qaeda, and is assaulting government and Christian targets.

As can be seen, none of the minor conflict situations threaten global trade or the global economy, except for the Somali pirates emerging from Puntland. The disruptions in the Gulf of Aden and Indian Ocean have been managed by an international naval flotilla involving 20 to 24 ships at a time, of which 2 or 3 may be American. The U.S. has had a large role in coordinating these intercept operations—a special leadership talent and capability the U.S. has. This has worked pretty well: acts of piracy have fallen sharply in 2012—only 46 attacks through August 2012, of which only 9 were successful (compared with 68 successful attacks in 2010 and 34 in 2011).91

---

What does the U.S. military do about “weak and failing states”?

…What the Administration-in-office tells the U.S. military to do—nobody else.

More to the point is what U.S. legacy forces did in the way of intervention into “weak and failing states” before Iraq and Afghanistan and thus what the prospects are for their doing anything in the future. In fact, before Iraq and Afghanistan, the U.S. militarily intervened (i.e., with organized military units) in only four “weak and failing states” situations: Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia, and Kosovo—all of which posed humanitarian problems and were not of strategic significance.

I do not include the training-and-assisting missions of U.S. forces in Colombia, the Sahel, the Philippines, and in Central Africa, in each of which U.S. soldiers are explicitly barred from participation in combat. I also do not include the peace-making efforts of American diplomats (among other diplomats) and NGOs, which might have sometimes included some U.S. forces hovering nearby, like the Marines off Liberia in 2003 for possible support of U.S. Ambassador Blaney as he tried to reconcile two guerrilla armies threatening to sweep into Monrovia from the north and south.92

After the wrenching experiences of Iraq and Afghanistan, why would any U.S. President undertake that kind of nation-building operation again, much less many of them, whether it is a matter of the country providing sanctuary for al Qaeda or not? An Administration might undertake such ventures only after people had forgotten the experiences of Iraq and Afghanistan—that is, upon the passage of a generation, as has now happened after the tragic Vietnam experience. (U.S. forces were out of Vietnam by the end of 1973; large U.S. forces went into Iraq in 2003.) Or an Administration might again make fallacious assumptions that the operations would be “fast and cheap,” like the Bush 43 Administration did on Afghanistan and Iraq.93

92. A Marine ARG/MEU was offshore of Liberia for some time, but the U.S. put no troops on the ground. (The Marines stayed on the ships, but neglected to take their malaria pills because they were at sea, and the mosquitoes flew out and bit them—you get bit by a mosquito in that area, you get malaria). To persuade one warlord not to advance into Monrovia, Ambassador Blaney took the Marine commanding officer with him to meet the warlord; he persuaded the commanding officer to launch a pair of AV-8Bs over the meeting place as they met. The warlord backed down.

93. There is a great fallacy in American “regime change” thinking that I call “the Queen Bee Fallacy.” That is, American leadership thinks that, if the “Queen Bee” is simply plucked out, whether it be, for instance, Allende in Chile, Noriega in Panama, Saddam in Iraq, or Qaddafi in Libya, then somehow all good things will follow. It applies to Bashar Assad in Syria in 2013. Maybe it’s because the U.S. has its own “monarch,” the President, who has all sorts of powers (especially in foreign affairs) and makes all the decisions. We may even be ready to choose our own Quisling, like Chalabi (self-promoted) in Iraq. We were also lulled by our experience after World War II in finding Adenauer for West Germany and De Gasperi for Italy. But the situations always turn out more complex than that, and establishing new leaders and new systems for finding leaders turns out to be very difficult, especially in the less-advanced countries. We end up with quagmires.
Moreover, not only might a new situation entail huge initial forces, like 400,000 apiece in Somalia and Yemen, but their long duration would also have to be anticipated—the British experience was 12 to 37 years for pacification (12 in Malaya, 37 in Northern Ireland). Afghanistan has now gone on for nearly 12 years with perhaps many more to come. The U.S. could leave 6,000 or more troops (i.e., beyond just trainers) in Afghanistan for at least another 10 years beyond 2014 unless the Afghans deny immunity for U.S. troops as the Iraqis did (they have been studying the actions the Iraqis took on that issue).

Iraq and Afghanistan have broken U.S. ground forces and left many soldiers with lifelong disabilities. The costs have been high—adding substantially to the U.S. national debt that many are complaining about these days as well as distorting the rest of any Administration’s approach to providing for national security.

In short, although some defense analysts predict that the U.S. may have to mount numerous counterinsurgency programs in “weak and failing states” (one retired U.S. Lieutenant General having said, “we can expect to be involved in 3 to 5 more of these beyond Afghanistan over the next 10 years”; a current official in OSD talked in the recent past about the U.S. having to occupy 20 to 30 countries at a time), the only countries that hang in the balance as havens for terrorists are really Somalia and Yemen—it is highly unlikely that Mali would be. The U.S. Government is going to be reluctant to make the same massive efforts in those countries as in Iraq and Afghanistan, not least because U.S. ground forces are close to the breaking point.

But could Syria become one of those? Syria through 2013 has become a Shia-Sunni war, with indications that al Qaeda terrorists, coming especially from Iraq, are gaining a foothold.

Pakistan might also be considered, but it has a relatively strong state and a strong army, and does not want U.S. organized military units in its country. If Pakistan’s government were to collapse, and the army not take over, there is no way American troops could get there (presumably to seize Pakistan’s nuclear weapons) before the Indians.

Coming back to a main point about “weak and failing states,” though: what is “strategic significance”? Aside from the al Qaeda sanctuaries on one hand and the problem of the trafficking in drugs on the other, “weak and failing states” have never been a big planning consideration for U.S. Administrations because they are not a threat to the United States.

94. There have been discussions among those concerned with the future of U.S. defense that the AVF, the small percentage of the U.S. population in the active forces (0.4 percent), and the lack of conscription have made the U.S. public generally indifferent to the plight of military individuals and their families—as evidenced by the apparently complete indifference to the war in Afghanistan during the 2010 election.

95. In the fall of 2012, radical Islamists asserting affiliation with al Qaeda took over all of northern Mali. There is practically no infrastructure in the area in which to set up bases to train expeditionary terrorists. International measures were taken to disperse these Islamists. In Somalia as well, al Shabab has been losing control of cities and towns and is dispersed across the countryside.
During the 1990s, any small U.S. interventions, e.g., for non-combatant evacuations or humanitarian reasons), were deprecated by the U.S. military as “MOOTW” (Military Operations Other Than War) and considered only as “lesser-included cases” for force planning, i.e., they would be covered by existing forces if the Administration requested. Now, if the “weak and failing states” are of any concern, it is because of the al Qaeda problem. As discussed above, that is of concern in a relatively small set of the “weak and failing states” and may even be of more concern in the advanced states of Europe, which the U.S. is also not going to invade. The small operations that may be carried out, including for humanitarian assistance or for disaster relief, are still not force-sizers or shapers of overall U.S. forces; it is what the Administration might do with the forces if they have nothing else to do at the moment. In fact, the number of those small operations went way down when the U.S. got embroiled in Iraq—only the Somali piracy loomed as a new problem, but, as noted, the U.S. itself has devoted only two or three ships at a time to patrols there.

**Why Administrations might consider using U.S. forces in “weak and failing states”**

As of mid-2013, and as U.S. operations in Afghanistan wind down, the Obama Administration’s preferred method for pursuit of al Qaeda in weak and failing states is small detachments of Special Forces providing technical assistance (intelligence, communications) to local forces, as in Yemen, the Trans-Sahel, and (with regard to the LRA) Central Africa. Drone strikes are also used. Special Forces trainers and advisors also continue to be deployed in the southern Philippines and Colombia.

From time to time, U.S. forces may be sent on HADR (Humanitarian Aid or Disaster Relief) missions. These kinds of operations are conducted if circumstances otherwise permit. They are not force-sizers. They are done with available resources. The U.S. is never alone in providing HADR.

Although the prospects are dim for a U.S. Administration entering into any new large-scale and long-term occupations and nation-building in a country, as discussed earlier, the institutionalization of counter-insurgency (COIN) within the Defense Department, as a force-capabilities matter, seems to be taking root. Training manuals have been written and published. Training grounds, like those at Fort Polk in Louisiana and the National Training Center in California, have been rebuilt for urban warfare situations, equipment like MRAPs has been acquired (even if to be stored for future breakout), and procedures for coordination among the Services have been developed. It becomes part of the U.S. tool kit, however rarely it might be used in actual situations in the future.

The expansion of other U.S. Government agencies to provide colonial occupations and governance is simply not going to happen. Congress never has and never will fund anything like that. (See the appendix of this paper on “whole of government.”) This is a fundamental truth.

There is one more consideration about the “weak and failing states” in the future. That is the effects on these states of global warming, with sea-level rises, droughts, loss of arable land, loss of water supplies, diseases, and so on. They would be the hardest hit areas in
the world, despite their minimal contributions to the greenhouse gases that cause the effects. The problem is mostly humanitarian, though, and it is not clear that U.S. forces should plan on or be designed to rescue them. It is not up to U.S. forces. It is up to American leadership at the top as to how the United States may prepare for climate change.

**Proliferation and non-proliferation—essentially a diplomatic problem**

Ever since the United States gained its early monopoly on nuclear weapons, beginning in 1945, its leadership and much of the policy and academic communities have been anxious about nuclear proliferation. The number of countries with nuclear weapons is now up to 9—the P-5 (Permanent Members of the UN Security Council, with their UN Security Council vetoes); Israel, India, and Pakistan (the three non-signatories of NPT); and now North Korea (which withdrew from NPT). Iran might join. Yet 43 countries have nuclear reactors, with more than 400 reactors among them (including 103 in the U.S.). Proliferation never has been as rampant as feared.

The current nuclear proliferation debate is all about North Korea and Iran, while controls of fissile materials elsewhere have been expanded, particularly to remove highly-enriched uranium from research reactors. There is fear of further proliferation in the Middle East if Iran really does build nuclear weapons or is assumed to have done so. However, whatever country aspirations may be, it takes a long time to successfully build the industrial facilities to generate fissile material for weapons and then to weaponize that material. And there would not be much of a market in which to buy full-up weapons—e.g., from Pakistan? Pakistan needs all the weapons it has to deter India. North Korea has had enough plutonium for about six weapons and an unknown amount of enriched uranium. It is doubtful that it would sell its stock to another country except for vast sums of money.

Five-Power Negotiations have taken place with North Korea for many years, but have now been stalled for several years. North Korea has tested nuclear explosive devices three times (with not-impressive yields). I has tested longer-range missiles as well, though it has not demonstrated intercontinental capability. In the meantime, North Korea’s economy is getting worse, and it has an untested youngster as its new supreme leader. It sank a South Korean corvette in the Yellow Sea and has caused other incidents. The world now waits for the possible collapse of the North Korean state, but it has been waiting for a long time.

Iran seems hell-bent on building nuclear weapons and has been developing missiles to carry them with the help of North Korea. The international community wants Iran to stop enriching uranium, and economic sanctions have gradually been stepped up against the country. There is much chatter in the “expert” community about either Israel or the U.S., or both, bombing Iranian nuclear sites, and it seemed awfully close in the spring of 2012. U.S. Administrations have said the option is open, but also that the consequences of such

---

strikes are incalculable and would likely only delay the Iranian program. There has been a great anticipation of unanticipated consequences that might arise from the bombing of Iran. There is, for example, much talk about whether Iran could close the Strait of Hormuz and how to counter that if it happens. In the meantime, Administrations have been leading the international community in imposing economic sanctions on Iran. These sanctions have had a great impact on the Iranian economy, to the point where even the Iranian leadership has acknowledged the hurt. Diplomacy and non-military actions can still be pursued.

Supposedly, Iran may be able to build some nuclear weapons in a few years as it continues to enrich its uranium. Then, supposedly, it could “influence” (whatever that means), intimidate, and coerce other states in the Middle East, though for whatever purpose other than kicking the U.S. out of the area and turning everybody against Israel, which they already are, is never made clear. Or they might become more militarily adventurous, as in the Gulf, creating incidents.

The existing nine states possessing nuclear weapons or at the brink, including North Korea, but not yet Iran, have not gone to war or otherwise taken aggressive actions simply because they had nuclear weapons. Why would Iran be expected to behave differently and turn more aggressive? First of all, Iran would never have many nuclear weapons, even assuming it could adapt warheads to missiles—and certainly nothing compared to whatever Israel has (200?), much less the U.S.’s 1550 fielded warheads under New START. Second, Iranian leaders would likely be obsessed with whether to use the limited nuclear weapons they had—and retaliation if they used any—if they contemplated going to war against the U.S. or anyone else. Having nuclear weapons complicates any “rational” military planning, as both the U.S. and USSR recognized.97 Third, if Iran were to use even one nuclear weapon, it would be retaliated against, would suffer enormous civil damage, and would have fewer nuclear weapons than when it started. North Korea has already said that its limited nuclear weapons capability is for deterrence. It is likely that Iran would also talk about deterrence if it were to acknowledge possession, since both countries have felt threatened by what they perceive as an American drive to invade their countries in order to effect regime change.

Iran having nuclear weapons would certainly be a deterrent to a U.S. invasion—if the U.S. were otherwise insane enough to contemplate any such invasion. In short, nuclear weapons would be no more useful to Iran than they have been for the previous nine possessors at the brink of war. Iran can be deterred. The U.S. need only send frequently to Iran a photograph of Hiroshima overlaid on a photograph of Tehran to remind it of the devastation nuclear weapons can cause—to it. Unlike Mao’s China (as Mao used to say), Iran cannot be satisfied to be left with a vast peasant country with no economy.

As for “the inevitable proliferation” to other countries around the Persian Gulf upon Iran achieving and declaring it had nuclear weapons—it’s not easy for those countries to

97. As Sergei Khrushchev said at a conference at the Center for Cold War Studies at George Mason University on the 50th anniversary of the Cuban missile crisis on October 27, 2012, his father remarked to him during their walks in the woods at that time about the horrors of nuclear war and wanted to desperately avoid it.
develop anything on their own. Around the world, a reactor seems to cost more than $10 billion. A new Russian reactor to be built in Turkey is estimated to cost $20-25 billion. Reactors seem to be taking at least ten years to build—the reactor the Russians built for Iran at Bushehr took about 16 years. If Iran then wanted to pull those rods out for optimum plutonium recovery, it would have to do so after only five years of power production. Yet Iran signed an agreement with Russia to return spent rods to Russia. Iran cheating on that agreement would be very provocative, but cannot be precluded, given their isolation from global opinion. And pulling the roads early would mean the country would lose the power generation for which it had made the investment. Of course, making its own fuel rods is the ostensible reason for its uranium enrichment program—but, so far, the only place they could go would be the Bushehr reactor, which finally became operational only in August 2012, only to remove all its rods to cooling ponds three months later because of some malfunction.

