

CHANGING COURSE: PROPOSALS TO REVERSE THE MILITARIZATION OF U.S. FOREIGN POLICY

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September 2008

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The militarization of U.S. foreign policy, through reliance on our military to pursue objectives better achieved by other means, has reached unprecedented heights under President Bush. Substantial militarization also occurred in the Cold War era, especially during peaks in the U.S. arms buildup against the Soviets and during the Vietnam War. Important examples of militarization today are the Bush doctrine on preemptive defense, the invasion and continuing occupation of Iraq, the War on Terror, and military threats against Iran.

This tendency to rely on military action as a first resort has seriously damaged U.S. national interests. The Iraq War is a disaster for both Iraq and the United States, and the War on Terror has not made us safer. The U.S. is no longer seen as a beacon of liberty to the world, but as an imperial bully with little respect for international law. The economic costs of our emphasis on military action, in turn, are enormous. The Defense Department budget

is out of control, now nearing World War II levels. The Department of State, meanwhile, has lost influence and no longer provides robust diplomatic alternatives to militarization.



To change the situation, the U.S. needs a new president with an internationalist as opposed to an imperialistic approach to foreign policy. Such a president would promptly withdraw our combat troops from Iraq and rely primarily on intelligence and law enforcement agencies to counter the worldwide terrorist threat. He also would insist on major changes to rebuild the State Department and to reduce the role of the Department of Defense (DoD).

Regarding State, which for many years suffered major cutbacks, the objective should be to enable the department to effectively fulfill its traditional role as our premier governmental institution for foreign policy. Secretary of State Rice's vision of "transformational diplomacy," in contrast, will have the practical effect of aligning State more closely with DoD; e.g., by having State personnel work jointly with the military under her "Civilian Stabilization Initiative. In addition, most of the increase in State's foreign assistance budget under President Bush

2 has gone to support DoD in Iraq and elsewhere. To rebuild State, a definitive policy change is needed to demilitarize our approach. For example, the next secretary should seek major increases in the size of the Foreign Service, the number of its overseas posts, and in language and area training. The changes in each case must go well beyond those proposed by Secretary Rice and focus specifically on diplomatic and economic missions, as opposed to support for the U.S. military. State should also double current levels of development assistance, with a renewed emphasis on efforts to eliminate poverty, as opposed to support for the U.S. military.

Defense, in turn, needs to downsize its forces and to shift its focus away from the War on Terror. DoD's own transformational activities have led to an excessive buildup of capabilities for both conventional and irregular warfare, with a current focus on the latter. DoD also has a new mission that calls for stability and security operations to support the War on Terror, which will likely aggravate the ongoing militarization of foreign assistance programs. In short, DoD should cut back its capabilities for combat operations, both conventional and irregular, and rethink its efforts to build new capabilities for stability and security operations. The end result should be a downsized force that can be built up in the event of emerging threats – unlike the current threats in Iraq and Afghanistan -- that might legitimately require a large-scale military response. At the same time, the next administration should relieve DoD from its central role in pursuit of the War on Terror.

To help ensure a reduced DoD role, Gates' successor should cut the total defense budget by at least 20 percent over the next four years. Although both candidates for president suggest that budget increases are needed to repair the wear and tear of the Iraq War, the case for substantial cutbacks seems compelling in view of the sheer size of the current defense budget. A 20 percent cut will be difficult, especially given the strong vested interests involved, but there are many possibilities for significant savings, including cutbacks in ballistic missile defense programs of dubious efficacy and an end to the military occupation of Iraq. As the Cold War underlines, militarization is deeply embedded in our recent history. To overcome the deeply entrenched militarization of U.S. foreign policy, changes on the margin will not suffice.

RECOMMENDATIONS

For the Next U.S. President:

- Take immediate steps to move away from current militarization, including military withdrawal from Iraq and putting intelligence and police forces in charge of combating terror.
- Develop and pursue an internationalist vision for U.S. foreign policy, emphasizing support for multinational institutions and non-military action whenever possible.

To rebuild State:

- Substantially increase efforts to enlarge the Foreign Service and to enhance in-depth training, while de-linking such efforts from support to U.S. military.
- Open new posts worldwide and either re-establish USIA or create new State agency as principal vehicle for U.S. public diplomacy.
- Refocus USAID assistance on economic development, with particular emphasis on efforts to eliminate poverty, as opposed to current focus on support for War on Terror.
- Seek major budget increases for State, including a doubling of funds for development assistance.

To reduce DoD's role:

- Downsize DoD forces for both conventional and irregular warfare.
- Plan instead for a smaller fighting force that can be built up as necessary to meet future threats.
- Rethink new mission that calls for stability and security operations in support of the War on Terror.
- Stop further militarization of foreign assistance programs.
- Remove DoD from its leadership role in the War on Terror.
- Reject proposals to increase expenditures to make up for wear and tear of Iraq War and/or to maintain current spending at levels equal to 4 percent of GDP.

- Insist on 20 percent reduction in total defense spending over next four years and establish firm ceilings to ensure compliance.

WHAT IS THE ISSUE?

