

The Quadrennial Defense Review

TESTIMONY

UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

Andrew F. Krepinevich

Executive Director

Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments

September 14, 2005

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to appear before you today, and to share my views on the ongoing Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR). My testimony is intended to serve as a basis for developing a post-9/11 defense posture, assisting both those charged with crafting the QDR, or evaluating it.

Twenty years from now, we should look back and find that the 2005 QDR represented the most important and far-reaching review of our military posture since the early days of the Cold War. The reasons for this are clear. Consider that since the last QDR in 2001, the United States has:

- Seen New York and Washington attacked by radical Islamists;
- Invaded and occupied Afghanistan and Iraq, and waged an ongoing counterinsurgency in both those countries;
- Initiated what stands to be a protracted “Global War on Terrorism” with radical Islamists;
- Witnessed the continued drift toward a “Nuclear Asia,” with the prospect that, by decade’s end, America will confront a 5,000-mile “Atomic Arc of Instability” stretching from the Persian Gulf to the Sea of Japan; and
- Observed the continued growth of Chinese military capabilities along somewhat disturbing lines.

Three Enduring Challenges

Any defense review must address the threats to challenges to our security, list key assumptions about how the military competition will develop over the planning horizon, and translate them into plausible contingencies that can serve as the basis for planning, programming and budgeting.

Recent events have reduced much of the uncertainty under which defense planning occurred in the decade between the Soviet Union’s collapse and the radical Islamist attacks on New York and Washington. The ongoing war against radical Islamists and continued military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq presents America with an immediate and likely enduring challenge to its security. Second, since 1998, the “nuclearization” of Asia has proceeded apace. Both India and Pakistan have detonated nuclear weapons and built nuclear arsenals. North Korea has declared its possession of nuclear weapons, and Iran has accelerated its efforts to develop a nuclear weapons capability. Finally, China’s continued rise as a great power has yet to be matched by evidence that Beijing will seek to resolve its outstanding strategic objectives through peaceful means. These three enduring security challenges are likely to dominate US defense planning for the next decade or two, and perhaps longer.

These challenges are likely to manifest themselves in forms quite different from those that dominated the Cold War American military’s attention. The old, familiar challenges posed by the Soviet military have, in many instances, dissipated under the weight of the US military’s primacy in key traditional warfare areas. There is no blue-water navy to challenge the US fleet’s maritime

dominance. Would-be adversaries seem more intent on acquiring missile forces, not manned fighter wings to counter US air power. One searches in vain to identify the country that seeks to field large, advanced mechanized ground forces as the best way to challenge the US Army.

The Planning Environment: Key Assumptions

Defense planners are struggling to adjust to the rapid pace of events. But as much as the world has changed in three short years, the fact is that more is on the way. Concerns regarding a fundamental shift in the character of key military competitions remain valid. The attacks of 9/11 and the subsequent “Global War on Terrorism” (GWOT) and protracted irregular conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq are only harbingers of a much broader transformation in the character of conflict. This should have a very sobering effect on the Defense Department. Transforming the US military in anticipation of these challenges to US security proved difficult in the decade preceding 9/11; indeed, historically speaking, transformation has always been a struggle for military organizations. Yet, given the demands of an ongoing war, transformation will be even more difficult now. There is a danger of viewing transformation through a rear-view mirror—undertaking major change principally to address immediate challenges for which we find ourselves unprepared, and failing to anticipate emerging challenges and adapting the military before the threats emerge in full form.

Some assumptions must be made about the environment in which defense planning must occur. One that emerges from this diagnosis is that the level of effort required by the US military is almost certain to increase substantially. To be sure, Iraq has (at least temporarily) been struck from the list of rogue states, and al Qaeda may have been dealt a significant setback following 9/11. However, these positive conditions will likely be more than offset by the need to continue balancing a rising China in such a way to discourage it from resolving outstanding issues through the use of force; adapting to the increase in nuclear-armed states; and dealing with the ongoing eruptions of a volatile Islamic World. To this must be added the decline in the cohesion of America’s alliances, which places a greater burden on the US military.

We might further assume that the United States’ Cold War era emphasis on deterrence will decline in favor of greater relative emphasis on war-fighting, dissuasion and preemptive/preventive war. As for the other pillar of US military strategy, reassurance of allies, it seems reasonable to assume that allies will prove less durable and reliable than during the Cold War era, or even the recent past. Ironically, we should also assume that, owing to the problem of scale mentioned above, the United States will need allies much more than it has over the last 15 years. Moreover, it will need allies along Asia’s arc of instability, and for a different set of mission priorities than those associated with the Cold War era. Unfortunately, this occurs at a time when many long-term US allies, especially those in Europe, are reducing their defense efforts and focusing more on local security.