The greatest disruptive catastrophe of all that we Americans discuss is of the al Qaeda terrorists getting a nuclear bomb and almost certainly blowing it up in the U.S. if they could. Osama bin Laden used to say that they wanted to. But there is no evidence that any al Qaeda groups have gotten anywhere in getting a nuclear device.

Similarly, there is fear of al Qaeda spreading biological agents like anthrax or chemical weapons like Sarin. As the Aum Shinrikyo cult in Japan found, despite its 300 scientists and one billion dollars spent, it is not easy to make anything that’s effective. But these are scenarios to which much attention has been given in the U.S., with elaborate homeland defense response plans being prepared, however improbable the event.

The long diplomatic efforts of successive U.S. Administrations attempting to strengthen the overall non-proliferation regime have been highlighted lately by the pressures on North Korea and Iran. The Obama Administration also negotiated the New START treaty with Russia covering strategic nuclear weapons. It was ratified in December 2010. The second step was to get wide agreement among many countries on the safeguarding and removal of fissile material, especially from research reactors. This is under way. The Administration still has aspirations for “the zero option” of no nuclear weapons in the world, but nobody considers that practical or likely.

**What are the consequences of any proliferation for the future of U.S. forces?**

In summary, the consequences for the future of U.S. forces in light of the limited proliferation to date are that the U.S. is likely to keep up its levels of strategic nuclear forces in accordance with the New START treaty with Russia. Israel, India, and Pakistan cannot threaten the U.S. with their nuclear weapons, though the security of Pakistan’s nuclear weapons is a constant concern to the U.S. The U.S. is not going to bomb or invade North Korea or Iran, but is going to continue to deter them from using their weapons while staying ready for any other aggressive actions by either country.

That is, American conventional forces are to continue their deployments to Northeast Asia and the Persian Gulf, at whatever level they emerge after Afghanistan and upon whatever strictures the U.S. will impose on the defense budget in light of the U.S. debt.
Keeping up the non-proliferation regime under the NPT is otherwise a matter of diplomacy. The U.S. does keep counter-proliferation options open, however, having developed, inter alia, a 15-ton conventional bunker-busting bomb.

**There are no substantial threats in what is called “The Commons,” except maybe in the growing instances and fears of cyber warfare**

When the U.S. moves out into the world—White House officials, diplomats, Treasury officials, military forces—it discovers that the world is full of countries and that the countries are full of people—now having risen to nearly 7 billion. Therefore, it has been with some relief that some in the U.S. Department of Defense turn to “The Commons,” where there are practically no people, but lots of high-tech systems and lots of room to operate without running into people, except maybe the rare pirates, the occasional boat-people, and the many fishermen.

The obsession of some with “The Commons” is also a carryover from the Cold War, where war with the Soviets was an abstraction, system against system, in the nuclear stratosphere, the air, and sea, without regard for whatever people might be in the way. The U.S. military during the Cold War never wanted to calculate “collateral damage,” especially in the use of nuclear weapons, including for a European war.

“The Commons” is also a distraction from thinking about the dirty ongoing war in Afghanistan.

“The Commons” are sea, air, space, and now cyber. The Commons are perhaps the least threatened areas of the world or of world activity, including practically no threats to international trade. A lot more difficult things are happening in the world beyond movement of ships, aircraft, and people through The Commons. Movement of information through electronic media—fiber optic cables and satellites—is where the cyber threat comes in, either through the stealing of the data or the disruption of commerce through disruption of the necessary data exchanges on transactions or disruption of electric power distribution controls, if that is possible.

There is talk among the U.S. military about “The Commons” being unregulated, but, in fact, the commons are highly regulated, though with some gaps.

For example, in the air commons, countries are responsible for all air traffic over their own territories, while ICAO regulates international air traffic. The threats lie with terrorists, but many more controls of boarding passengers have been instituted in just about every country of the world, especially since 9/11.

As for the seas, there is the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), of which the U.S. is not a signatory, but observes as a matter of customary law. The IMO (International Maritime Organization) regulates the ships plying international waters—reinforced by the maritime insurance companies and strict port regulations in the trading countries.
But there are gaps in the regulations and in their coverage. Right now, the most “ungoverned sea spaces” are those off West Africa (fish poaching and the movement of drugs) and East Africa (the Somali piracy problem). There are essentially no threats to the main maritime shipping routes—except for the grievous problem of pirates emerging from the Somali chaos, and even those pirate attacks have hit less than 1 percent of the passing commerce. The threat of pirates in the Strait of Malacca—most of which consisted of wallet-liftings—has been enormously reduced. Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia have coordinated their patrols, especially as Indonesia became more stable with a strong economy, thus permitting them to mount more sea lane patrols. The Sumatra tsunami of December 2004 also meant much more attention was given to reconstruction of the fishing ports along the Strait’s coast of Sumatra, from whence many of the pirates had originated. Finally, it should be noted that all of the Strait of Malacca is in the local countries’ territorial waters, not to be patrolled by other countries.

There are, of course, smugglers (drugs, fish poaching, human traffickers, and movement of other goods) and boat people evading policing. These are not new problems.

Terrorists are not at sea, except as they may transit between islands in the Indonesian and Filipino archipelagos, and there were a couple of attacks on Filipino ferries in the past. Whether suicide terrorists ramming a Japanese tanker in the Strait of Hormuz in the summer of 2010 and making a dent in that tanker constitutes some new wave of terrorism remains to be seen.

A great deal of work is being done by the U.S. Navy and other navies to take advantage of the IMO regulation that all ships over 300 tons displacement have the AIS (Automatic Information System) transponders. Although AIS is a line-of-sight query system, systems are being set up to centralize the information through collection at various points so that as many ships as possible can be reported to, and identified at, central command posts. This would help narrow the search for anomalous, non-reporting ships through local surface patrols and shore radars.

The Somali piracy problem has lately been the greatest threat in all the seas of the world. This problem has been highly aggravating, but there have been as many as 20-24 naval ships of various countries patrolling the area now, of which about 2 or 3 may be American. This has been the biggest activity against any hostile activity in the world’s oceans that navies have today. The naval operations have also proved a great experience in developing coordination among the navies, to include Russian and Chinese ships. On the other hand, the merchant ship defenses have also greatly discouraged the pirates. Though attacks continue, the number of successful attacks has been driven way down, to the point where the Puntland pirates are now a “going-out-of-business-business.”

Iran threatens to close the Strait of Hormuz from time to time, but it would be suicidal for its own economy for it to do so. In any event, detailed analyses show that it cannot keep the Strait closed long enough to do serious harm to world oil supplies.

98. Remarks by Steven Carmel, Vice President, Maersk Lines, at CNA on February 26, 2013. He had to be prodded to mention the role of navies in curbing the piracy.
The U.S. Navy has never policed all the sea lanes of the world, and no one has assigned it that responsibility. During the Cold War, the U.S. Navy worried about the Soviets venturing out in the Atlantic, the Mediterranean, and the Pacific. The U.S. Navy had long stationed three destroyers in the Persian Gulf (“MIDEASTFOR”) but got more involved in the Gulf after the fall of the Shah and the beginning of the Iraq-Iran war in 1980. When the Cold War ended, the U.S. Navy declared that it had the resources (especially carriers) to cover “three ocean hubs;” the Med, the Gulf, and the Western Pacific. There turned out to be no threat in the Med, so the Navy has kept practically no ships there, though many transit through on their way to the Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean. However, the Navy is going to homeport at four Aegis missile defense ships at Rota, Spain, to provide missile defense for Israel (not to police sea lanes). Thus, its most regular deployments are to the Gulf and the Western Pacific. It also provides maybe one surface combatant and one SSN to drug patrols in the Caribbean.

It is ironic that the U.S. Navy says that it is protecting global trade at sea, and then various writers assert that China is the growing threat to the sea lanes, with its supposedly growing navy. As a matter of fact, the Chinese navy, in terms of combat ships and submarines, is only barely growing. A significant portion of the merchant ships at sea (as high as 50 percent?) may be those going to and from China, bringing China its raw materials, oil, and other goods, and distributing its manufactured products around the world. Why would China go out and shoot up any of this traffic? Is this a realistic threat for the U.S. Navy to protect? And, if so, shouldn’t the U.S. charge the Chinese for this protection service?

As for the air lanes of the world, under ICAO rules, all aircraft in international airspace must file flight plans (and their changes) and to “squawk” (turn on IFF, that is, “Identification, Friend or Foe” signals) while in the air. Countries are responsible for their own territorial air spaces. A non-squawking aircraft picked up on radar could be challenged by fighter aircraft, depending on what country it might be approaching. After 9/11, al Qaeda terrorists have been recognized as the air threat. Inspection controls at the airports and the exchanges of passenger lists are meant to detect suspicious passengers. This seems to be working, except for the Delta underwear bomber of Christmas 2009, who slipped through, though his name was on some watch lists. The Saudi super bomb designer who designed his underwear bomb and another more sophisticated bomb stolen by a Saudi mole has recently been reported killed in a drone attack in Yemen.

On space, the Russians, Americans, and the Chinese have been talking about shooting down satellites for decades, and each country may have taken some experimental shots to do so. None seems to have fully fielded such an offensive capability. There is the


100. There was a fear of transits of WMD materials through the Med, so the NATO allies set up Operation Active Endeavor (OAE) to interrogate passing merchant vessels. The U.S. Navy participates in OAE with one surface combatant at a time. OAE has interrogated a lot of ships, but has found nothing, and has intercepted only boat people. Several years ago, Germany dropped out of OAE because there was nothing to do.
The question of jamming, e.g., of GPS. At a point target, that might be possible, but wide-area jamming seems hard. Perhaps the greatest problem is that of space junk colliding with operational satellites. Spying from space seems to have gone commercial.

The last area of “The Commons” is cyber warfare.

Cyber warfare has been a super-sensitive field at this time in history where so many control and information systems in the world are subject to hacking. Russia, China, and Iran seem to be the most prominent current sources of hacking, along with a lot of independent amateurs. China has been most active in stealing military, technical, and commercial information. The U.S. has been making a massive effort at NSA, in a separate command, and among the Services and Combat Commands to counter any cyber attacks. These organizations need a lot of expert people and powerful computers to stay ahead in the game. The private sector is also taking steps to protect its facilities.

One particular worry is about cyber attacks on control systems for electricity grids. In the U.S. and Canada, there is a quasi-governmental effort to examine the potentiality of the problem. However, there is a general consensus that, at worst, a cyber attack on grids could cause only transitory problems.

In the broader sphere of possible cyber warfare, both defensive and offensive measures (counter-hacking) are being examined. The U.S. is considered (by itself) to be the most vulnerable country, but it is a classic “two can play at this game” situation—if you hack, you get hacked back. But, in a military sense, once a country like China has taken down another country’s systems and left them blind, what does China do next? Attack with real military forces? That is, the problem of who to attribute an attack to—whether individuals and from which country, and whether official or private—may be most difficult. It is likely that most cyber attacks can be recovered from, and in reasonable time unless they presage a following conventional attack by military forces, e.g., by China on Taiwan.

In summary, with regard to “The Commons,” there are no big threats—except for cyber warfare, where the potential is growing and still not fully understood. It would not seem to be a force-builder for the Department of Defense, except for the personnel and computers needed for cyber warfare, which are themselves expensive.

But how do “The Commons” relate to the foreign policy of the United States, that is, to U.S. interactions with the rest of the world?

As noted earlier, U.S. relations with the rest of the world have to do with people in other countries, and just about all those people are on land, not out in “The Commons.” Except for Canada and Mexico, the U.S. is behind two oceans, which means that communications with other countries are either by sea, by air, or electronically (i.e., by fiber optic cables on the sea beds or through satellites in space). Thus, the U.S. is dependent on these crossings to get to where the other people are, especially as the globalized economy has expanded and there is enormous trade passing across these commons.
The U.S. Government is concerned that these crossings not be impeded and it worries about possible threats to them. As discussed above, the threats in The Commons (in the air, by sea, or in cyberspace) seem to be minimal these days. The U.S. is not so worried about U-Boat wars anymore and the Soviet submarine threat has faded away, though we wonder what China is going to do with its submarines.

The U.S. got used to Soviet ICBMs and SLBMs and even Chinese ICBMs—deterrence has worked because the U.S. could retaliate. Some may worry about the prospects of North Korea or Iran actually developing ICBMs, but, as the Russians point out, North Korean (and now Iranian) missiles are based on old Russian Scuds, and they note that it took the Soviet Union long evolutions—several generations of missiles—to get good systems, and even then each system required about 70 tests of each to judge its reliability.101

The al Qaeda terrorists have aspired to move by air, to blow up airplanes, or to use airplanes to attack buildings to kill Americans. However, after 9/11, pursuit of al Qaeda terrorists and its associates by the U.S. and other countries has dispersed it. It is now down to single or a few individuals attempting attacks. This makes its being able to steal and operate long-range missiles dubious, much less put together nuclear warheads to mount on them. There are no suitcase or underwear nuclear weapons.102

But there is another appeal to the concept of The Commons: a U.S. isolationist foreign policy, retreating behind the two oceans and cutting Americans out of all those troubles overseas. The Commons can then become our lines of defense. We can go back to self-sufficiency with our own resources at home (autarky). Some are calling this “off-shore balancing,” though no author says what is being “balanced.” Among the U.S. military, only the U.S. Navy would roam around the world. Such a foreign policy, or rejection of one, may well appeal to the Tea Party, which seemed to not refer at all to anything going on in the world outside the U.S. during the 2010 and 2012 election campaigns, but their overall influence on foreign policy does not seem to be large. Considering trade, finance, and good relations over a long time between the U.S. and most countries in the world, talk about autarky, isolation, and “off-shore balancing” is simply not real.