American foreign policy has become militarized as U.S. armed forces are increasingly used to pursue objectives that are better achieved by political, economic or other means. Such action can occur at the initiative of the civilian leadership or of the military itself. The likely outcome, since the military is a very blunt policy tool, is contrary to U.S. interests. Examples of militarization are wide ranging, from an undue emphasis on the military aspects of foreign assistance to ill-advised wars of choice, most recently in Iraq. Under President Bush, militarization of foreign policy has reached unprecedented heights. The principal image of the U.S. worldwide is that of an international bully; e.g., breaking down doors and killing innocent women and children in an unjust war in Iraq, and torturing prisoners in a war against terrorists without regard to either U.S. or international law. The U.S. is no longer seen as a beacon of liberty to the world but as a cowboy who has run amuck in the Wild West.

The damage from this militarization extends well beyond the death and destruction in Iraq and the negative effects on our national image. Other important results include a dramatic reduction in the State Department's role and a runaway federal budget deficit that has exacerbated the current economic downturn. Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates recognized the need to rebuild State when he called last November, and in later speeches, for more funding for international affairs to help reduce the overseas burdens on Defense. The president's budget request for fiscal year 2009, which proposes a 16.5 percent increase in State's budget, is at least a bow in this direction. But the same budget request proposes a hefty increase for the Pentagon that would bring inflation-adjusted spending on defense to its highest levels since World War II. If approved, the net result would likely be further militarization and continuing escalation of the economic costs involved.¹

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE.

The militarization of U.S. foreign policy is not new. During the Cold War, for example, the U.S. established a permanent standing army and engaged in a military buildup that went well beyond the requirements of deterrence. The U.S. also fought two major "hot" wars, in Korea and Vietnam, neither of which was necessary to protect its vital interests. There are important parallels with the current situation.

Korea and Cold War Buildup. In early 1950 before the Korean War, President Truman asked Secretary of State Dean Acheson to reexamine our national security objectives. The result was NSC-68, prepared by Paul Nitze and his Policy Planning Staff, which set the stage for Cold War militarization. This document portrayed the USSR – still a war-battered nation in 1950 -- as an "implacable evil." Its assessment of the Soviet Union's warfighting capability, in turn, was an "egregious exaggeration." At first skeptical of NSC-68, President Truman endorsed it after the outbreak of the Korean War in June 1950, which he mistakenly saw as a Soviet feint in preparation for another war in Europe.²

The Korean War helped prompt the Cold War arms buildup, which began with an "almost fourfold" increase in the U.S. defense budget, from a limit of \$14.4 billion imposed in 1949 to more than \$52 billion in 1953. The U.S. buildup continued, with additional peaks in U.S. defense spending during the Vietnam War and the Reagan era. (See figure 1.) Threat inflation, which served to justify the continuing buildup, reached an "extreme" under President Reagan, who deceptively claimed "with neoconservative coaching" that the U.S. nuclear arsenal was "dangerously inferior" to that of the Soviet Union.³

Vietnam. In Vietnam, the U.S. fought an ugly war under three presidents to save puppet regimes in the south from a communist insurgency. The U.S. Congress authorized the war with the Tonkin Gulf Resolution, based on trumped-up reports of an unprovoked attack on a U.S. destroyer. The U.S. leadership falsely assumed that the North's leader was simply a pawn of the Soviets and the Chinese, as opposed to an independent nationalist with strong anti-colonial credentials and popular support. The United States also falsely assumed that if the communists

won in Vietnam, there would be a “domino effect” with communist takeovers throughout Southeast Asia.

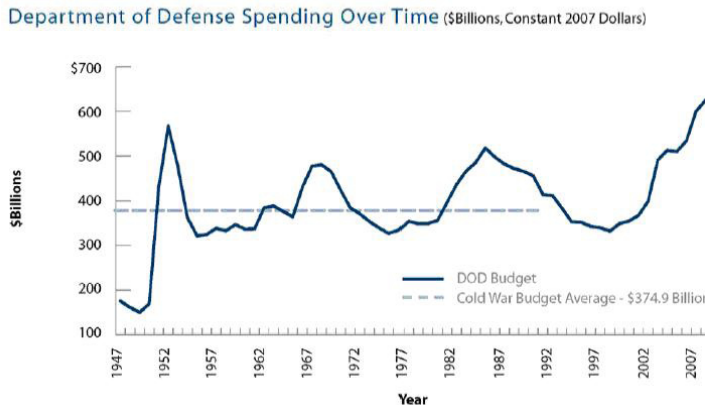


FIGURE 1. SOURCE: CDI 2007 MILITARY ALMANAC.⁴

Over time, assessments of impending victory in Vietnam by the U.S. Secretary of Defense and his advisers led to greater and greater commitments of troops to fight a war that they did not understand. In the end, the United States mounted massive bombing campaigns against North Vietnam with no appreciable effect on the political will of the North Vietnamese. The result was a defeat in Vietnam and, due in part to an ill-conceived extension of the war, a disaster for neighboring Cambodia.⁵

Common Threads. The common threads are striking between these past examples of militarization and the current situation under President Bush. During the Cold War, both sides had a highly ideological view of the other – as seems true today in the Iraq War and the War on Terror. Fear was also an important factor driving the Cold War military buildup, just as our fear of another 9/11 helped to support the current buildup for the war in Iraq and elsewhere. In each case, the U.S. willingness to go to war was influenced by false assumptions and a lack of understanding of the actual situation on the ground. Also, in both Vietnam and Iraq, the U.S. leadership engaged in duplicity to help create a pretext for war. Another similarity, underlined by each case’s outcome, was a tendency to underestimate the difficulties (not to mention the sheer horror) of war and to be overly confident in our military’s ability to overcome them.