Any discussion of military competitions that looks 15-20 years into the future must acknowledge considerable uncertainty with respect to how events will play out. Over the past century, the US military experienced several major shifts in warfare that could not have been easily predicted

fifteen years in advance. It is necessary, therefore, both to identify the principal uncertainties that will most influence the future military competition, and to be explicit about our assumptions as to how these critical uncertainties will be resolved.

Among the key military competitions, it is assumed that the following conditions will obtain:

- The missile/anti-missile competition will continue to favor the offense;
- Stealth will endure (e.g., given equal resources, investments in stealth—such as in aircraft and submarines—will accrue greater advantage than investments in counter-stealth capabilities);
- Detecting and destroying time-sensitive targets and deep underground targets will remain difficult;
- Enemy attempts to establish sanctuaries against US forces will increase, while the US homeland’s sanctuary status will erode, perhaps precipitously;
- Information warfare operations will not prove decisive at the strategic level of warfare; however, they will prove increasingly important to prevailing at the operational and tactical level of war; and
- Highly distributed, highly networked forces can be fielded in significant numbers.

The Challenges and the Color Plans

The three enduring challenges stated above are captured in Defense Department planning documents for the 2005 QDR, which place them within the following context:

- *Catastrophic challenges* to US security, with primary emphasis given to attacks on the US homeland with WMD, especially attacks by nonstate actors involving nuclear weapons or biological warfare agents.
- *Irregular challenges* to US security, such as those posed by terrorist groups and insurgent movements. In the near term, the threat emanates from radical Islamist groups such as al Qaeda, and by the Taliban and Ba’athist insurgent movements in Afghanistan and Iraq, respectively.
- *Disruptive challenges* to US security, which involve dramatic shifts in the character of conflict from what exists today. The challenge here is to hedge against an uncertain future in an environment of dynamic change. Certain hedges, for example, might focus on how the US military would need to adapt, or transition, itself if one of the fundamental assumptions concerning the character of key military competitions proved wrong (e.g., if highly distributed, highly networked forces could not be fielded during the planning period; if

offensive information warfare operations proved dominant at the strategic level of warfare; etc.), or to meet a novel or asymmetric challenge such as those posed by enemies fielding anti-access/area-denial forces—what, in China’s case, might be termed “Assassin’s Mace” capabilities.

- *Traditional Challenges* to US security that range from the familiar threats posed by combined arms mechanized air-land forces that dominated warfare for much of the 20th century beginning with World War II, and those of nuclear-armed states.

In order to make informed decisions as to the size and shape of the US military, a set of representative contingencies must be developed based on these challenges. The Color Plans¹ cited below argue (as does history) that it is risky to try and predict with any great degree of precision the character of future conflicts. It is riskier still to focus on one particular contingency as a model for all plausible conflicts. To properly serve the national interest, defense planners must craft a military posture that is capable of addressing—insofar as the means are available—the full range of plausible threats to US security, not only those that are most familiar, or most likely, or that play to the military’s strong suits. Given these considerations, the following Color Plans are suggested:

- China (Disruptive Peer) (Plan Red)
- North Korea (Nuclear Rogue) (Plan Yellow)
- Pakistan (Failed Nuclear State) (Plan Green)
- Radical Islam (Plan Purple)
- Global Energy Network Defense (Plan Black)
- Global Commons Defense (Plan Orange)
- Nuclear/Biological Homeland Attack (Plan Blue)

Absent a Color Plan approach, there is a danger that the US military will view the future as little more than a linear extrapolation of today’s world. Yet as the world saw on 9/11, discontinuities in the competitive environment can yield dramatic changes in military requirements. Indeed, military competitions are inherently nonlinear. By thinking through the consequences of a range

¹ The original “Color” plans were developed between 1904 and 1938 by the Joint Army and Navy Board, comprising high-ranking Army and Navy officers. In 1919, after World War I, the board was given a joint planning staff, called the Joint Army and Navy Planning Committee. The color plans established were: Germany: Black; Great Britain: Red; Japan: Orange; Mexico: Green; China: Yellow; the United States: Blue; and US internal rebellion: White. These plans helped the US military to hedge against an uncertain future by focusing its efforts on preparing to confront a range of plausible contingencies, as opposed to the most familiar or those believed to be the most likely.

of plausible contingencies, the military can minimize the risk of future dramatic swings in requirements and the associated problems they imply for military effectiveness.

The contingencies presented above are a “best guess” of what threats the US military should be prepared to address, in addition to those it currently confronts in Afghanistan, Iraq and other sites in the war against radical Islamists. Consequently, over time the Color Plans will almost certainly require some adjustment. We should expect that some plans will be dropped, while others are added. Still others might undergo significant modification. Ultimately, the goal here is not to predict the future; rather, it is to position the US military to respond effectively to a wide range of plausible contingencies representing significant threats to the nation’s security. In this way, uncertainty regarding the future is taken into account, as opposed to being assumed away. As shown in Figure 1, each of the Color Plans presented in the preceding chapter is associated with the three enduring challenges confronting the United States, and the form these challenges might assume—traditional, irregular, catastrophic, or disruptive.