“Uncertainty” and “complexity”

When some military planners and international analysts can’t think of real threats to U.S. national security, “uncertainty” and “complexity” are the residual terms some use about threats once they get beyond North Korea, China, Iran, Hezbollah, and the al Qaeda terrorist threats. They say the world is unpredictable, full of surprises, and you never

101. Author’s discussions with Colonel General Viktor Yesin, former Chief of Staff of Soviet Strategic Rocket Forces and Major General Vladimir Dvorkin, former head of the Central Institute of Soviet Strategic Rocket Forces. The mature ICBMs the Soviets achieved were the SS-16, 17, 18, and 19 (the SS-16 turned into the SS-20 which then turned into the SS-25 and SS-27.) That is, they were at least third generation developments.

102. General Yesin has stated in public that the Soviet Union did have 100 suitcase nuclear bombs, all in the hands of Spetsnaz. They have all been dismantled he said—and he was in a position to know.
know where the next threat to the national security of the U.S. is going to come from. They throw in scare words like “asymmetrical” and “hybrid” military operations by ragtag enemies like Hezbollah—that is, the weaker they are, the fiercer they are, the more the U.S. military would be unable to handle them—witness all those small boats with anti-ship missiles emerging from numerous Iranian ports if Iran were to attempt to close the Strait of Hormuz on a suicide mission. They imagine terrorists building nuclear and biological weapons in The Sahel or the Hadramaut area where there is no water or electrical power. The future is too hard to predict, they say, and so they conjure up fantastic enemies that have every imaginable military capability (even if they have no economies) in 2024 or some other arbitrary date in the future.

Yet the world is finite, and, at least in America, we do all sorts of predictions about the future—we are alert to what could surprise us (the Sputnik fear), but we exaggerate it all in fantastic scenarios, multiplied (e.g., two simultaneous wars that would strain U.S. forces—except that the two wars we have had from 2001 through at least 2014 were initiated by us).

Yet there are two points to consider in all this:

1. It is hard to put “uncertainties and complexities” into reasonable defense planning within a U.S. defense budget top line that is determined externally to the Defense Department, i.e., by the Administration at the top with due regard for the overall U.S. economic situation and especially the annual deficit and the accumulated national debt these days.

2. It is not the U.S. military (alone) that manages the world—but then neither does the U.S., with all its agencies, manage the world.103

On the other hand, the U.S., in its foreign policy and in its private and governmental economic interactions with the world, including in the G-20, and in its bilateral relations, is not completely helpless in nudging that world. Actually, so far it has done very well in this area, although it has been deeply distracted by Iraq and Afghanistan and the great costs of those wars (a trillion dollars so far) and the current stagnation of the U.S. economy. And there is a good deal of peace in most of the world, marked as well by the overall diminution in defense spending around the world, leaving the U.S. spending about 38 percent of the world’s total defense budgets.104

But, whatever the “uncertainties and complexities,” to repeat the words of Colin Grey at CNA’s workshop for the NIC on the future of conflict in May 2004, “The most predictable thing is the unpredictability of an economic crisis.” And we got one of those crises in September 2008 in the U.S., which then rippled over into Europe, though not in China, India, and Brazil—however, the economies of each of those countries is slowing

103. And nobody, government or private, seems to be controlling the bankers and financiers who are trading on what is estimated to be $400-700 trillion of financial instruments, including derivatives, every day. If that $400-700 trillion were 30-to-1 leveraged, the underlying value would only be $13-23 trillion.

104. Per the SIPRI 2012 Yearbook in its update in April 2013.
down from their previous high growths as their American and European markets shrink. That crisis has left the U.S. economy and society in bad shape, whatever all those other putative threats in the world.

One last non-threat: “Resurgent Russia.” Russia is not resurging

Some people worry about “a resurging Russia” (our word, not theirs), but the last thing in Russia that might be “resurging” is its military—it’s in poor shape and not getting better. In 2009, Russia did suffer financial difficulties, deficits, loss of economic growth (minus 7.8 percent, the largest drop among the advanced countries), and rising unemployment, just as the U.S. suffered, though to lesser degrees, with an added burden of high inflation and capital flight.

Similar to the U.S. using the huge credit resources of the U.S. Government, the Russian government accumulated huge reserves when oil and gas prices were high and drew down those reserves from around $400 billion to $125 billion then—but at least it had the reserves. And it has recovered from what it has called “The Crisis,” resuming growth for a while at around 4 percent, with unemployment at only 5.4 percent. It is also restoring its hard-currency reserves as oil prices rise upon the turmoil in the Middle East—though that still leaves it dependent on oil and gas receipts to sustain its economy and especially to undertake modernization of its military equipment. However, as in the U.S. and Europe and other advanced countries, the present budget for military forces and equipment must compete with societal needs for pensions, health care, and education. Unlike the other advanced countries, its national budget deficits and overall national debt are very low.

The Russians never use the term “resurging,” and certainly not in their official strategic documents. They do not speak in any of their official documents of being a great power again. They talk of multilateralism and cooperation, not multipolarity. The Russians want to join the world, and especially to join Europe, with which they feel a strong and historic cultural affinity, as well as recognizing there would be more suitable economic opportunities with Europe than with China (for whom they would be simply sellers of oil, gas, and arms). But they have been generally stiffed by the Europeans and seem to have turned to China instead. They are also long-time admirers of America, but America is distant from them, and the levels of trade and other interactions between the two countries are very low—unless the Russians were to lose their old Soviet fear of foreign direct investment (“colonialism”) and become more welcoming of U.S. investors. What seems to keep the U.S. and Russia still talking is about all those strategic nuclear weapons on both sides and now the Northern Distribution Network (NDN) that Russia has arranged by which the U.S. and its allies can transport supplies and people to Afghanistan (and now retrograde as the U.S. and its allies reduced their forces there).

And the Russian military is not “resurging.” Its military and military-industrial base is in poor shape—but its priorities in any case had been health, housing, and education for its people, not the boosting of military forces—until Putin returned to the Presidency in May 2012 and decided to greatly increase the defense budget and to use the old military-industrial complex as the source of modernization (an oxymoron). The Russians see the
need for “modernization” in their economy so that they can enter world markets competitively (“modernization” for them seems to mean “technological advancement”). There is some dispute in Russia about the contribution that the revitalization of the old military-industrial complex could make to “modernization.” Putin seems to think it would be central to modernization; Medvedev did not, and practically nobody else thinks so. In any case, given the costs and difficulties of building new equipment and the dwindling of the age-cohort for military service and the unpopularity of such service, it is shrinking its military forces down to the provision of territorial defense, not “power projection.”

The best thing Vladimir Putin did for the world is his first two terms as president (through 2008) was his almost total neglect of the Russian (formerly Soviet) military. He concentrated on people programs instead, in addition to preventing oligarchs from buying off the political system, though this has led to the near monopolization by the state of gas (Gazprom) and oil (Rosneft) production while continuing the state monopoly of pipelines for both oil and gas.

The Russian forces—strategic nuclear, ground forces, air forces, naval forces—have been withering away. The old military-industrial complex (MIC) that fed huge amounts of equipment to Soviet forces has especially withered away, with aging and obsolescent tooling, aging workers, and the diversion of secondary suppliers to more profitable lines of business. From our studies, we have discovered that ballistic missile businesses and naval construction are close to being going-out-of-business businesses.

Twenty-one years after the Soviet Union fell, the Russians were finally setting thorough military reform in progress, under a strong and decisive Minister of Defense, Anatoliy Serdyukov, who was formerly a furniture salesman and then the federal tax collector, as well as being a member of Putin’s dacha community. Their ground forces were being reorganized into a territorial army distributed along the long Russian borders (which are almost as long as the old Soviet borders), at “permanent readiness” as they call it, i.e., fully manned and not dependent on the classical mobilization system that they maintained across the Cold War. They have been reducing their tank numbers to only 2,000, of which only 600 would be modern (T-80s and T-90s—and now they are even discontinuing T-90 production).

But the Russian government still doesn’t have enough money and a culture to end conscription, nor can it recruit a sufficient number of volunteers (“Kontrakniki”). It has never gotten an NCO training program off the ground. In any case, the enlisted cohort of the population (18 years and above) in a declining, aging population is also declining and is in bad health to boot, not to speak of Russian middle-class parents who do everything they can to keep their sons out of the military because of the continued hazing of recruits. The ground forces are relying on old and aging Soviet equipment, as do the Navy and Air Force. The ground forces have been reorganized into brigades (except for their airborne forces), but the brigades are still manned at only 70 percent, and then only with one-year

105. The U.S. has never considered a foreign military respectable unless it has a power-projection capability. If it does have capabilities to project military forces beyond merely country defense, it is considered an enemy.
conscripts. They have grand plans for building modern equipment, but those plans keep
getting postponed because the state is still on a tight budget in order to keep its
macroeconomics sound. And the estimates are still that 30 to 40 percent of the defense
budget is lost to corruption.

The military reform program was unpopular among many of the older military, but in
October 2012 of Serdyukov was fired because of his connections to the corruption in the
civilian support services he had set up. He has been replaced by another non-military
man, Sergei Shoigu, former Minister of Emergency Situations, but he has kept on with
most of the reforms initiated by Serdyukov.

So Russia is not a military threat to the U.S. It is to Georgia, of course, as demonstrated
in the five-day war of August 2008 that the Georgians started. Yet that war was a matter
of one rag-tag force against another rag-tag force—and those were the best forces Russia
had, battle-hardened in Chechnya and other skirmishes in the North Caucasus. President
Sarkozy of France arranged a truce between the two sides after only five days of fighting.

The battle revealed enormous deficiencies in Russian forces and that became a big spur to
their long-delayed military reform. The war also had broader unanticipated and adverse
consequences for Russia in the world: capital flight, loss of incoming capital, and near-
universal condemnation. Only four small countries in addition to Russia itself endorsed
the declarations by South Ossetia and Abkhazia of their independence. None of them
were the former Soviet republics, who were reinforced in their determination to maintain
their sovereignty against any Russian threats to it—so much for “the Russian privileged
sphere of influence” that President Medvedev had spoken of.

**Russian relations with the U.S. and the implications for U.S. forces**

With regard to Russia, the U.S. Administration is sustaining “mutual assured destruction”
at reduced levels through the New START treaty. At the lower levels, the balance still
represents mutual assured destruction, unless the U.S. were really to make a huge and
expensive effort to build a “global missile defense system” that would clearly be aimed
at setting up a first-strike disarming capability against Russian strategic nuclear forces.
This would be highly destabilizing, especially since the declining Russian industrial
capability makes it extremely difficult for them to engage in any arms race that could
increase their strategic nuclear forces back up toward Cold War levels, unlike the U.S.,
which, despite its grievous deficit problem, probably could waste resources to that end.

However, neither side foresees a nuclear war at all, though the Russians still fear U.S.
missile defense as an offensive weapon. The Obama Administration has tried to put that
fear to rest with a more modest approach for missile defenses, at least in Europe, that has
been planned against the putative Iranian threat. This was part of the initial step in the
Administration’s setting out to “reset” U.S.-Russian relations. Reset is also being
pursued in a variety of working groups. However, the Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat
Reduction program started in 1991 to ensure that the security of Russian weapons and
fissile materials has now been stopped by Putin as well, after 20 years. Putin has said that
Russia is now perfectly capable of maintaining that security itself.
The Russians are still disturbed by the expansion of NATO and by NATO having separated Kosovo from Serbia—the Russians have always felt weak and have thought they might be next for “NATO’s attack.” But the NATO countries have put membership for Georgia and Ukraine on the back burner, especially since the Ukrainian population would rather join EU than NATO since NATO membership provides no economic benefits, which they greatly need. The Obama Administration did much to get WTO membership for Russia, including making arrangements with Georgia to end its holdout, and the WTO officially invited Russia to join in December 2011, with the Russian Duma ratifying entrance in July 2012. U.S. trade with Russia is very small, but the Administration hopes that at least U.S. investors in Russia can be assured that their investments won’t be confiscated. The Administration has also received cooperation from Russia to set up the NDN logistic path to Afghanistan.

It would be absurd for the U.S. in its foreign policy to choose Georgia over Russia. Would the U.S. want to finally go to World War III against nuclear Russia in order to return the South Ossetians and Abkhazians to Georgia simply to help them preserve Stalin’s dream of subordinating them to the Georgians? Unfortunately, South Ossetia and Abkhazia join those other orphan territorial entities around the world, including Northern Cyprus, Kosovo, Republik Srpska (in Bosnia), Nagorno-Karabakh, Transnistria, Kashmir, and even Taiwan, that do not have full sovereignty. It is not neat in the international system of sovereignties. Negotiations about their status and participation in international organizations are endless, their economies are poor (except Taiwan’s), but they persist and survive despite their shadowy status.

So, what does this survey of threats and non-threats have to do with the general position and activities of the United States with regard to the rest of the world, that is, to the foreign policy of the U.S. Government, as conducted by the Administration-in-office?

Note that only five putative enemies are listed above—North Korea, China, Iran, Hezbollah, and the al Qaeda-and-its-associates terrorists. The situations with each of these “enemies” are mostly being handled by diplomacy these days. China is hardly an enemy, while Hezbollah is not really the U.S.’s enemy; it’s Israel’s. Al Qaeda and its associates are being pursued by an international effort involving many agencies and very few U.S. forces, though the U.S. has particularly pursued al Qaeda leadership personalities with drone attacks—except for Osama bin Laden himself, who was killed in a Special Forces raid on the ground.

U.S. forces will still be postured against North Korea and China in the Western Pacific, and the U.S. Navy is likely to be the containment instrument in the Persian Gulf. A new regional missile defense posture will be slowly established, using Aegis ships and land-based SM-3 missiles—although it is not clear as to (1) why the U.S. taxpayer should be paying for the missile defense of Europe against Iranian missiles, or (2) why Iran would be lobbing missiles into Europe, and against what targets, in the first place.
The U.S. Navy will also continue to deploy regularly (hopefully going back to its regular six-month cruises once Afghanistan is over), since those cruises are best for its professional readiness—not because it has to patrol all the sea lanes of the world (which it simply has never done).

U.S. forces will continue to find ways to exercise with allies. Both U.S. servicemen and those of other countries find these exercises professionally and diplomatically rewarding.