All of these wars had important negative effects on the U.S. domestically. For example, according to an analysis by Stiglitz and Bilmes, the total cost of the Iraq War – including hidden and long-term costs – will likely be \$3 trillion or more. This debt will clearly pose serious constraints on the domestic programs of the next U.S. president. The Vietnam War also had high costs far beyond the war itself, including damage to President Johnson’s War on Poverty and rampant inflation. In addition, both the Vietnam and Iraq wars were paid for with borrowed money. The Cold War military buildup had similar costs. As one critic puts it, these included “ramshackle cities, broken bridges, failing schools, entrenched poverty, impeded life expectancy, and a menacing and secretive national-security state.”⁶

CURRENT MILITARIZATION

Bush Doctrine. The Bush doctrine, initially formulated in the wake of 9/11, calls for anticipatory military action against serious threats to U.S. national security. This doctrine of preemptive defense flies in the face of established international law which has long held that a “just” war can be initiated only as a last resort against an imminent threat. According to the Bush doctrine, today’s threat of “rogue states and terrorists” is so great – especially given their potential use of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) – that the U.S. cannot wait for a threat to become imminent before taking preemptive military action.⁷

The Bush doctrine reflects the unabashedly imperialistic view, developed by neoconservative ideologues in the 1990s, that the U.S. as the sole remaining superpower should use its military superiority to achieve the

“final triumph of American ideals.” Some neocons even believed that another World War had already begun -- against Iraq and Iran. They focused in particular on a need to “liberate” Iraq in order to “revolutionize” the strategic situation in the Middle East. Even the U.S. Congress and President Clinton gave partial lip service to this idea, with the passage and signing into law of the Iraq Liberation Act of 1998. The neocons, in short, had laid the ideological groundwork for the Bush doctrine and the illegal invasion of Iraq well before 9/11.⁸

Iraq. The invasion and continuing occupation of Iraq is the most salient example of the current militarization of U.S. foreign policy. The pattern of reliance on military action before other options have been thoroughly explored was extraordinary in the Iraq case, from the initial decision to invade to the later reliance principally on a military surge as the best way to salvage the situation. The State Department, especially in the early stages of preparing for the war, was ignored. Moreover, intelligence from the CIA and elsewhere was deliberately skewed by top officials without interagency vetting in order to build up a case for war. The consequences in terms of blood and treasure were disastrous for both the U.S. and Iraq.⁹

Under a new president in 2009, the United States should announce a specific departure date for its combat troops and make every effort to complete an early end to its military occupation of Iraq. The United States should also take appropriate steps to help stabilize the situation both before and after its troops depart. Such steps should include the initiation of serious talks with all of Iraq’s neighbors about the future security of the region. They should also include efforts to obtain economic and humanitarian assistance for Iraq. Overall, a key need is for the United States to stand firm against any slippage in its departure date for combat forces. If serious problems arise, the United States should seek to obtain multinational solutions, with both regional and UN support if possible.

War on Terror. After 9/11, military action against the terrorists who launched the attacks was clearly warranted in Afghanistan. The planners of 9/11 were there, harbored by the government. Unfortunately, the United States failed to pursue Osama bin Laden when it had him trapped and prematurely diverted its attention to Iraq. At the same time, the administration declared a war against terrorists worldwide and used the fear of another 9/11 to initiate or increase a variety of efforts to combat terrorism militarily on a global basis. These efforts even included increased military assistance to countries such as Colombia, where the groups of concern were drug-funded guerrillas who did not to the United States.

This War on Terror – also called of the military mind- While the U.S. in on intelligence and to counter terrorist entity to conduct DoD, the U.S. Spe-

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has the lead for “planning, synchronizing and executing global operations against terrorist networks.” By early 2006, the Special Operations Forces had received an 81 percent increase in their baseline budget to pursue the War on Terror. Although the elite Special Forces can be useful, these “imperial grunts” – who are not known for their sensitivity to human rights concerns -- are not the ideal vehicle for building closer relations with the militaries of other nations.¹⁰

ror is another important ex- tion. The very term, “War on the “long war” -- is indicative set of the U.S. leadership. the past has relied primarily law enforcement agencies threats, DoD is the primary the War on Terror. Within cial Operations Command

Iran. The repeated warnings by President Bush and other officials of military action against Iran if that country develops nuclear weapons are another important example of the militarization of our foreign policy. The President has gone so far as to dramatize the situation as a potential World War III if Iran simply acquires the “knowledge” to make nuclear weapons – in contrast to Iraq, where the U.S. at least claimed that the weapons were

6 already there. Such threats against Iran continued despite the conclusion with “high confidence” in a 2007 National Intelligence Estimate that Iran had halted its program to develop nuclear weapons in the fall of 2003.

The Iraq disaster did not deter the Bush administration from serious consideration of another attack that, even if limited to targeted air strikes, would likely prompt serious Iranian retaliation – e.g., in Iraq -- and a more united Iran that would remain hostile to the U.S. for the foreseeable future. As before the Iraq War, this situation has generated remarkably little critical examination by the Congress or the U.S. public. The potential gravity of the situation is underlined, even today, by the continuing deployments of U.S. carriers in the Persian Gulf, with armed aircraft at the ready to strike Iran.¹¹

KEY CHANGES

Clearly, the militarization of U.S. foreign policy has become firmly entrenched during the two terms of President Bush and cannot be easily fixed by tinkering on the margins. At a minimum, major change is clearly needed in the presidency and in the two parts of the Executive Branch with the greatest responsibility for foreign affairs – the Department of State and the Department of Defense, respectively.¹²

Presidential Leadership. The new president in 2009 must seize the moment not only to pull the nation out of Iraq but also to de-militarize our overall approach to foreign policy. While moments for major change are relatively rare, President Bush had an opportunity for such change in the immediate aftermath of 9/11. But he responded with ill-conceived, militaristic policies that dragged the nation into an Iraqi quagmire and made us less, instead of more, secure. Today, at a time of widespread disaffection with President Bush’s policies, we face another opportunity for major change. This opportunity could be still more promising than in 2001 if the new president receives a strong congressional majority. But to overcome militarization, the new president must also have a far-reaching agenda and exceptional persuasive capabilities to inspire the U.S. public and Congress to think very differently about U.S. foreign policy.