Figure 1: Competitors, Challenges and the Color Plans

Competitors	Challenges	Color Plans
Radical Islamists	Catastrophic	Blue
	Irregular	Black, Orange, Green, Purple
China	Catastrophic	Blue
	Disruptive	Black, Red , Orange
	Traditional	Red
Rogue and Unstable Nuclear States	Catastrophic	Yellow, Green, Blue
	Traditional	Yellow

Deterrence, Dissuasion, and Reassurance

Military forces have missions other than waging wars. Indeed, the US military's greatest success comes when, through its efforts, America's interests are preserved without having to resort to war. If defense planners are to avoid the horrors, costs and uncertainties of war, they must also keep the other elements, or pillars, of defense strategy in mind. They are: deterrence of adversaries, reassurance of allies, and dissuasion of hostile and friendly competitors. These pillars have been addressed, formally or informally, consciously or coincidentally, by every administration since the early days of the Cold War. They have, and should, exert an important influence on the sizing and shaping of US forces, and on their disposition.

For example, if the US force posture is to serve as an effective *deterrent*, planners must take into account how a prospective enemy views US military power, and how that power might best be used to prevent an adversary from employing military force or the threat of force (i.e., coercion) to achieve ends that are inimical to US interests. Because deterrence strategies seek to influence the calculations of others, the optimum American "deterrent force" might be significantly different in some ways from the forces US military leaders believe are best able to defeat aggression in the event deterrence fails.

Similarly, *reassurance*, like deterrence, lies in the eye of the beholder. A US force posture whose principal purpose is to reassure allies might find American forces deployed to fixed forward bases as a trip-wire force. This force's military effectiveness in war may be quite limited in terms of its war-fighting capabilities. However, its presence guarantees US blood will be shed in the event of conflict, providing a strong sense of reassurance to the country hosting these forces that Americans are sharing their risks.

The United States should field some forces that do not represent the best investment in terms of war-fighting capability, but which do for purposes of deterrence or reassurance. It might also do so if such forces served a *dissuasion* function—convincing competitors, both friendly and hostile—that they ought not to pursue the development of certain capabilities the United States views as particularly undesirable in the hands of others. For example, the United States might maintain a substantial blue-water fleet over and above its Color Plan requirements if it believes such a dominant force will discourage other states from attempting to build a capability to contest US control over the seas. Take another example: if the United States could field forces that could deploy, fight and sustain themselves in a highly distributed manner, it might dissuade enemies from developing anti-access/area-denial forces (e.g., ballistic and cruise missile forces).²

Given the discussion above, it becomes clear that, in the process of assessing how the United States would respond to the challenges posed in the Color Plans, *Washington's alliance portfolio*

² Anti-access/area-denial capabilities are especially effective against large, fixed (or slow-moving) targets, such as major ports or air bases, or large surface warships transiting chokepoints. The ability to deploy, operate and sustain a highly dispersed force would greatly devalue A2/AD forces, making investment in them relatively unattractive.

must be restructured. Aside from fortifying key existing alliances where possible, several states look particularly attractive. One is India, a rising regional power that bisects Islamic Southeast Asia from Islamic Southwest Asia. India also serves as a nuclear counterweight to China. With its growing naval capability, New Delhi also represents a potentially significant source of support in several key Color Plan contingencies requiring maritime forces. Moreover, India also maintains substantial ground forces, which could be of great importance in several other Color Plan contingencies. Another key potential ally is Singapore, whose location along a critical maritime trade route, and small but modern and skilled military, represent important assets in several Color Plan contingencies. In the war against radical Islamists, and perhaps in dealing with rogue nuclear regimes, Turkey, a secular, democratic Muslim state, may prove an increasingly important ally. Turkey acts as a land bridge from Europe to Southwest Asia, and maintains the largest army in NATO. These attributes could prove highly valuable across a number of Color Plans.

The Program-Budget Disconnect

Given that the challenges confronting the United States are substantially greater now than during the 1990s, it is not surprising that the defense budget has increased by roughly 25 percent in real terms in recent years. Yet even this figure has not proven sufficient to cover the cost involved in waging the ongoing wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the broader war against radical Islam, and transforming the military to deal with the Color Plan contingencies.