The following section discusses the overseas posture of U.S. forces in the coming future in greater detail.
XII. U.S. Military Posture in the World After Iraq and Afghanistan and How It May Relate to U.S. Foreign Policy

Under the BCA, the Obama Administration worked some strategic changes together with program adjustments to meet the initial BCA-mandated cuts that were to add up to $478 billion over ten years. The strategic changes were mostly about the posture and activities of U.S. forces overseas, as opposed to some drastic changes in U.S. forces for some unknown but terrifying future. These changes in overseas posture and activities are appropriate to the current situation out in the world, including threats to U.S. and allied security, and within the larger context of U.S. foreign policy. They do not apply particularly to some of the reductions in force sizes and acquisition programs that may eventuate as programs are adjusted to the ten-year, 8.3-percent reduction the BCA imposed.\(^\text{106}\)

Further reductions have now been required by the second half of the BCA, the sequester, imposed upon extending the FY12 budget, with modifications, through the end of FY13. These two BCA steps mean the reduction is about 18 percent over the next ten years, that is, another $55 billion-a-year off the previously projected defense budget, although the initial sequester for FY13 was $37 billion. Further changes in the U.S. military overseas posture was being assessed by DOD in mid-2013. In the spring of 2013, the effects of the sequester were already affecting the Navy’s maintenance schedules, thus delaying deployments, so that was already an effect on U.S. “posture” around the world.

To put it most simply, the overseas posture adjustments are being made with the legacy forces the U.S. already possesses. For instance, the “rebalancing” to the Asia-Pacific region does not imply additional forces overall in a flat or declining U.S. defense budget.

As for the substance of the new Obama Administration strategy and its priorities regarding the U.S. overseas posture, given that the major threats are China and Iran—however improbable scenarios for wars with them may be—and given that there are hardly any threats these days to Europe, it is appropriate that the Obama Administration is sustaining its existing East Asian posture, with some adjustments, while sustaining the U.S. containment of Iran in the Persian Gulf, while the Administration tries to thwart the Iranian nuclear weapons program with sanctions and diplomacy.

The isolated al Qaeda terror threats still loom behind the adjustments of U.S. military postures, with the recent addition of Mali as a terrorist theater. The U.S. will continue to handle the threats by drone strikes and Special Forces assistance to local police and military forces. Current U.S. activities to aid Yemen are in this category.

The continued turmoil in the Arab world is a concern in which U.S. diplomacy is engaged, but not U.S. forces. The most prominent of these in 2013 has been Syria, but

---

106. The costs of U.S. legacy forces and programs-of-record (acquisitions now under way) may well have been understated in the FY13-17 FYDP submitted to the Congress in February 2012, according to CBO: \textit{Long-Term Implications of the 2013 Future Years Defense Program} (July, 2012).
the intervention there of U.S. or anyone else’s forces, whether to fight the 300,000-man Syrian army or as peacekeepers, is simply not foreseen. Otherwise various kinds of assistance to identifiable and moderate rebel groups has been underway—though the most prominent and organized rebel groups are Islamist. As a force-posture matter, though, U.S. forces are not standing by.

The new strategy also includes continuing exercises with allies and friends around the world and assistance to countries to improve their own defenses—although the resources available in the 150 Foreign Assistance and Defense Department 1206 accounts are quite limited, as they have always been, and likely to be even more reduced under sequestration, except for the funds for Israel.

The adjustments to the worldwide postures of U.S. forces are complicated by the fact that the war in Afghanistan is not yet over. This pertains particularly to the planned reductions in U.S. ground forces personnel. As noted earlier, the removal from Afghanistan of the surge component of 33,000 soldiers was accomplished by the end of September 2012, the turnover of security to the Afghans is to take place across 2013, and then the rest of U.S. (and allied) forces are to phase out over 2014. The details for any residual foreign forces (likely to be all American) in Afghanistan beyond 2014 remain to be worked out. However this scenario in Afghanistan may evolve, it should be noted that the whole Afghanistan issue (and Pakistan as well) will preoccupy Administration officials through 2014.

Posture in Asia

The Administration describes the changes in posture in East Asia as a “rebalancing.” Pundits call it a “pivot.” Basically, it means retaining the forces already stationed there (and on the U.S. West Coast, Hawaii, and Alaska) and making a few additions, notably continuing the shift to 60 percent of whatever ships the U.S. Navy has to the Pacific, a shift that had already been in progress before the BCA.

Perhaps more important than the adjustments in the stationing of U.S. forces in the Pacific area has been the post-2010 diplomacy whereby Secretary of State Clinton and other U.S. diplomats have managed to get the countries of Northeast and Southeast Asia together for harmonious discussions of mutual security, given the increasing Chinese “assertiveness.” China insists on dealing with the countries in multiple bilaterals, while the U.S. seems to be able to bring them all together (and threat each one as an equal). As an example, the RIMPAC naval exercise off Hawaii in June 2012 involved 22 countries, even including Russia, but not including China. 107

There were, per DOD’s March 2012 personnel report, about 40,000 U.S. military personnel in Japan and about 28,500 in South Korea. The U.S. had been planning to move 4700 of the 14,000 Marine personnel on Okinawa to Guam and others to Hawaii, but this may be delayed or changed because of costs and problems in overloading the

107. One is reminded of the panel in Peanuts where Lucy organized a party for the sole purpose of not inviting Charlie Brown. However, China has been invited for RIMPAC 2014 and apparently intends to participate.
fragile environment in Guam. Chinese assertiveness has made Japan nervous and perhaps less eager to see reductions from Okinawa.

The U.S. Navy has been executing a plan to homeport 60 percent of its combat ships in the Pacific. It had been 50-50 Atlantic-Pacific. The Navy now has 285 ships, so this would mean 171 ships in the Pacific—though the overall number of ships may shrink in the coming years because of the flat DOD budget. The Navy has already achieved this goal in submarines. The rest of the move is to be completed by 2020. Of the ships homeported in the Pacific, one carrier, four surface combatants, and three amphibious ships, plus the command ship, USS Blue Ridge, are homeported in Japan. Four littoral combat ships (LCS) are to be homeported in Singapore in coming years. The Navy also has a logistics headquarters in Singapore. The U.S. is negotiating for more frequent visits of its ships to Vietnam and to the Philippines, though not proposing to homeport them there.

The U.S. Air Force has F-15s, F-16s, A-10, KC-135R tankers, and E-3 AWACS aircraft forward-based in Japan and South Korea.

Twenty-five hundred U.S. Marines will be rotated in and out of Darwin in Australia as a new addition in the area—a dagger aimed at the heart of China, though Indonesia is in the way.

The Middle East

Although the attention in the discussions about the new strategy has been about East Asia (given too the tendency to treat China as “the new peer competitor” replacing the Soviet Union), the Middle East—particularly the Persian Gulf—still looms almost equally large and is an almost more immediate situation than East Asia because of the Iran nuclear program. The Gulf had become a hive of U.S. forces’ activities since 2001 both during the Iraq war and in providing air support and logistic way stations for the war in Afghanistan. Outside of Iraq and Afghanistan, the U.S. had created more air bases, logistic bases (especially in Kuwait), and command centers (e.g., in Qatar). The U.S. had years ago established its naval headquarters (NAVCENT, Fifth Fleet) in Bahrain, though periodic unrest in Bahrain could make the headquarters vulnerable and subject to relocation.

The U.S. withdrawal of its forces from Iraq meant some of this overall activity in the area was phased down, but the use of bases, notably in Qatar and UAE, to support Afghan air strike and resupply operations has continued. In the meantime, the confrontation with Iran grew as its nuclear enrichment program progressed and also because the withdrawal of the U.S. from Iraq left the Shia Maliki government there with closer connections to the Shia Iranians. Moreover, the Arab Spring spread to Bahrain and its 79-percent Shia population and led to more American fears of Iranian interventions. The Iranians, in the meantime, keep threatening to try to shut down the flow of oil through the Strait of Hormuz as Israel (and the U.S.) keeps threatening to bomb its nuclear facilities.
Therefore, the U.S. Navy is maintaining its surface ship patrols in the Gulf. A carrier is always around, and sometimes two have been on station. The Navy has four minesweepers homeported in the Gulf, and another four are heading there. Eventually they will be replaced by Littoral Combat Ships (LCS). It has also established USS *Ponce*, a former LPD that was scheduled for decommissioning, as a station ship in the Gulf to support mine-clearance capabilities and perhaps other functions (not clearly Special Forces yet). The U.S. is maintaining 13,500 military personnel in Kuwait so far. Before OIF, the U.S. had prepositioned equipment for two Army brigades, in Kuwait and Qatar, but no mention of their reconstitution has been made. A Marine ARG/MEU cycles in and out of the Gulf. The U.S. is keeping its base on the UK’s Diego Garcia Island, and the Marines are sustaining a Maritime Positioning Squadron (MPS) there and are reconstituting the equipment in its ships.

The U.S. has also been selling missile-defense-capable systems to the Gulf states and is now preparing to install an X-band radar in Qatar to detect missile launches—along with the X-band radars in Israel (the Negev) and Turkey.

The U.S. is continuing CJTF-HOA at the French base Camp Lemonnier in Djibouti, with around 1300 U.S. military personnel, along with the longstanding French bases and now even a Japanese base there. The patrols against Somali pirates in the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean continue, with the U.S. contributing 2-3 ships of the 20-24 total ships of a number of nations there; the planning and coordination of the operation are still lodged at the U.S. naval headquarters in Bahrain.

**Europe and the Eastern Mediterranean area**

As noted, there is no threat to Europe, except, as usual, the al Qaeda terrorists, plus the emerging threat of Iranian missiles—though it is not clear why Iran would lob missiles into Europe, and at what, especially with nuclear weapons. But the U.S. is augmenting missile defenses for both Israel and Europe, with four missile-defense-capable cruisers and destroyers to be homeported at Rota, Spain, along with two LCSs eventually. Later, land-based SM-3 missile defense systems are to be installed in Romania in 2015 and Poland in 2018. In the early 2000s, the U.S. also set up “forward operating bases” at Romanian and Bulgarian air bases, at which U.S. forces drop in for exercises, but are permanently stationed there.

Even as “third priority” within the Obama Administration’s new change-of-posture strategy, Europe still receives substantial military attention from the United States. The U.S. is going to keep two Army brigades in Europe—the 173rd Airborne Brigade in Vicenza, Italy, and a Stryker brigade in Germany. The U.S. Army will periodically send a brigade to Europe for exercising with allies there. As of March 2012, about 70,000 U.S. military personnel were still in Europe.

**Comment on U.S. bases overseas**

Chalmers Johnson has said that the U.S. has something like 700 bases in 120 countries around the world, but this is not true. The U.S. has had nearly 100,000 military personnel
in Afghanistan (going down to 68,000 with the removal of the 33,000 surge troops by the end of September 2012), may be keeping 68,000 personnel in Europe at long-time bases there (down from 300,000 in the Cold War and about 81,000 after the Cold War ended), and about 64,000 military personnel stationed in Japan and South Korea.

Aside from Afghanistan, the U.S. has had fighting military units (“troops”) in only five countries worldwide—UK, Germany, Italy, South Korea, and Japan. The only other countries that have any significant numbers of U.S. military personnel (though not force units) are Bahrain, Djibouti, and the air control center in Qatar. A few more countries have 100 or so U.S. military personnel. Most of the rest of the so-called bases (in about 140 countries) have fewer than 10, including Marine guards at U.S. embassies.108 So there is no U.S. global military occupation. It is said that the U.S. has bases in Central Asia, but the DOD report shows only 11 U.S. military personnel in Kyrgyzstan, managing the continuing flow of personnel and supplies through the airfield at Manas, the single U.S. “base” in all of Central Asia. That air base in Kyrgyzstan may close or have greatly reduced operations after the bulk of U.S. forces has left Afghanistan by the end of 2014.

The prime advantages of these adjusted postures in the Western Pacific, around the Persian Gulf, and in Europe are not so much for defense against some attack, though containment and deterrence of Iran and China seem to be a continuing need, but also for the opportunities for continuing exercises and other coordinated activities with allies and friends, like countering piracy off Somalia.

**General comment on “posture”**

The term “posture” is not altogether descriptive of how at least U.S. forces think about themselves. The posture of U.S. forces at home implies “readiness”—being manned, maintained, and trained for fairly rapid deployment to various places in the world when ordered to by the President and Secretary of Defense. Another word for readiness is “preparedness.” All U.S. forces are “expeditionary,” as discussed earlier, since they are ready to be sent across the two great oceans upon being ordered to do so by the President and Secretary of Defense. Readiness is also a matter of keeping up the professional qualifications of U.S. military personnel and their making sure their equipment is well-maintained.

If they are out in the world, U.S. forces may assume a “waiting posture” until ordered into a conflict situation or to perform other tasks (e.g., humanitarian relief after a natural disaster), and they may then engage in selected response operations (“use”).

---

XIII. The Future Utility of U.S. Forces

....In light of the enemies and conflicts the U.S. might encounter and consider for either diplomatic management or military intervention

Once accumulating and maintaining the spectrum of capabilities discussed earlier in this paper, what might the nation want to use them for, if no longer for massive counter-insurgencies and nation-building, nor for a great war with China, which the nation should want to avoid?

The following chart shows the possibilities. This series of charts shown previously in this paper went from how the world works— from only private business to war—through how the U.S. in its foreign relations relates to that spectrum—again from supporting its businessmen to going to war with its military forces—through the activities that U.S. forces carry out along the spectrum—again from being ready back in the U.S. all the way to war—and finally to the military capabilities that the U.S. sustains to support that spectrum of activities—what Colin Powell called “the tool box.”

The final step is to relate these capabilities maintained back to the typical situations in the world that Administrations have either gotten involved in or thought about getting involved in over time, as shown below. That is, it is not conjecture that reveals how the U.S. may act, but past and current experience. Let us remember that it is not some “demand” from unknown sources out in the world that triggers U.S. forces to undertake some operation, but it depends heavily on the Administration in office, its nature and mood, which in turn depend heavily on both the U.S. economy and how it’s performing and when the next election looms.
The activities are divided into:

(1) Defending the U.S. (“U.S. doesn’t want threats to reach its shores”)

(2) Preparing for or deterring potential or actual conflicts with other countries (“two-state wars”) that would involve shooting

(3) Getting involved in the internal problems of countries, from humanitarian disasters to raids on terrorists establishing sanctuaries in countries, but not long-term occupation and nation-building of countries again for a long while.

Note: I could not make one-for-one connections from the capabilities in the spectrum on the bottom to the situations on the top, so much cross-hatching is shown, as the appropriate tools might be drawn anywhere from within the tool box for whatever situation arises.  

Note also that the chart also lays out in the intermediate position the range of functions for which the U.S. defense community thinks the forces might be useful (I do not necessarily call them “missions”).