In terms of substance, the United States needs a president with a vision of the U.S. world role that is virtually the opposite from President Bush’s. Instead of an imperialistic paradigm, he would adopt an internationalist paradigm. Such a president, for example, would not preemptively attack another country in defiance of international law. Nor would he rely primarily on military action to combat the terrorist threat. Rather, the new president would make every effort to solve world issues, including real threats to our national security, through multilateral, non-military action whenever possible. Even when military force is necessary, an internationalist president would seek UN approval and the involvement of other nations to the maximum feasible extent. He might also seek creative ways to reduce the future U.S. military role; e.g., by helping to build UN or regional military forces as an effective alternative to relying on weak “coalitions of the willing” for largely unilateral U.S. action.

The new president must also insist on major changes in the bureaucratic agencies that will have the primary responsibility for carrying out an internationalist foreign policy. Again, these are State and DoD, in that order. For State, the new leadership must persuade the Congress to support a transformation very different from that proposed by Secretary Rice. For DoD, the new head must impose major cutbacks in a budget that is currently out of control. This DoD process will likely prove especially difficult in view of the longstanding, special interests involved. As President Eisenhower warned in 1961, the US faces a growing “military-industrial complex” with “unwarranted influence” over our government.¹³

Rebuild the State Department. The capabilities of the Department of State have been severely gutted since the years of the Marshall Plan in the wake of World War II. Without a significant domestic constituency, State has long been a prime target for cutbacks by members of Congress – with some peaks and valleys, as shown in Figure 2 below. As Secretary Gates put it in a recent speech, “the slashing of the President’s international affairs budget request has too often become an annual Washington ritual – right up there with the blooming of the cherry blossoms and the

Redskin's opening game.” In the 1990s, important cutbacks included the abolition of the United States Information Agency (USIA) as an independent agency for public diplomacy and reductions in staff for the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). While the funding for State began to increase in the post 9/11 era, much of the increase went to support DoD in the Iraq War and elsewhere in the War on Terror. Moreover, the total State budget remained grossly inadequate especially when compared to that for the Department of Defense. For example, the total request for State last year -- \$36 billion – was less than what the Pentagon spends on health care alone.¹⁴

Although the President has requested a significant additional increase in funding for State for Fiscal Year 2009,

DEPARTMENT OF STATE SPENDING OVER TIME
(\$BILLIONS, CONSTANT 2008 DOLLARS)

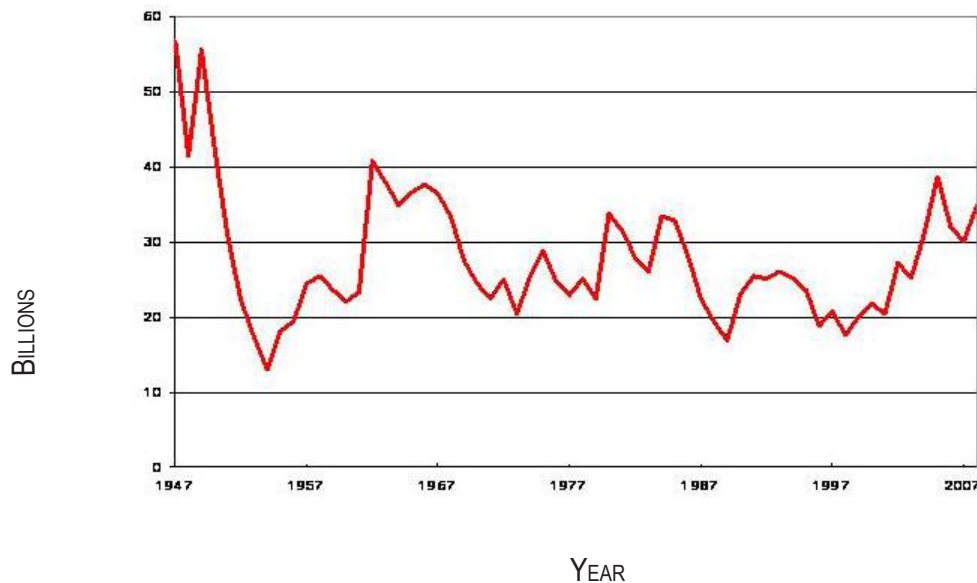


FIGURE 2. SOURCE: OMB HISTORICAL TABLES FOR INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS OUTLAYS¹⁵

much of this increase will simply align State more closely with the U.S. military. One proposal, for example, will double the number of Foreign Service Officers (FSOs) assigned to U.S. military commanders. Another will increase the overall size of the Foreign Service by 1,076 in the next year. This in turn will help State to staff the Civilian Stabilization Initiative (CSI), designed to strengthen the U.S. civilian capability to respond to crises in fragile or failing states. The CSI will include an Active Response Corps that, in the words of Secretary Rice, could “deploy with the 82nd Airborne within 48 hours of a country falling into conflict.” Such proposals reflect Secretary Rice’s vision of “transformational diplomacy” as a guide for change within State to meet future challenges. This vision, which Defense Secretary Gates clearly shares, stresses a need to reposition diplomats to “critical emerging areas” and to empower them to work jointly with the military for reconstruction and stabilization in post-conflict environments.¹⁶