The Defense Department will likely have to exploit a range of options to redress the imbalance that exists between what will be needed for the defense posture versus those resources currently programmed to support it. The “rich man’s” approach of simply increasing the Pentagon budget’s top line to address the challenge is neither likely, nor desirable, although some increases may be warranted. It is not desirable because it discourages efforts to pursue a “thinking man’s” approach that reorients the defense posture on the new security challenges of today and those that may emerge over the next 15-20 years. Greater efficiencies in defense management should be pursued, and vigorously. The force posture must be adapted to minimize risk. The US alliance portfolio and associated commitments should be revised: too much of the effort in this area is based on tradition, rather than on hard-headed strategic assessment. Finally, transformation should be pursued aggressively—out of opportunity as well as need. It offers perhaps the best chance to get more value for the nation’s defense dollars.

A cursory review of the Color Plans, which in some cases are very different from the planning metrics that shaped much of the defense program since the Cold War’s end, reveals some first-order decisions that can be advanced with little fear of being overturned by more detailed analysis. The following are among the first-order decisions or adjustments to some main elements of the defense posture:

- The Army and Marine Corps need to reorient themselves on *irregular challenges* to our security, with principal emphasis on capabilities associated with foreign military

assistance, special operations, counterinsurgency, counter-terror “manhunting,” and human intelligence.

- The Air Force and Navy need to reorient themselves on existing and prospective *disruptive challenges*, placing primary emphasis on countering emerging anti-access/area-denial capabilities, and threats to the global commons (e.g., space, the infosphere; offshore undersea economic assets such as the global fiber optic grid and energy fields; and maritime commerce).
- It seems likely that the four Services have important roles to play in addressing direct, *catastrophic threats* to the American homeland. These include defense against ballistic and cruise missile attack; border control; defense against delivery of WMD through nontraditional means; and consequence management.
- Military operations over the past 15 years have demonstrated that when our enemies challenge us in *traditional warfare*, as in the two Gulf Wars and in the Balkans, air power can play an increasingly important, if not dominant role. While all four Services should maintain a significant residual capability for traditional warfare, the Army and Marine Corps should be able to migrate more of their capabilities into other challenge areas than either the Air Force or the Navy.

In addition to rebalancing Service forces and capabilities to address irregular, catastrophic and disruptive challenges to U.S. security, the military needs to undertake key institutional changes. Among them are:

- Refocusing the professional military education (PME) system to emphasize the study of Asia in general, and radical Islam and China in particular. Irregular warfare is also in need of increased emphasis. War gaming and campaign planning should reflect the contingencies outlined in the Color Plans. The foreign area officer (FAO) program needs to be expanded and enhanced. Intelligence operations need to accord much greater emphasis on HUMINT than in the recent past.
- Transforming the training infrastructure to better account for irregular, catastrophic and disruptive challenges to US security.
- Restructuring the force to sustain sufficient forces engaged in a protracted conflict. The Navy and Marine Corps long ago established a rotation base for their forces. More recently, significant progress is being made in this area, with the Air Expeditionary Forces and the Army’s modularity initiative. However, these forces are primarily oriented on traditional challenges.
- Engaging relevant departments and agencies of the Executive Branch with the goal of developing more effective interagency relationships, which are critical to dealing effectively with irregular and catastrophic challenges to US security.

The above discussion of major defense programs is neither meant to be comprehensive nor definitive. Answers will emerge only after a thorough analysis of the Color Plans, to include developing joint war-fighting concepts that address the types and mix of forces best suited to deal with them. Modifications to the force posture that emerges will need to be made to accommodate the demands of deterrence, reassurance, dissuasion and preemption/preventive attack set forth in the nation's national security and military strategies.

It must be understood that, even for the Defense Department, a definitive analysis—one that provides a set of clear, unambiguous answers defining the defense posture—is simply not possible. There are too many uncertainties that cannot be resolved. The best that one can hope for is that careful planning will reduce the degree of uncertainty confronted by senior defense decision-makers, and provide them with options for hedging against an unpredictable future. Simply put, once the DoD analysis has been completed, the secretary of defense and his senior military advisors will have to apply their judgment. Waiting for the definitive analysis to make decisions is to wait in vain.

For example, it is clear that, relatively speaking, the US military must become more capable of addressing irregular challenges to its security, as well as asymmetric catastrophic challenges. It also needs to increase its emphasis on potential discontinuities (i.e., disruptive challenges) over the planning horizon. This means that forces optimized for traditional challenges should, for the most part, experience a relative decline in emphasis.

In the final analysis, the 2005 QDR has the potential to be the most fundamental review of the US military posture in over half a century, since the dawn of the Cold War. It is thus critically important that we seize this opportunity to position ourselves by crafting a strategy and force posture that can sustain us for what is likely to be a long struggle. Failure to accomplish this runs the risk that defense planners will invest increasingly scarce resources in capabilities optimized for the “wrong” future. I applaud the Committee's determination to tackle these important issues head-on.