109. Thanks to Frank Sullivan and Frank Miller, Senior Fellows at CNA, for pointing this need out.
Dissuasion

Dissuasion, which has come to mean (as a trapped term) discouraging another country from thinking it can match the U.S. in the capabilities the U.S. already has, e.g., in fifth-generation aircraft, command and control of forces, or other sheer technological advantages in which it would be difficult for them to catch up to the U.S. This might also mean imposing the diplomatic and trade controls (i.e., sanctions or embargoes) meant to prevent or make it otherwise difficult for a country to develop or acquire such capabilities, e.g., nuclear weapons.

The implication for U.S. forces as the future unfolds is to keep up U.S. military technology; it doesn’t mean the technology would necessarily be used. That is, the technology the U.S. chooses to develop and deploy should not necessarily be based on the kind of fantastic war-fighting scenarios developed for nuclear weapons during the Cold War or some Great Long-Distance War With China in the future.

Deterrence

Deterrence usually means a capability for retaliation, i.e., “We can cause more damage to you than you can cause to us.” Deterrence also operates in the case of homeland defense, e.g., by the TSA (Transportation Security Agency), and in other border controls. Because terrorists may know they could be intercepted by border and other controls, they do not even try to slip through, or other barriers exist from which they have to turn away.110

The implication for U.S. forces is similar to nuclear deterrence during the Cold War:

- First order is simply having the capabilities for retaliation
- Second order is their “credibility,” i.e., as in the Cold War, their survivability and reliability to do what their capabilities are supposed to do
- Third order—again, as in the Cold War—is the ability to target specific targets. Targeting is what low-level officials do when not subject to higher-level political supervision.

For both dissuasion and deterrence, it has been the “having” and “improvement” of capabilities within the military and the threat of retaliation from the capabilities represented by “having” that counts. Of course, the U.S. spends far more on its military than any other country (not necessarily wisely), but most of that spending is not relevant to the foreign policy activities mentioned—except again in the military’s insurance function in case something or some development goes wrong.

110. How to deter the radicalization of individuals through their access to the internet, like the Boston Marathon bombers, is a quite separate problem.
Containment

Containment, in effect, means drawing lines (“redlines”?) that some other force might fear to cross or to pose actual barriers that would result in physical contact. Constant U.S. naval patrols in the Persian Gulf are an example. The implication for U.S. forces is that they are around to promise a fight if a line is crossed. In some cases, this may be described as “a tripwire”—not necessarily a big force available to defend or retaliate immediately, but that their being attacked would bring that big retaliation on.

Containment was originally a Cold War concept (the West’s own Iron Curtain around the Soviet empire). It found a new function in the dual containment of Iraq and Iran in the Persian Gulf during the 1980s and 1990s, that is, a capability to prevent that war from spreading to the other Gulf states. It is getting new emphasis with regard to Iran and possibly China in the coming years. Nothing seems to frighten the Chinese more than the American “threat” to contain them, in effect to seek to isolate them from the rest of the world with our own Iron Curtain.

Just as in the Cold War, containment in the future will be broader than just military presence—that is, it would have a strong economic component. Bolstering the countries on our side of whatever containment lines might be set up (mostly metaphorical, not necessarily in the sense of patrols) involves only some U.S. forces, continuing consultations at the diplomatic level, sales of military equipment (as for missile defenses for the Saudis and other Gulf states)—all very passive-defensive—and the usual restricted economic relations (which tend to exclude the country being contained, as is happening with economic and financial sanctions on Iran in 2012).

Responses

Responses, that is, the deployment of U.S. forces on a mission assigned by the President and Secretary of Defense, range from:

- Humanitarian responses (usually involving the delivery of relief supplies and almost always “not into harm’s way”),
- Through non-combatant evacuation operations (NEOs) where there might be a possibly of local disorder spilling over onto U.S. forces trying to get our people out,
- Assisting other countries in their peacekeeping operations (usually by flying them there or providing other support short of the U.S. bearing arms),
- Peacekeeping by U.S. forces themselves (usually as part of an international peacekeeping force, as in Bosnia and Kosovo and the MFO in the Sinai),
- Shows of force, involving the positioning of U.S. forces not far from some situation on land so they can be noticed (shows of force have been rare),
- Brief fights, raids, or strikes, and
- On up the spectrum to major combat operations.

111. The Hall-of-Fame baseball umpire Bill Klem, when confronted by a ballpayer challenging a call, would draw a line in the dirt and tell the ballpayer that, if he crossed the line, he would be thrown out of the game. One player drew his own line in the dirt and said to Klem, “If you cross this line, I’ll punch you in the nose.” Klem threw him out of the game.
After the end of the Cold War in 1989, with the end of the Soviet threat and the spread of globalization, and until 9/11, there were only a few shooting situations in which U.S. forces were involved:
- Panama in late 1989,
- Desert Storm in 1991,
- Somalia toward the end of 1992 (Blackhawk Down as the ultimate step; before then it was peacekeeping),
- Haiti in 1994 (loaded for shooting, but turned out unnecessary as General Cedras got the message and left),
- 18 days of bombing in Bosnia in 1994,
- A couple of short retaliatory strikes in Iraq (e.g., Desert Strike for 4 days in 1998), and
- Kosovo-Serbia (78 days of bombing in 1999, followed by mostly allies carrying out peacekeeping and government administration).

In the 2000s, all real shooting has been in Iraq and Afghanistan: the quick combat phases lasted a few weeks in both places, followed by long-grinding counter-insurgency operations.

The other kinds of smaller responses seem to have withered away in the 2000s—partly because the U.S. wasn’t particularly concerned about the situations or that other countries had them well covered (e.g., the British in Sierra Leone). Countering the Somali pirates in the Gulf of Aden and Indian Ocean has involved an international response in which the U.S. Navy (and once the Marines) have participated, and there have been only a few shooting incidents.

Most responses, other than the continuing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, have been for humanitarian disasters, like after the earthquake in Haiti and the Pakistani floods. These responses have taken only minor numbers of U.S. forces, using especially their logistic capabilities and in particular their helicopters. The humanitarian responses were thought to improve the U.S. image. They are ordered by Administrations as well to help restore relations with the countries where disasters or other disruptions may have occurred. The U.S. is rarely alone in these humanitarian responses.

It is the rare shooting “opportunities” that essentially drive the jointness, readiness, and training of U.S. forces. This is what their military capabilities are basically for. But, as this paper has stated earlier, the U.S. will be faced with maintaining a range, or spectrum, of capabilities, given the history of both short, sharp joint combats and long-grinding counter-insurgencies (see also “occupations” below). The U. S. will acquire a little bit of each capability, all across the spectrum, preserving something from each of the four Services and Special Forces. That means that responses ordered by an Administration can be appropriately tailored to the situation.
Occupations

Finally, there are “occupations.” That’s what the U.S. did in Japan and Germany after World War II, then in South Vietnam from 1965 to 1973, and now in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Peacekeeping forces in Bosnia and Kosovo might have been considered occupations, but the U.S. contributed only a minor part of those peacekeeping forces and let other countries’ personnel do civilian government oversight. The presence of the peacekeepers was pursuant to international agreements and agreements with the locals, so the threat of harm to U.S. forces was minimized. No U.S. soldiers died in combat in Bosnia and Kosovo, but more than 6,500 had died in Iraq and Afghanistan by the end of 2012, and the number of “walking wounded” who will require long-term care and rehabilitation was over 50,000 by early 2013.

Occupations in Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan have also involved the U.S. in “nation-building,” that is, establishing governance, from the capital down to local jurisdictions (including the selection of local leaders); establishing internal security; undertaking the restoration or even creation of infrastructure (e.g., electricity, roads, water systems); establishing health care and food supply; supporting the restoration or installation of education facilities; and altogether restoring or even trying to create an economy.

Altogether, the U.S. has not had much stressful experience in occupations—including the Philippines until World War II (after the insurgency early in the 19th century had died down) and the major occupations in Germany and Japan after World War—until Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan. The latter occupations have been difficult and have taken enormous resources in personnel and dollars and have had doubtful success.

- In Germany and Japan after World War II, most of the earlier local institutions for these purposes needed to be simply reconstituted once their old forms of war-supporting governance had been extirpated. The U.S. needed a minimum of civilian administrators upon their reconstituting of the local government functions. And there were no internal security problems.

- The U.S. did not occupy South Korea after World War II, but the war beginning in 1950, followed by a truce in 1953, resulted in a U.S. military occupation. The South Koreans themselves rebuilt their economy and society—first under the civilian dictator Syngman Rhee, and then under a series of military dictators, for nearly three decades until democratic rotation of leadership was achieved.

- In the West Germany, Japan, and South Korea cases, it was the local people that created their booming economies, with the U.S. only providing security from outside attack.

- After the Bosnia and Kosovo wars of the 1990s, the U.S. peacekeepers there (essentially military police) were only 15 percent of the total peacekeepers. European civil administrators nurtured the new governments.
• But in Iraq and Afghanistan, the U.S. Government has had to rely heavily on its own military and those of its allies, along with contractors, to do the practically all the jobs of nation-building, given the immensity of the needs, the lack of security, and the near-unavailability of sufficient local civilian administrators. Almost all institutions had to be newly created, though the notion of creating an economy beyond subsistence and poppy-growing in Afghanistan has seemed practically impossible.

• There have never been enough civilian U.S. Government assistance people—and there never will be, because Congress has always skimped on their funding. The accounts (Title 10 for defense (050 account), Title 22 for Foreign Assistance (150 account)) are appropriated by different subcommittees in both Houses. Defense is usually funded at something like 10 times the amount for foreign operations since it is, in the Congressional view, mostly a U.S. domestic program—for American military personnel and their families, for procurement and research and development in American plants and laboratories, and for base infrastructures and family housing. There are no indications that Congress would ever open any foreign assistance floodgates. There have been no new Marshall Plans since 1947, except perhaps to stabilize the Israeli economy.

After Iraq and Afghanistan, as noted repeatedly in this paper, U.S. Administrations are likely to be reluctant to undertake any more counterinsurgency and nation-building operations for some time to come, given their costs, the lack of resources for the civilian side, and the diversion of resources (e.g., the reduction in military readiness in all other aspects), for dubious results. The State Department Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations (CSO) is taking steps to create a civil administration service to be available for some future occupation, but it is unlikely to have enough people (including of the right specialties) on call, and Congress has only barely funded it. Given Congressional aversion to the idea, the U.S. is simply not going to create a civilian service in reserve to be called up for nation-building in another country. That is, the U.S. will not create the equivalent of the old British colonial service.

The forces that the U.S. will downsize to—in order to fit the straitened Federal budget under the pressure of the national debt and the refusal to raise taxes on the rich—is unlikely to support any more Iraqs and Afghanistans. However, even assuming that the base defense budget may be flat at the lower sequester level, and then barely keeping up with inflation for another ten years, it would still be able to cover all those other functions with which the U.S. has had experience since the end of the Cold War.113

---

112. This author spent nearly nine years (1981-1990) while in the Defense Security Assistance Agency (DSAA, now DSCA) in the struggle to get Congressional support and financing for the 150 account.

113. The creativity of the scenario writers in the Department of Defense in making up game scenarios in which the numbers remaining in U.S. forces upon the imposition of a flat budget would be inadequate for their scenarios will continue to be astonishing. But their creativity will not alter the budget numbers. Only some dire situations that actually arise and may threaten the security of the continental United States itself may lead to increased funds for any such contingency, or new U.S. security organizations may be created, like the Department of Homeland Defense and its budget after 9/11. Many Defense Department articles
The only situations in which the U.S. could possibly contemplate high-resource wars are those with China and Iran, as discussed earlier. North Korea attacking South Korea is highly unlikely and has become less likely over the past six decades, whatever the propaganda from Pyongyang. China and Iran would be committing economic suicide to go to war with the U.S., as well as their losing a lot of their forces—but the U.S. would lose forces, too. There’s an enormous amount of diplomacy that takes place between the U.S. and just about the whole Western world—plus the Sunnis in the Middle East and Japan, on the situation with Iran and between the U.S. and a war with China—that is meant to preclude wars.

- On Iran, Iran’s economic linkages with the world are drying up—to their detriment, not those of the U.S. The U.S. has other, bigger economic problems, and the world is getting to the point where it doesn’t need Iranian oil. Moreover, Iran is projected to run out of oil for export by 2015. Iran doesn’t care about its people; it has them under control; it can let them eat nukes.

- The economic linkages of China with the world, including substantially with the U.S., lie between it and some great war with all its accurate missiles, space shots, jamming, cyber warfare, and so on. China has a big, big problem with all its 1.3 billion-plus people; that’s different—and the biggest problem for its leadership.

How does the spectrum of the capabilities of U.S. forces (including the basic Service institutions) support the continuities in U.S. foreign policy?

The United States itself is hardly threatened. It is bordered by the two least-defended countries in the world, Canada and Mexico, though the stability of Mexico is threatened by the drug traffic that is on its way to American customers. Only Russian ICBMs and SLBMs and Chinese ICBMs can reach us. Terrorists try to reach us by hijacking or setting off bombs in planes, but it has gotten very difficult for them.

This is why the utility of the U.S. military has long been thought of by U.S. political masters as “projection of military forces,” to catch threats far away from the continental U.S. before they might ever reach our territory and people. This has meant that all U.S. forces have assumed an expeditionary character—they can be lifted and moved by sea and air, and then they are to be supported by long logistic trains of a nature unique in the world—in part because just about every other country simply plans to defend its own territory.

As a result of the occupations after World War II, and stretching across the Cold War and (greatly reduced) into the Post-Cold War period, many U.S. forces were left at overseas

---

may also speak of American interests that may be threatened, but this author has never seen any of those interests specified in any of those documents—“interests” is just thrown in at the end of sentences.

114. China has long been developing SLBMs, but the latest SLBM it is developing is not ready yet.
bases. However, these are being greatly reduced. After Afghanistan and the closure of
supporting bases in the Persian Gulf area, only five countries will have U.S. force units
on their soil (UK, Germany, Italy, South Korea, and Japan) not counting the homeporting
of missile-defense destroyers, minesweepers, and LCS at various ports.

Most U.S. foreign policy activities do not involve military activity. U.S. foreign policy
by Administrations is:

- Inherited, in both relations and longstanding, difficult-to-resolve problems (e.g.,
  Middle East peace, North Korean and Iranian nuclear weapons programs)
- Pragmatic and reactive, day-to-day coping with problems around the world (not
  necessarily “world-wide problems”)
- Exercised in the continuity of international structural economic and financial
  institutions, which at present at may be in grave jeopardy because of the financial
  troubles in the U.S. and Europe that have led to economic recession and
  stagnation.