Contrary to Secretary Rice’s view that these initiatives will increase State’s influence, the practical effect will often be to perpetuate the militarization of our foreign policy. Secretary Rice’s concept for the CSI, for example, is a worldwide application of efforts already underway in Iraq (and Afghanistan) where State personnel are working in Provincial Reconstruction Teams to assist the U.S. military. Inevitably, State personnel in such situations are dependent on the U.S. military to provide the necessary security for their efforts to succeed. The civilians become an adjunct to the military effort – all the more so since the total number of civilians will likely remain very small compared to the number of military on the scene. A senior adviser to General Petraeus in Iraq provided a useful perspective on the size issue: “there are substantially more people employed as musicians in Defense bands than in the entire foreign service.”¹⁷

8 An important underlying problem is the very notion – consistent with the preemptive and unilateral approach of the Bush administration -- that the United States must become involved militarily in trouble spots worldwide. This notion reflects a concern that trouble spots, including so-called “ungoverned spaces,” can become breeding grounds and staging areas for terrorists. But sending in the U.S. military with a few civilian advisers – e.g., for counterinsurgency and stability operations -- will not likely solve this problem and could well lead to increased terrorist activity. Where serious conflicts exist, the best approach will often be to push for political solutions and, if needed to buttress a political accord, to use a multilateral military force in a peacekeeping role. At the same time, the best way to prevent future threats in world trouble spots may often be targeted economic assistance to promote development.

A related issue is the militarization of the U.S. foreign assistance program, which includes both development and security assistance. Recent outside reports agree that our foreign assistance has become “dysfunctional” and express concern over the growing defense role, including in areas where State should have the lead. Funding for USAID’s traditional development programs has remained “fairly constant” over the last twenty years. In contrast, assistance programs specifically to support the War on Terror have “grown dramatically” under both State and DoD authorities. The result has been large amounts of foreign assistance since 9/11 to countries that are regarded as “strategically vital,” especially Iraq but also Afghanistan and Pakistan. This is still another example of militarization, in the one area where State has significant money to disburse. None of the outside reports propose a convincing solution to this problem. Some even recommend the creation of a new department to replace State, which would likely serve to make matters worse -- as occurred after 9/11 with the creation of the Department of Homeland Security.¹⁸

Overall, the key need to rebuild the State Department is not transformational diplomacy or new organizations but a definitive policy change to demilitarize the U.S. approach. While the military have a role to play, the principal emphasis of U.S. foreign policy should be on diplomacy and developmental assistance as opposed to support for post-conflict situations and a worldwide War on Terror. With a strong president and secretary of state committed to such an effort, State should be able to recapture its role as our premier governmental institution for making and carrying out U.S. foreign policy. The plethora of official U.S. entities with an overseas presence in this era of globalization can make effective coordination of U.S. foreign policy difficult at best. But with a firm turn away from our current militaristic approach, State should be able to regain a more effective voice in the Washington interagency arena. State should also take steps to buttress the authority of U.S. ambassadors, including their authority to approve all security assistance to their host country militaries.¹⁹

Budget Implications for State. Major funding increases are needed, well beyond those proposed by President Bush, to put State back in charge of foreign policy. Secretary Rice recently asked, “How can it be that the United Kingdom, with one-fifth of our population, has a diplomatic service nearly as large as America’s?” Her question underlines the need for a much larger increase in FSOs than currently proposed for the CSI and related initiatives. State should seek to establish an effective presence, for example, not just in world trouble spots but wherever it is currently underrepresented -- including, if appropriate agreements can be reached, in nations such as Iran and North Korea. Substantial funding would be needed not only to cover the personnel costs involved, but also to build or re-open new posts. In addition, State should seek to expand and intensify its in-depth language and area training well beyond that already envisioned in the transformational diplomacy initiative. At the same time, special attention should be paid to rebuilding State’s role in public diplomacy. State should consider, for example, either resurrecting USIA or establishing a successor agency, including with an updated version of the now defunct USIA network of overseas libraries.²⁰

In addition, the United States should double its foreign assistance for economic development. The majority of the HELP Commission, which was established by the Congress to enhance the effectiveness of U.S. foreign assistance, has already recommended such an increase, as has Senator Barack Obama. A doubling of current levels does not seem unreasonable since official U.S. development assistance has long been relatively modest – well below the UN recommendation of aid levels equal to 0.7 percent of GDP. Again, the

primary objective of USAID programs should be development worldwide, with particular emphasis on efforts to eliminate poverty. The purpose of the effort is not simply altruistic. Effective development assistance is probably more important to our national security interests in the long run than military assistance to stabilize world trouble spots. Developmental efforts are much more likely to win the hearts and minds of potential adversaries, for example, than current programs to support the War on Terror.²¹

Reduce DoD's Role. DoD's traditional role has been to deter military threats to our national security and to fight the nation's wars when deterrence fails. The problem is, the current military buildup is grossly out of proportion to the threats we face. In early 2006, for example, the Department had expeditionary forces deployed worldwide to fight the War on Terror and to occupy Iraq. Its total overseas presence was impressive, with some 350,000 armed forces deployed or stationed in some 130 countries. As suggested, this is clearly an overreaction to the events of 9/11. DoD in 2006 was also in the midst of a much vaunted transformation of its military forces. (Secretary Rice's use of the same term is borrowed from DoD.) The DoD transformational efforts called, among other things, for lighter and more mobile forces that could better fight irregular or nontraditional warfare. As we have seen in Iraq, much of equipment involved could not withstand improvised explosive devices! Other transformational efforts focused on new ways to carry out traditional warfighting missions – as was the case with the so-called “revolution in military affairs” in the 1990s. These activities included costly acquisitions of new and improved Cold War legacy systems, such as F-22 Raptor aircraft, which are completely irrelevant in today's threat environment.²²

Another example of DoD excess is its force planning construct, which serves as an important guide for future force sizing. In 2006, for example, this construct called for a “surge” capability to conduct and win “two nearly simultaneous conventional campaigns” while “reinforcing deterrence against opportunistic acts of aggression.” It also called for a steady-state capability to conduct “long-duration counter insurgency operations” while maintaining a surge capability to conduct “a large-scale, potentially long-duration irregular warfare campaign,” as in Iraq and Afghanistan. Such bloated capabilities for multiple conventional and irregular campaigns, if ever realized, would likely serve to perpetuate the militarization of our foreign policy. A new National Defense Strategy at least gives conventional warfare a lower priority than irregular warfare against terrorists. As previously stressed, however, the War on Terror is best fought primarily by intelligence and law enforcement agencies, not by the U.S. military.²³

At the same time, the Department of Defense is now seeking to develop military capabilities for another important role, which builds on its Iraq experience. As Secretary Gates put it on July 15, 2008, “the overall posture and thinking of the United States armed forces has shifted – away from solely focusing on direct American military action, and towards new capabilities to shape the security environment.” This shift is reflected in a DoD directive, issued in November 2005, which established “Stability, Security, Transition and Reconstruction” operations as a “core mission” for the US military on a par with combat operations. Already, at least two U.S. regional commands – SOUTHCOM and AFRICOM – are proposing to become the central actors for coordinating an interagency effort to promote stability and security against potential terrorist threats in their respective regions. Gates acknowledges a “concern” that such arrangements could lead to “creeping militarization” of foreign policy. But he states that this can be avoided with the “right leadership, adequate funding of civilian agencies, effective coordination on the ground, and a clear understanding” of how military and civilian efforts fit together.²⁴

Notwithstanding Gates' remarks, the militarization of our foreign assistance programs has already occurred. DoD has even become an important contributor to official development assistance, or ODA, which State's USAID would normally manage. In fact, between 1998 and 2005, “DoD's share of ODA increased from 3.5% to nearly 22%, whereas USAID's decreased from nearly 65% to less than 40%.” DoD also has an increased role with regard to security assistance, thanks in part to a Congressional authorization that allows Defense to use its own funds (the so-called Section 1206 funds) for assistance to partner nations to support the War on Terror. Essentially, the new core mission for our military provides a justification for DoD to expand its already growing influence over a variety of foreign assistance programs that should rightfully fall under State

10 Department leadership. Again, such efforts threaten to undermine the potential effectiveness of State programs that will often have a better chance than DoD programs of promoting long-term regional security.²⁵

In short, DoD should cut back its capabilities for combat operations, both conventional and irregular, and rethink its efforts to build new capabilities for stability and security operations. The end result should be a downsized force that can be built up in the event of emerging threats – unlike the current threats in Iraq and Afghanistan -- that might legitimately require a large-scale military response. A key need overall is to relieve the military of its current central role in the global War on Terror, which is best fought largely by other means. DoD leadership in the next administration should make this clear, including through a new National Defense Strategy, accompanied by threat assessments that are grounded in reality, as opposed to worst-case analyses and naive notions of a U.S. global imperium.

DoD should also consider, however, the development of increased capabilities in some areas aside from combat operations. These areas might include capabilities for shaping the environment, though not to the degree envisioned by the new DoD directive on stability and security operations. They might also include specialized forces for peace operations and humanitarian assistance. But there is clearly a need to carefully balance any increased DoD contributions in such areas against the overall need to substantially reduce the DoD role. In this regard, the U.S. should not seek to serve as a “guarantor of global security” by sending its troops for peace operations worldwide. Our military could end up overstretched and with serious operational difficulties simply by being engaged in numerous smaller-scale contingencies – as occurred, to some degree, in the 1990s after the Persian Gulf War. Similarly, DoD should not become a “global first responder” for world disasters. Both at home and abroad, the first responders to a disaster will necessarily be the local authorities on the scene.²⁶

Budget Implications for DoD. While many appear to agree on the need to increase the State budget, very few are bold enough to suggest significant decreases in the budget for Defense. Instead, even “progressive” analysts at the Center for American Progress state that DoD needs more resources, not less. They argue specifically that Defense needs to repair the wear and tear on equipment and personnel as a result of the Iraq War and to increase the size of our forces by 92,000 soldiers and Marines. Unfortunately, both of the principal candidates for president have picked up this argument – as has President Bush, whose latest budget proposal includes the 92,000 plus-up in force size. But the actual purpose of such proposals is far from clear; e.g., should the U.S. restore and increase its war-weary forces for another preemptive invasion or to continue indefinitely the War on Terror? Surely, DoD with its already outsized budget can find a way to recover from the Iraq War, and to effectively perform other important missions including in Afghanistan, without further budget increases. As Figure 3 below underlines, defense spending today not only remains out of proportion to that for the Department of State but is also out of proportion to past defense spending at the height of the Cold War.²⁷