The greatest international problem for the Obama Administration in 2013 may well be
the crisis of the European financial system and the overall slowing of the global
economy—including the Chinese economy—and of the effects of both financial troubles
and economic stagnation on the U.S. economy itself.

The U.S. military cannot do anything about those situations and is, in fact, caught in the
paralysis of the American political system between those who want to get the Federal
government out of every public program except defense, and those who believe that the
Federal government should find ways to stimulate the economy—especially in
infrastructure, education, and research and development—at the cost of the accumulation
of some more debt for a while. 115

The private financial system is sitting on $2-3 trillion in capital and deposits, afraid to
invest in production of goods and housing because the public is not yet out of debt and its
decaying incomes (lost 4 percent 2009-2011) don’t leave them in a position to expand
their consumption. The country has been in a demand-side stagnation, which is one
reason why interest rates have been so low and likely to continue low for a few more
years to come until full economic recovery may be achieved—by one estimate, not before
2018.

So the foreign policy focus for the U.S. and among U.S. Government agencies is
economic, with the White House and the Secretary of the Treasury in the lead. That’s

115. The U.S. Federal Reserve Bank (“The Fed”) will keep interest rates on U.S. bounds low at least
trough 2015. As the Reinhart and Rogoff book, op. cit., says, unlike most recessions, recovery from a
financial recession like that beginning in 2007-2008 takes 7 to 10 years, during which interest rates stay
low. Therefore, the U.S. can afford to accumulate more debt for a while longer. In April 2013, the
Reinhart-Rogoff assertion that a national debt of 90 percent of GDP represents a tipping point upon which
an economy declines was shown to be flawed analysis—economic growth is still possible.
where the action is: the G-20, IMF, G-7, APEC, Free Trade Area negotiations, and WTO negotiations. The U.S. has been rather helplessly on the sidelines as European leaders remain paralyzed with their defective euro currency structure.

These forums and negotiations do not discuss military or conflict problems—they have much bigger issues to cope with. These problems include energy supplies, though those problems have seen some easing with the discovery of new sources—especially natural gas in shale, and the slowdowns in economies and thus less consumption of energy.

These institutions have also been grappling about whether to do something about climate change, about which there are going to be real problems in the future for the security of the world’s people, not just states-nations. But the solutions (adaptation or mitigation) to climate change appear to be too costly to undertake at the moment.

To summarize what the Administration is doing in foreign policy in mid-2013:

- One critical problem discussed in these economic forums was the question of currency exchange rates and whether China was following a beggar-thy-neighbor mercantilist currency policy. It has faded lately, as the Chinese economy slows and its wages and costs of doing business rise, while its foreign markets, especially in the U.S. and Europe, stagnate. The issue of their “manipulating currency exchange rates” seems to have faded away. This is not the time for a trade war.

- The second biggest foreign policy activity of the Obama Administration has been restoring relations with longstanding allies and friends, to include Europe, Japan, and the Arab countries.

- There is also routine police work to enforce global regulations—the chasing of criminals through InterPol, on the drug trade, including the U.S.-Russian discussions about the traffic in opium from Afghanistan, and in the maintenance of order in the air and oceans through ICAO and IMO and other agencies, as well as bilaterally. However, Congress’s repeated failures to ratify UNCLOS (the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea) has hindered U.S. participation in this area—as in the Arctic as the ice melts. However, the U.S., as a littoral state, is a member of the Arctic Council.

- The advanced states have been cooperating extensively on the pursuit of al Qaeda and the reduction of international terrorism. Note, for example, the international cooperation upon the mailing of package bombs from Yemen in late October 2010 and then the new PETN bomb in 2012 that fell into the hands of a Saudi-planted agent.

- None of the above activities has particularly involved U.S. military forces—except for the war on Somali pirates in the Indian Ocean, in which the number of U.S. ships is small, but, as is becoming more common, as in the Libya operation,
U.S. ISR assets and their management—facilitating the connections among participating units—play a unique and very large role.

- Then there are the continuing humanitarian efforts around the world, in which the U.S. is an active, but hardly the sole, participant. The U.S. military, given its sealift and airlift capabilities, can provide quick-response and short-term support—though the situations are very episodic, that is, the U.S. would not keep or build military forces solely for those purposes.

The major point is that the formidable U.S. military forces are ready to support most of these foreign policy matters if they have any implications for the defense of the U.S. Nonetheless, the Administration and U.S. forces are still tied down by Afghanistan, still requiring troop rotations and dwell time at home, and still taking some causalities. The U.S. Navy in particular is still tied down in the Persian Gulf as the Iranian threat grows and the tension in that situation becomes greater, though the FY13 sequester has disrupted the maintenance schedules for U.S. carriers and thus only one carrier may be in or near the Gulf for a while. The problem of Syria continued through 2013 with no clear resolution in sight at all. The international community is finding it hard to intervene there, except with humanitarian assistance.

U.S. defense is going through the adjustments arising from the long wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and the U.S. (and European) financial catastrophe that led to the Great Recession of 2008 and 2009 and the slow economic growth thereafter—resulting in a flat defense budget (and worse, with sequester). Even though interest the government must pay on 10-year bonds has been down around 2 percent and likely to stay at that level for some more years to come, the political class of America is obsessed instead with the Federal debt, which in 2013 exceeds GDP by some measures, and therefore cannot bring itself to invest government credits in growth, e.g., through investments in infrastructure, education, and research and development. Such investments would otherwise be the way to generate more revenue over time as the economy grows and more people are employed and thus able to pay more taxes. The defense budget thus stagnates in the interim, while the U.S. has still been fighting its costly war in Afghanistan.

It is difficult in these circumstances to foresee what the future may bring for DOD. Yet under the most dire of presently threatened circumstances—the sequestration, pushing the defense budget back all the way to 2007 levels—the U.S. will still have by far the largest defense budget in the world, the finest forces, the best educated and trained personnel who are also battle-hardened, and the best equipment, thus to sustain forces that are ready and expeditionary, assuming careful management of the ample resources available.

After Afghanistan (and Iraq), most U.S. forces are going to come home, to recover and reconstitute. Ground forces personnel are being cut by 100,000 and maybe more. The forces will then turn to restoring and keeping up their readiness for whatever the Administration wants them to do, while advancing their technology and adding new replacement systems in practical and incremental ways (as opposed to some of the disastrous acquisitions of the last 20 years).
Defense planning for the future: the conflict between sustaining the forces the U.S. has—while evolving them as the future unfolds

During the long technological competition with the Soviet Union, the U.S. thought, planned, and developed for “the future.” Obsolescence was essentially defined as, “the Soviets are certain to be coming up with something better, so we must too.” So improving, modernizing, and “transforming” the forces, especially to keep up with technological developments, was the essential mind-set of U.S. forces. This envisaging of the future was reinforced by the fact that the U.S. and Soviet Union never fought directly, and the possibilities faded especially once Berlin confrontations ended after 1964.

Across the Cold War, though, the U.S. always expected Soviet nuclear attacks on the U.S. and on Western Europe “out of the blue,” not to speak of a repetition of the surprise North Korean attack on South Korea in 1950. So the U.S. built strategic nuclear forces on hair-trigger alert; stationed forces in Western Europe, South Korea, and Japan; and maintained its forces in the United State in readiness to deploy. But readiness in those days also meant constant modernization of the forces, especially as technology advanced.

The world changes, and the United States wants its forces to change with it, both in their basic capabilities and in their orientation to the places around the world to which the U.S. Administration-in-office may wish to send them. After all, aside from the remote needs of homeland defense (except when the National Guard is sent out to help with immigration control on the southern border or in natural disasters), what U.S. forces may have to do for U.S. national security will be overseas. But the biggest question for the future, after the disastrous experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan (as was also the case in Vietnam), is what an Administration’s orders to the troops to go fight have to do with the assuring the security of the United States itself.

As the defense budget shrinks across the next ten years—in accordance with the Budget Control Act of 2011—the most important “strategy” being discussed in DOD is to not let the force go hollow, i.e., to keep a great force that is ready, with great people, equipped and trained, in order to be ready to do whatever they may be asked to do. But a force that is so balanced will inevitably shrink in the numbers of force units, given that the real costs of personnel and of O&M continue to rise without real increases in the overall budget. That means, as noted earlier, a big squeeze on acquisitions, especially on the high-cost items, which in turn leads to less replacement equipment, squeezing force sizes even more—a double whammy.

But because the acquisition budget somehow represents the future of defense and given that:

- Someone out there may be stealing a technological march on the U.S, that fear now being applied by some to China.
- Those making decisions in the Pentagon and what Congress goes over in detail in the President’s budget submission tend to focus on this future aspect because it is acquisition that anything new appears.
The prominence of acquisition issues is also driven by having to think ahead to equipment replacement, since all equipment has a finite life.\textsuperscript{116}

But replacement of older equipment has gotten complicated as both the calculators in the Services of “requirements” and industry strive to make something truly new and different. Obsolescence has long been defined as thinking about something better. Folding new technological opportunities into the replacement task means taking more technological risks, with inevitably higher and unpredictable costs, and, as it is turning out, long development times.

Anxieties about what another country may be doing to develop new and exotic military capabilities has been a big motivator for making something truly new and different. Yet it can’t be anything like the uncertainties the U.S. had about what the Soviets were doing. The current anxieties tend to be focused on China. There are also anxieties that “anyone in the world, including terrorists, can have access to the most advanced weapons systems because “they are now cheap and are being proliferated,” though little evidence is advanced to this effect.

Yet, as mentioned earlier in this paper, the greatest uncertainty for the Services is what an Administration may want to use U.S. forces for. It is not some mysterious “demand” coming from somewhere out in the world. Defense Department documents may speak of “commitments” and “responsibilities” the U.S. may have in the world, but the terms are used rhetorically, without specifics.

There is also the issue of keeping the industrial base alive, lest its designing and manufacturing skills be lost.\textsuperscript{117} And there is the simple matter of the Services getting bored with what they used to build.\textsuperscript{118} These mind-sets arise from how U.S. defense evolved because of and during the Cold War—especially as the U.S. never did get to fight with that Soviet enemy and could keep rolling over its inventory with improvements.

The trouble with this future mind-set—even though U.S. defense is essentially all about contingencies—is that it’s as if only the future counts and as if all defense planning starts today from a kind of zero base. As stated earlier in this paper, this may tend to neglect the already formidable strengths of the legacy forces, including the fact that just about all U.S. fighting systems are almost certainly better than any others in the world. That could

\textsuperscript{116} However, it appears that tanks and helicopters, and maybe other equipment, can be kept forever since all their parts can be replaced within a given hull. For instance, B-52s have had long lives with constant upgrading.

\textsuperscript{117} When keeping the industrial base alive was raised in a briefing at CNA many years ago, Professor Richard Cooper, an economist from Harvard, said, “What do you mean sustaining it? Most industry does not keep its old machinery forever, but is constantly changing it over!”

\textsuperscript{118} An example is the U.S. Navy getting bored with building DDG-51s forever, however modified. It designed a super new replacement—the DD-1000 Zumwalt-class destroyer—but it got so big (and actually restricted in its function largely to shore gunfire support) and cost so much ($3.3 billion apiece) that the Navy is going to build only three of them and is continuing the DDG-51 line.
be a case for continuing lines of superior systems, e.g., for F-15s, F-16s, F/A-18s. But it is hard to make the case of reopening the F-22 line, given its very high cost. But most doubt about the F-22 is that it is hard to envisage what wars it might be used in—it has not been used at all in the current Iraq and Afghanistan wars.

Many of the new capabilities the Services are striving for may simply be for insurance against unexpected developments. Only those that China appears to be developing might be threats. But that the Chinese haven’t demonstrated many real leaps in technology as yet—even their new DF-21D anti-ship ballistic missiles seem to be modeled after the U.S. Pershing II RADAC maneuvering warhead developed during the 1970s. Other Chinese developments seem to be evolutions of Soviet systems developed during the 1980s, e.g., Soviet SU-27 fighter derivatives.

But any DOD thinking about the future, and in particular about new systems, has to be constrained for a while because of the dire American economic, jobs, deficit, and debt situations. The prospects for U.S. economic growth creating jobs may not improve for another several years. Future thinking in DOD is also constrained by the continuing drain of the war in Afghanistan.

Yet almost all the worries about U.S. national security out into the future—at least as expressed by those in Washington who worry at all about it—are about scenarios involving China, Iran, al Qaeda terrorists, or cyber warfare—and no others. Neither the pursuit of al Qaeda nor cyber warfare is going to be a big budget drain. Aside from the fact that either China or Iran would essentially be committing economic suicide to go to war with the U.S., they are the countries that various American defense experts pose as the “anti-access/area-denial” (A2/AD) challenge and, with it, some particular technological challenges to overcome what are essentially country defenses, i.e., China and Iran simply defending themselves against U.S. invasions.

In a way, if those are the threats of the future (though most are not particularly threats to the security of the United States itself), then, as DOD goes through its budget squeeze and decides on its priorities, it might want to deemphasize the highly technological equipment required to cope with A2/AD, including missile defenses, stealthy penetrating delivery vehicles of very long range, jamming, etc. Successful and cost-efficient development of these super-systems would be big challenges for the defense industrial base, even if their development were supposed to be representative of the U.S. staying competitive in technology.

To do so, assuming the great costs to develop the new systems, within, of course, the straitened defense budget, would mean favoring investment over the size of the forces, and thus further diminishing numbers of U.S. force units. One also has to ask what the strategic purposes of all these capabilities would be. What is the strategic situation of war in which these systems would be deployed in battle? Most involve invading the supposedly technologically competitive countries, again China or Iran, which would be extremely dangerous and highly unlikely to be successful.

Moreover, if force size is to be given up, what specifically would be given up, e.g., would U.S. ground forces be even more severely reduced, even below the 1990 Base Force
levels of 480,000 Army and 172,000 Marines that were thought to be adequate across the
1990s?

If these sophisticated systems were to be deployed, and considering the dangers of
actually invading China or Iran, is there some concept of deterrence that could be
advanced—much like the evolution of deterrent thought with regard to the strategic
nuclear deterrence stand-off between the U.S. and the USSR? The essence of that stand-
off was the threat of retaliation in case one side decided to strike first—and the retaliation
would be against something the first side had not expected to lose. So far, no such
deterrent discussion or concept has emerged from the U.S. Defense Department or from
the Administration at the higher level.