Overall, the case for substantial cutbacks in defense seems compelling. The defense budget request for FY 09 is \$515.4 billion, not including a supplemental request of \$70 billion for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Again, this represents the highest level of defense spending since World War II. Some will point out that current U.S. military spending is only 4 percent of our GDP, which is significantly less than Cold War levels. Top DoD officials have even suggested that U.S. military spending should not drop below this 4 percent level. But the GDP measure is arbitrary and largely irrelevant without reference to specific threats and a strategy for dealing with those threats. As one analyst puts it, the “sole coherent rationale” for increased military spending is the “dangerously misguided” notion that the U.S. should seek “to try and run a benign American empire.”²⁸

As a first step to reverse this trend, the new president in 2009 should seek to cut DoD’s total budget by at least 20 percent in real terms over the next four years. The 20 percent figure corresponds to a proposed reduction by Foreign Policy magazine in a 2001 interview with four top-level flag officers for an article on “Reinventing War.” Two out of the four agreed that a 20 percent cut could actually increase DoD’s military effectiveness. If any of

the top brass could accept such a proposition without strong objections, there must have been a good deal of slack in the DoD budget before 9/11! The case for such a cut is almost certainly as strong today, despite the costs of the Iraq War, given the massive increases in the Defense budget since 9/11. To help ensure that this long-overdue cutback is achieved, the next administration should establish firm annual ceilings on defense expenditures, with adjustments as necessary to reach a 20 percent reduction. Without firm ceilings, the likely result would be endless haggling with the military over supposedly critical demands that cannot be met without higher expenditures. At the same time, a concerted effort will be needed to ensure buy-in by key leaders of the U.S. Congress.²⁹

With regard to specifics, the previously cited study by the Center for American Progress makes some useful proposals for program cuts that could help to achieve a 20 percent reduction in defense expenditures. Near the top of the list for cutbacks should be the elimination of high-cost Cold War legacy systems such as the F/A-22 Raptor aircraft and ballistic missile defense. Another high priority for cuts should be major reductions in our still outsized nuclear arsenal, coupled with diplomatic efforts to move all nations

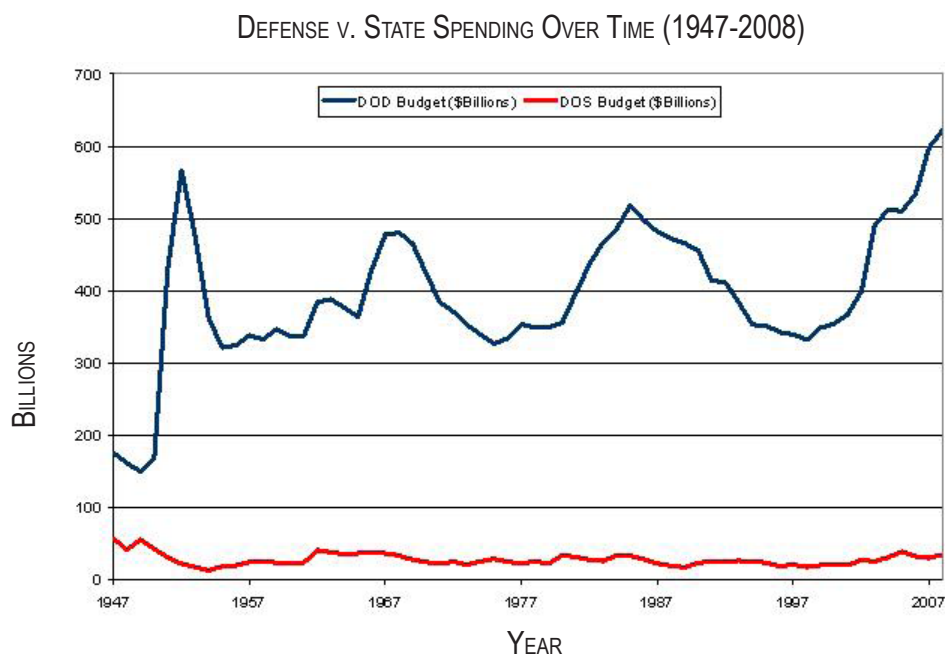


FIGURE 3. SOURCE: SEE NOTES FOR FIGURES 1 AND 2 ABOVE.

closer to the ultimate goal of zero nuclear weapons. In addition, the U.S. could probably make a significant dent in its defense expenditures by promptly withdrawing its combat troops from Iraq. Stiglitz and Bilmes estimate, for example, that the operating costs of this war will rise to \$16 billion a month in 2008.³⁰

CONCLUSION

As stressed at the outset, a tendency toward militarization is deeply ingrained in our past history and has reached a new high point under President Bush. To reverse this trend, changes on the margin will not suffice. Rather, the U.S. must make major changes in its specific policies and overall approach to foreign affairs and in the key bureaucracies involved. These changes include not simply the election of a new president, but the election of a president with strong leadership capabilities and a new vision of the U.S. world role. They also include dedicated efforts to 1) rebuild the State Department as a premier institution for making and carrying out U.S. foreign policy and 2) to reduce DoD's role by reorienting its focus to reflect current realities and cutting back substantially on its record-level expenditures.