Although this approach to the future is the alternative to the “fighting-the-last-war
syndrome,” is it both too narrow and too improbable? That is, would it be too restricted,
cutting off many other avenues of defense readiness and deterrence? The alternative to
the technologically stretched future may well be the U.S. keeping the spread of
capabilities of its already excellent force in roughly the same proportions as before the
Iraq and Afghanistan wars, i.e., essentially the post-1991, post-Cold War forces as they
evolved, with the replacement equipment being more “retro,” i.e., building what we
knows works and can be evolutionarily improved.

Another approach to the future, rather than the classic style of confrontation with the
Soviet Union that is now applied especially to China, is to consider how the U.S.
Government and the U.S. Defense Department effectively work day-to-day. Even given
the flat budget mandated by the BCA over the next ten years, the Department of Defense
has already made substantial investments in its existing very good forces with its
experienced military people. That suggests incremental adjustments of the forces while
waiting for the future to unfold—remembering it is not a more dangerous world as the
incidences of conflict, especially those of strategic significance (at least for the security
of the United States itself), decline.

In short, this is not the time for some radical “transformation” of U.S. forces to cope with
a great enemy or widespread wars all over the world. Much of the history of complete
transformations of country forces came upon huge disasters to both the country and the
forces, as for Germany and Japan upon their total defeats in World War II, or the total
collapse of the Soviet pseudo-economy with its mistaken supply-side view that it was
generating economic growth by the endless multiplication of its military capabilities.

The U.S. is hardly in the kinds of positions those countries were in, although, if its
economic decline continues in the current directions with a small class of oligarchs and a
huge underclass of the poor and under-employed, it might have to examine the
possibilities for a much smaller military establishment, with certainly less thought about
running around with its military to rectify all conceivably bad situations in the world.
Summary on the future of U.S. forces: mapping them out across the short-, mid-, and long-terms

The following chart completes the set of three—on the future of the world, the future of the U.S. in the world (both shown earlier in this paper), and, finally, the future for the U.S. military in the world.

First, note the constraints on the left, especially the budget constraints, which, as noted throughout this paper, are determined outside defense, especially based on the U.S. tolerable deficit situation (it is considered to be intolerable now), not because of any “analysis” of “needs” or “requirements” done within the Defense Department.

Moreover, as has been discussed, the combination of a flat defense budget out into the future (and less, if sequestration takes place given the priority in Congress to no more taxes on the rich) and rising personnel and O&M costs will squeeze the funds available for new acquisitions, especially since the new acquisitions lately have had huge cost overruns and prolonged development.

The Services have a tendency to jump way out into the future in their thinking, conjuring up enemies with superb capabilities on the basis of fears, not evidence—and also
assuming some great turnaround in what has been a strong decline in armed conflict worldwide, starting only coincidentally with the end of the Cold War.

Near-term

The near-term issues are mostly about Afghanistan, the threat of Israeli and/or American war on Iran to stop their nuclear programs, and adjusting to the growing frictions in the China Seas (which have yet to lead to any shooting). In mid-2013, however, the greatest area of uncertainty was whether the civil war in Syria is to be left to burn itself out (with a real threat of an Islamist government as the outcome), be resolved by diplomacy, or resolved by outside military intervention. The U.S. itself would not be in a good position after Iraq and Afghanistan to send the necessary minimum of 400,000 troops into Syria.

Otherwise, the U.S. Navy continues to deploy routinely to the Persian Gulf and the Western Pacific. It keeps a carrier in the Arabian Sea to provide strike sorties into Afghanistan, as well as to deter Iran. The U.S. has also occasionally had two carriers in the area for that latter purpose. Diplomatic efforts lead the Administration’s initiatives on both the Iran and China issues. Al Qaeda terrorists are being pursued in “economy of force” efforts through drone strikes and Special Forces raids in the few places where the terrorists still operate, though the situation in Mali adds new complications—though how anything from there could reach the U.S. is a mystery. Assuming the planned withdrawal of U.S. forces from Afghanistan, the standing-down of their long supporting logistic lines, and the reconstitution of the forces back in the U.S., the U.S. forces that can be supported by the flat budget seem adequate to handle the Persian Gulf and China seas stand-offs, assuming wars can be avoided. That means that DOD can begin the evolutionary adjustments to its existing forces as necessitated by the constrained defense budget.

Mid-term

In the mid-term, it is hoped that U.S. forces will all return from Afghanistan to recover, reconstitute, and re-equip, while adjusting to the flat defense budget—which will continue to prevail unless the U.S. economy shows a real turnaround to substantial growth. The prospects for that future in 2013 are dim, which may well mean continued trouble for defense acquisition programs. However, as ground forces personnel are reduced, a greater proportion of the defense budget might be shifted to provide more acquisition funds, though more funds won’t necessarily cure the extensive difficulties in the development of the new systems that will still be in progress. There may be some more shrinkage in the number of force units (“force structure”) as adjustments to the new budget levels are made.

The war on al Qaeda and its associates will also continue in the mid-term. It will not end; the approach will be to minimize it and contain it. It will not be a force-sizer within DOD, though—except for sustaining Special Forces. Life for al Qaeda terrorists will not be a happy one as they continue to be pursued by police and intelligence forces; by drones and raids; and by the U.S., its threatened allies, and local governments. Al Qaeda can survive only in “ungoverned spaces,” or badly governed spaces, often where there is
no water, no electric power, and no local income, or by individuals radicalized by the internet.

For the mid-term, there will be some debate within the Defense Department as to new directions for the character and capabilities of U.S. forces, e.g., between

- Sustaining COIN capabilities developed in Iraq and Afghanistan
- Swinging back to “Cold War” technological races against “The New Near-Peer,” i.e., China, as represented by the Air-Sea Battle concept being developed by the U.S. Navy and U.S. Air Force, which so far is presented by those Services as abstract “capabilities,” not as a matter of national strategies connected to real situations in the world

The likely outcome is to have some of both, serving as hedges against extreme scenarios—notably either another massive occupation of a collapsing country or the Great War With China, however unlikely either one of those may be.

If war breaks out in the mid-term, it would be with Iran, possibly triggered by Israel taking the initiative to bomb Iranian nuclear facilities. It would be a mess, with great losses on both sides. The mid-term alternative to war with Iran may well be a posture of deterrence and containment since Iran, with nukes, will be a decrepit country under sanctions and as it runs out of oil to export—the North Korea of the Middle East as it were; and, like North Korea, it would be no real threat otherwise. In the meantime in the mid-term, the adjustments in the U.S. posture in the Asia-Pacific will be realized, e.g., the full shift of the Navy to a 60-40 balance of ships between the Pacific and Atlantic Fleets. As noted earlier, it would be mostly a naval presence that the U.S. would maintain in the Persian Gulf.

**Long-term**

In the longer term, all future defense planning is going to be strongly affected by the pressures for further reductions in the defense budget in the light of the need to reduce the annual budget deficits and the overall Federal debt. If sufficient growth were to return to the U.S. economy so as to create more jobs for the 93 percent of the population whose income dropped in the Great Recession—and this would take government stimulus that is not foreseeable in the current political paralysis in the U.S.—then the defense budget might see some relief. On the other hand, given national domestic priorities and the security of from foreign threats of the country, it may be that DOD can find a way to live with the more austere budgets initiated by the BCA—which, for the very first time lays out a ten-year projection of the defense budget.

Also in the longer term, as can be seen on the chart, there is a clash, a division between what U.S. forces might be doing around the world on a day-to-day basis versus what may

119. In the summer of 2012, the discussions of the possible Israeli initiative were endless, including pro-and-con in Israel itself. No one thought it could do it alone, that is, without the U.S. joining in. The discussion has faded away since and sanctions and diplomacy are still at the fore.
be done to keep a highly capable force in readiness in support of foreign policy, that is, contingent forces for whatever may come up that an Administration wants to respond to. Naturally, any new war would shape the kind of force that the United States evolves in the longer term. The U.S. tends to hope for some kind of short, sharp war if war is necessary at all—Desert Storm has become the ideal.

- The conception of a short, sharp war that is highly joint and combined, i.e., with allies if possible, may be the favorite within DOD. Such a war would emphasize America’s technological prowess, assuming technological innovation is supported and sustained within the U.S. economy and the DOD budget.

- At the other extreme, the question may still arise in U.S. defense debates as to whether the U.S. would have to invade, occupy, and nation-build in some decrepit country that might pose some kind of threat to the U.S. itself, e.g., by harboring and fostering terrorists.

- In between these two extremes—the almost abstract, classic, technological war on one hand, and the grinding counterinsurgency war on the other—given whatever forces the U.S. maintains and evolves, some will still be deployed overseas in essentially deterrent and reassuring postures (e.g., to reassure Japan) and will find it useful to exercise and hold strategic discussions with allied and friendly countries. In short, the U.S. military will still maintain extensive connections around the world because, given U.S. history, it is out into the world that we may eventually send U.S. expeditionary forces and the forces ought to be familiar with those environments. But that would not take many forces overseas at any given time; most U.S. forces would still be back home, maintaining their professionalism and their readiness.

**Overall observation**

Unless the U.S. economy were to completely collapse or a Presidential Administration were once more to engage in prolonged and draining counter-insurgency operations in countries like those in Iraq and Afghanistan, the U.S. will maintain by far the biggest defense budget in the world, will have the biggest Navy and Air Force in the world, ground forces that are far more capable than any other ground forces in the world, all those forces uniquely battle-hardened and more technologically advanced than any other country in the world—plus, the U.S. knows that it equipment works, that its personnel are skilled at operating it, and the forces have made real advances in interconnecting its own forces and with its allies.

The United States also maintains large and superb strategic nuclear forces, inevitably in balance with the strategic nuclear forces of Russia {there is no other measure for its numbers}. The U.S. possession of these nuclear forces has greatly discouraged proliferation—at the moment, the world is confronting only the additional nuclear weapons aspirations of Iran and North Korea. Although those programs pose dire dangers, Iran more than North Korea in the longer run, they are small programs and untested.
XIV. The Future of the World, U.S. Foreign Policy, and the U.S. Military—Combined—With Possible Dependent Paths in Each Sphere

The purpose of this paper was to demonstrate that the posture and actions of U.S. military forces are determined by and subordinate to the larger totality of an Administration’s interactions with the world, that is, to its foreign policies. This was illustrated by the three evolutions in the world, within upper and lower limits, that have been laid out earlier in this paper.

The first evolution was “the world,” where the upper and lower limits were: (high) “world economy grows, continued decline in conflict around the world,” and (low) “everything goes to hell in the world: conflicts, terror rampant, arms races.”

The second evolution was “the U.S. in the world,” where the upper and lower limits for U.S. activity in the world were: (high) “U.S. involved constructively and cooperatively around world,” and (low) “U.S. retreats to isolation and homeland defense.”

The third evolution was “the U.S. military and the world,” where the upper and lower limits were (high) “the U.S. military as the leading edge of the U.S. in the world, occupying many countries,” and (low) “the U.S. military held mostly in readiness back home in the U.S.”

Each of these horizontal expanding scenarios of activity was divided over time into near-term, mid-term, and long-term.

At this point, it is instructive to overlay the three evolutions laid out in this paper one on top of the others, as shown in the following chart. This chart is not to be read, but to be simply glanced at, because it shows the complexity as each sphere expands and overlays with the others as they reach further and further out into the future.
As noted on the chart, it is really a joke to throw the three charts on top of one another. But the point is that, when done this way, it shows that the near-term is practically the only situation where the activities in all three evolutions can be clearly distinguished and managed.

Near-term is what the other countries (and international organizations), the U.S. Administration, and the U.S. military are working at, and can work at. What they do in that near-term sets the stage for the mid-term and, in turn, for the long-term. The main point is that all those involved (in making a better world, of coping with and turning around a world or situation that is getting bad) are **not helpless in nudging the world beginning in the near-term, especially if they stay engaged with it**—and those activities are mostly economic, plus diplomacy to peacefully resolve disputes between countries.

This can be further demonstrated in the chart below, where two sample “dependent paths” are shown for each scenario. The lines are crooked because events can jolt them up and down along the way, and the job of decision-makers is to get them back on track toward better situations. I do not call them “outcomes” because the world drifts on—it does not reach some point where we can all go home.
For the world, most of which is about economics, i.e., life, the hope is, on the higher path (“dynamic”), to keep all economies growing within a global market involving free and fair trade. That’s the essence of globalization as it had been evolving since the end of the Cold War in 1989. The policy-makers on this path (e.g., in the G-20) are intent on keeping a well-regulated process, open to all and regulated through the WTO and associated Free Trade Agreements (FTAs).

On the lower dependent path, the global objective is to preserve peace (avoid or reduce conflict) as much as possible. For policy-makers, this may mean looking for some global security framework that is more effective than the UN, which is hindered by its voting and vetoes. The consensus method with no votes, as in NATO, is much more effective, though the notion of consensus seems incomprehensible to most hard-charging Americans who want only their way.120

For the U.S. in the world, the prime objective for policy-makers (upper arm) is that the U.S. economy recovers from its current stagnation and elements of decline (e.g., in American infrastructure, health, education, and research and development). That is, the U.S.—government and private—must innovate, resume growth, create jobs, reduce its debt, and balance its exports with its imports. American businessmen created

120. One proposal for this was the Russian President Medvedev’s proposal for a TransAtlanticEurAsian security framework, to include the U.S., the other NATO countries, and Russia and CSTO (Central Asian) countries, but it has had no takers.
globalization in the first place, first in Europe after World War II, and then later as buyers and investors in China. It is time that they came home and invested in America.

On the peace side for the U.S. in the world (lower arm), as laid out in this paper, the most immediately prominent security problems are being attacked and, all hope, resolved by diplomacy. In doing so, and with persistent global cooperation (also arranged by diplomacy), conflicts can be contained and the need for U.S. forces to intervene (“kinetically,” i.e., by shooting) can be minimized.

Finally, for the U.S. military in the world, it has been the objective of U.S. Administrations to keep threats as far away from U.S. shores as possible (upper arm). But should this somehow involve the U.S. acting as policeman of the world, the resolver of all “instability,” whatever that is? That’s an impossible job, and the U.S. couldn’t afford it even if it were possible. In any case, it has never done that, whatever the rhetoric.

However (still on the upper arm), there are alliances to sustain and expand (though not necessarily in hostility to other countries anymore) and peacekeeping missions (also on an international basis) to help organize and carry out.

But it had not previously meant that the U.S. military would be asked by Administrations to take on a nation-building role—which has proved disastrous in Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan—the only places in the world since the Philippines back around 1900 where the U.S. had really tried it. In Germany and Japan, it was merely a matter of keeping order as those countries’ basic institutions reemerged after being suppressed by their fleeting despotisms. U.S. forces simply don’t police and stabilize the world. The world going about its daily business hardly notices them. Peace and stability are far more complex matters, which the U.S. military affects only at the margin.

On the other hand, for the U.S. military (lower arm), after Iraq and Afghanistan, its task for some years to come is to return home and recover and then to stand in readiness for whatever successive Administrations want to do with it. But this force in being, back mostly in the U.S. except for some residual forces abroad, plus exercising with allies, is a deterrent, a “virtual presence” as a source of stability in support of the Administration’s foreign policy—which is not a matter of “grand strategy,” but of staying ratcheted up to the world, which we all cannot escape—at least economically in this era of globalized economies and finance.
XV. Recap: Major Points of This Paper

13. The United States is in deep economic, political, and social difficulties, with problems of debt, deficit, lack of growth, growing poverty, and lack of jobs and their creation. Growth may be returning, slowly, but deficit, taxation, and safety net reforms are needed—yet Congress is paralyzed.

14. The U.S. can hardly see the future for its defense until it gets out of Afghanistan and the forces return home, recover, and are reconstituted.

15. The U.S. will not conduct any more Iraqi or Afghan-type occupations and pretenses of nation-building for a long time, perhaps for another generation. Nor does the U.S. military police or stabilize the world, as far as anyone out there notices.

16. In the meantime, the defense budget for the future is being determined by the Budget Control Act of 2011, which involves cuts to the budget of $487 billion—essentially a flat budget—over ten years. Cuts could go higher with sequestration (another $492 billion over nine years).

17. This current budget approach is consistent with the longstanding fact that the defense budget is determined entirely outside defense, based mostly on the tolerable Federal debt—considered intolerable now.

18. No “strategy,” “requirements,” “scenarios,” “commitments,” “responsibilities,” “obligations,” etc.—all self-assigned in any case—have ever determined the defense budget top line. The only “demand” for the employment of U.S. forces in the world is by the Administration-in-office itself.

19. Thus, the forces retained and planned must fit the budget number.

20. Most U.S. forces, after Afghanistan, will have come home and will shrink; the Services are likely to keep a bit of everything, will stay ready, and will remain expeditionary as there is hardly any direct threat to the continental United States.

21. U.S. forces, whatever the budget constraints, will remain technologically the best, nearly the biggest and most capable in the world, and battle-hardened like no others. It will still outspend by far the next 20 countries, most of whom are allies.

22. Al Qaeda terrorism is being beaten by intelligence, police work, and raids. It is highly dispersed. It is not a force-determiner for U.S. defense, except for SOF.

23. China and Iran may be the only real “enemies” for planning the forces, but are to be managed mostly by diplomacy and are to be deterred, not fought.

24. U.S. “strategy” in the world is first to get its own economy going again, within the development of overall cooperative strategy for the world economy. The U.S. military supports this strategy, mostly as insurance. U.S. military forces are contingent forces, ready to do what the Administration in officer orders them to do.
Appendix: The Issue of “Whole of Government”

Reflections on how the previous and present Administrations have conducted their foreign policies

Who in the U.S. pursues “national security strategy,” or to put it much more simply, conducts foreign policy, i.e., U.S. relations with the other countries in the world? The Administration. There is much talk these days about the putative absence of a “whole of government” approach to foreign policy, i.e., to all the U.S. agencies that interact with the other governments and countries in the world that are supposed to be under the Administration’s overall policy direction, but might be going off in their own directions.

Some people think it’s a matter of many disconnected agencies pursuing their own stove-piped policies and programs around the world, without coordination, e.g., by the President not managing all day-to-day details of U.S. official interactions around the world or the NSC staff not effectively coordinating it all in such a way as to keep the President informed so he can make alterations to the directions U.S. interactions have been going.

But any picture of interagency competition is the stuff of journalists. An Administration may have a grand strategy when it comes into office, but it immediately faces two realities: one is sustaining or bending the continuities of policies and relations with other countries; the other is the events that crash in—always soon after it takes office, it seems. The architecture an Administration may think of creating is not as important as the Administration’s adaptability, as well as its reaffirmation of existing relationships.

In the foreign policy realm, to include the State Department, as well as the international involvement of the Department of Defense, the Administration consists of the President, the Vice President, and the political appointees of the Administration vetted by the White House office of personnel affairs. Just about all the political appointees subject to Senatorial confirmation are then farmed out to the departments involved, including State, USAID, Defense, and the Intelligence Community. Thus, the tentacles of the Administration reach deeply into the government where those political appointees lead the execution of the policies and programs of the Administration, in accordance with the laws.

The effectiveness of any Administration is heavily dependent on whether these White House appointees continue to operate as a team through the tenure of the Administration. It is always a question of both personalities and the compatibilities of personalities—such

121. During the relative stasis of the Cold War, the world seemed static enough that incoming Administrations could take about six months to review the situation and prepare new policy initiatives. This seemed true for the Nixon, Carter, and Reagan Administrations. But, beginning with the Bush 41 Administration, it no longer seemed true—back in 1989, with the surprising fall of the Berlin Wall, it had to react immediately to events, most of which were developing favorably, as the Soviet empire and then the Soviet Union collapsed. The Bush 41 Administration stepped out promptly in the world and picked up the pieces.
appointees are not generally known for their ego-ricence. Moreover, their tenure, as a long-term average, has longed seemed to be only about 22 months—burnout for appointees and their political staffs comes with 15-hour days. The system is rather volatile in this respect, but, at the same time, the political appointees bring new energies and ideas to departmental tasks, as well as “having connections” at the White House so that they know the policy directions the Administration is taking.

At the other end of the line is the Country Team, under the authority of the U.S. Ambassador, who is the personal representative of the President. All the other U.S. governmental agencies in the country are attached to the embassy. If they are scattered around a country, like DEA agents, with their own communication lines, control by the ambassador may be difficult, but they still rely on the embassy for their diplomatic status and immunity protection as well as connections to the countries’ corresponding agencies.

The Combat Commanders (COCOMs) have a limited and specified role in foreign policy. They relate to their military contacts in the other countries, especially if the U.S. has a formal alliance with that country. Their visits to countries must be cleared with the U.S. ambassador. They have their programs of “theater security cooperation,” including exercises, and hold conferences back at their headquarters. Each COCOM has political advisers from the State Department (POLADs), but it is nonetheless not easy for a COCOM to divine what Washington is really thinking about foreign policy at the moment—it’s hard enough for anyone in Washington.122

There are of course problems with this simple formulation. In the first year of a new Administration, senior appointees, especially on the policy side, may spend much time at the White House—and in doing so fail to establish good connections with permanent staff (who are nonetheless always eager to pass on their lore123). The next year becomes more of an execution year—moving out in the world, from all agencies (or reinforcing what’s already out there—remembering the great continuities in U.S. foreign policy as a rule). The longer political appointees stay in office, the more they may become embedded in their departments, “captive of staff,” though it is more a case of the grinding process of execution with all its petty day-to-day details rather then captivity. Then it may be time for a new election and another change of Administration.

The point of this is that, in my 28 years in OSD Policy and another 23 years observing it at an FFRDC,124 the connections between State and Defense were very close—minute-by-minute, with NSC and OMB staff nearby. For USAID and DOD, it was not quite as close because each had its own programs, and USAID wanted to keep some distance from DOD, which the world always regards as a branch of CIA. For the combined aid and security assistance programs, the consensus process was very strong, for it was all

122. When I was at the U.S. Mission to NATO (USNATO), the first cartoon in the Herald Tribune we read each day was Beetle Bailey—sympathizing with General Halftrack as he waited for “the call from the Pentagon.”


124. FFRDC = Federally-Funded Research and Development Center.
about the countries we were assisting. The assistance budgets (150 account) have always been extremely limited and quite dominated by the big programs for Israel and Egypt, followed closely back in the Cold War by programs for Greece and Turkey as NATO allies. Those big programs, though, provided coattails for the smaller programs. The point was that we, the staff, “worked for the Administration.” That was our boss: “The Administration,” whose officials we worked for, whatever the disparity of resources between the two departments (State and Defense).

There has been a lot of talk about “whole of government” having to take a greater part in American operations overseas in the future. It has been difficult to get a lot of U.S. Government civilians into these war zones, notably from the State Department and USAID. Their numbers had been slashed deeply during the Clinton and Bush 43 Administrations, to be sure. Civilian assistance in the occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan has instead been left mostly to contractors and NGOs. Contractors consume enormous amounts of money (their personnel are expensive and there are costs for their security), are vulnerable to providing corruption as they work with the locals, and have expenditures that have turned out to be difficult to account for. NGO teams are small and dedicated and accountable to their home charitable organizations, not the U.S. Government, but seem to get out and around countries better than U.S. government people, including the military. Increasing the numbers of U.S. Government civilians for a nation-building service is highly unlikely to be ever funded by Congress.

The **U.S. never had a “whole of government” problem until Iraq and Afghanistan.**

As a matter of fact, the problem of coordination among U.S. agencies in executing the Administration’s foreign and defense policies was strongly complicated by personality clashes within the Bush 43 Administration.

The government did well enough from the time the Marshall Plan was executed, through the Cold War, and in the first decade of the post-Cold War period. The Executive Branch also never had the interagency frictions, i.e., between State and Defense, that characterized the Bush 43 Administration. Shultz-Weinberger frictions were no obstacle to operations during the Reagan Administration. However, as Tom Friedman has said, if, during the Bush 43 Administration, Cheney and Rumsfeld had spent as much time preparing for the Iraq occupation as they did trying to get rid of Colin Powell and Richard Armitage, this “whole of government” question may not have arisen. Again, personalities in the U.S. Government count heavily. In any case, Rumsfeld wanted to be in complete charge of DOD and then practically isolated DOD from the rest of the government, i.e., it looked like he was “The Administration.” This all got fiercely complicated with 9/11, Afghanistan, and especially the mess that Iraq turned into. But even earlier in the Bush 43 Administration, Vice President Cheney and Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld had destroyed cooperation among departments.

The major problem of the putative “relief” of the U.S. military from carrying out diplomacy and development is that the U.S. Congress never has and never will finance State and USAID operations other than at the barest level. It is remarkable that State,
USAID, and other government agencies have accomplished so much around the world despite having been funded on a shoestring.

The “whole of government” problem also came up because of the essentially military orientation of foreign policy during the Bush 43 Administration. Its neglect of building global economic institutions was almost total except for ritual attendance at international conferences.125 With a military orientation, the U.S. also appeared to be much more unilateral in its foreign policy as well, especially during its concentrations on Afghanistan and Iraq—notwithstanding that most of foreign policy deals with all those countries the U.S. keeps running into out there is what constitutes “the world.”

When Condoleezza Rice became Secretary of State in 2005 and Donald Rumsfeld resigned in 2006 and was succeeded by Robert Gates and when Steve Hadley had replaced Rice as National Security Advisor in 2005, those three reconstituted the “Administration” and there was much more harmony among agencies.126 It should be noted, of course, the number of high Administration officials involved in any Administration is limited—I have counted about 30 officials whose positions have been involved at the NSC level across time, including their deputies as substitutes, of which maybe only 6 or 7 really carry weight; the rest are listening and providing information when called upon. With that few people at the top being critical, personalities count strongly. It is more the clash of personalities than that of agencies that accounts for breakdowns in communications among the agencies. Weak Presidents (Bush 43) and weak NSC Advisors (e.g., in the Reagan Administration up through the Iran-Contra scandal) do not help.

It should not be necessary to go through these explanations of how the U.S. Government works in foreign policy. However, in examining the future of U.S. national security and defense and the global economic context in which it is to function (much more subordinate to that economic context than it had been since the early post-World War II period), it seems useful to go through this review.

After 9/11, homeland defense has also became much more of a consideration. The homeland security staff at the White House has now been merged with the NSC staff. NORTHCOM was created, and there is much discussion of how the regular U.S. military would be used and who would command it during crisis events in the U.S. homeland.

125. The exceptions in the Bush 43 Administration were the PEPFAR (counter-HIV/AIDS) and Millennium Challenge assistance programs for Africa. The only continent in which Bush was popular was Africa.

126. A similar situation arose after the revelations of the Iran-Contra scandal in 1986. President Reagan was forced, per the recommendations of the Tower Commission, to reorganize his NSC. A much more harmonious trio of George Shultz at State, Frank Carlucci at Defense, and Colin Powell as National Security Advisor emerged to manage American foreign policy and defense for the rest of Reagan’s term.
About the Author

Dr. Henry H. Gaffney, Jr. served for 54 years on U.S. defense matters—first, for three years in the U.S. Navy, serving as an officer on surface combatants in the Pacific, including one year on cruises in the Western Pacific. He then served 28 years in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, mostly on international matters, including 13 years on NATO matters, mostly on NATO theater nuclear weapons, and 11 years on the Middle East, foreign military sales, and security assistance. His tasks in Defense always involved close liaison with the State Department. His major accomplishments in OSD were setting up the process and laying out the options that led to the NATO alliance consensus on Euromissiles and writing the report in 1979 that led to a substantial security assistance program for Egypt after the Camp David accord.

Dr. Gaffney joined CNA (then called Center for Naval Analyses) in 1990 and retired from there on May 31, 2013, a total of 23 years. While at CNA, he closely tracked Navy programs and their future projections, wrote on deterrence after the Cold War, organized 16 seminars with the Institute for USA and Canada Studies in Moscow and visited Russia 15 times. With colleagues, his major studies at CNA were on all the U.S. Services’ responses to situations from 1970 to 2006, as ordered by the President and Secretary of Defense, the American Way of War after the Cold War, the Changing Nature of Warfare for the National Intelligence Council, energy and climate change matters, several studies for the Director of Force Transformation (VADM Cebrowski) in OSD, and analyses of Putin’s leadership and of Russian ballistic missile programs.

Dr. Gaffney grew up in Newton, Massachusetts, graduated cum laude from Harvard in 1956 where he had an NROTC scholarship, and earned his doctorate in comparative government at Columbia University with a dissertation on Administration and the Administrative Service in Sierra Leone.

Dr. Gaffney lives in Bethesda Maryland and can be reached at gaffneyh@comcast.net and 301-913-5889.