The salient fact that underlines the need for major change is the continuing growth of the U.S. defense budget out of all proportion to actual threats to our national security. As one expert puts it, "we can be con-

12 fident the United States now exceeds the rest of the world combined in defense spending,” with China in “a very poor second place.” Although we must remain prepared to face a range of future threats, including attacks on our vital interests by hostile regional powers, current threats clearly do not require a level of defense spending comparable to that in World War II. (It should be noted in this regard, that the Russian invasion of Georgia – despite the alarmist rhetoric about another Cold War – poses no serious threat to U.S. vital interests.) Overall, major changes are needed to demilitarize U.S. foreign policy in part because President Bush has gone so far in the opposite direction. From this perspective, the changes proposed above, including a 20 percent cut in the defense budget over four years, seem relatively modest. In fact, a sustained effort may well be needed over several more years – with substantial further cutbacks in defense spending -- to rebuild our diplomatic capabilities and achieve a better balance between the “hard” and “soft” elements of U.S. power.³¹

In the longer term, the need to demilitarize our foreign policy is critical not only to restore our world leadership, but also to ensure the survival of our nation as we now know it. This is not simply because our current wars are depleting our political capital internationally and making us less safe. A key question on the economic front, for example, is how long we can afford the current militaristic approach. The preceding discussion has already suggested the enormous costs of the Iraq War on our economy, including far reaching opportunity costs. As Bilmes and Stiglitz point out, for example, “for far, far less than the cost of the war, we could have ensured the solvency of Social Security for the next half century or more.” Potentially at stake as well are our political liberties and democratic form of government. The more we build up the military, for example, the more it will likely become a dominant force not only internationally but also domestically. In fact, with the formation of the U.S. Northern Command for homeland defense, our military is already prepared to take a lead role domestically at a time of national crisis. Such political and economic concerns highlight, in short, the critical importance of dedicated and sustained efforts to demilitarize our foreign policy and to pursue a very different, internationalist approach as soon as possible.³²

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Endnotes

¹ Robert M. Gates, “Landon Lecture,” Kansas State University (Manhattan, Kansas, November 26, 2007), <http://www.defenselink.mil/speeches/speech.aspx?speechid=1199>. Re ‘09 budget, see Josh White “White House Requests \$515 Billion for the Pentagon” and “Amounts by Agency,” *The Washington Post*, February 5, 2008.

² Richard Rhodes, *Arsenals of Folly: The Making of the Nuclear Arms Race*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007), pp. 104-5.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 106, 298.

⁴ Ana Marte and Winslow Wheeler (ed.), *CDI 2007 Military Almanac*, (Washington: Center for Defense Information, 2007), p. 85.

⁵ In this writer’s view, if top U.S. officials had had a better understanding of Vietnamese history and culture, they would never have gone to war with Vietnam in the first place. From personal experience, well before the war became a major issue, many working-level officials in the State Department would have advised against our escalating involvement.

⁶ See Joseph E. Stiglitz and Linda J. Bilmes, *The Three Trillion Dollar War: The True Cost of the Iraq Conflict*, (New York, W.W. Norton & Company, 2008). For quote, see Rhodes, p. 308.

⁷ For latest version of Bush Doctrine, see *The National Security Strategy*, (March 2006), Section V, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss/2006/sectionIII.html>.

⁸ Andrew J. Bacevich, *The New American Militarism: How Americans are Seduced by War*, (New York, Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 83, 88, 90.

⁹ This writer worked in the Defense Department during the lead up to the Iraq War. He and many of his colleagues, including working level officials with relevant expertise, were highly skeptical of the case for war being made by top officials.

¹⁰ Quote re DoD combating-terrorism effort are from *Quadrennial Defense Review Report*, February 6, 2006, <http://www.defenselink.mil/pubs/pdfs/QDR20060203.pdf>. Term “imperial grunts” is from Robert D. Kaplan, *Imperial Grunts: The American Military on the Ground*, (New York, Random House, 2005).

¹¹ Re Bush threat of WWII and NIE conclusions, see “A Question of Purpose” and “Key Judgments From a National Intelligence Estimate on Iran’s Nuclear Activity,” *The New York Times*, December 4, 2007.

¹² Various additional changes, beyond the scope of this paper, are probably necessary to ensure the success of demilitarization. These would include further reform of the intelligence community; a renewed emphasis on arms control and disarmament; and improved Congressional oversight, especially through closer coordination between the Armed Services and Foreign Relations committees.

¹³ See Eisenhower’s Farewell Address, January 17, 1961, http://eisenhower.archives.gov/speeches/farewell_address.html. The principal impediments to change will likely come from the Congress, as opposed to the bureaucracy. In this writer’s experience, career officials generally want to support, not to obstruct, a new president.

¹⁴ Quote from Robert M. Gates, Speech, U.S. Global Leader-

ship Campaign (Washington, D.C., July 15, 2008), <http://www.defenselink.mil.speeches/speech.aspx?speechid=1262>. Re State budget request vs. Pentagon spending on health care, see Gates, endnote 1.

¹⁵ For data on State spending, see Historical Tables: Budget of the United States Government, (Fiscal Year 2009), Table 3.1 Outlays by Function and Superfunction (1940-2013), <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/budget/fy2009/pdf/hist.pdf>.

¹⁶ Re doubling of FSOs at military commands, see Nicholas Kralev, "State Doubles Military Advisers," *The Washington Times*, January 18, 2008. Quote on deploying with the 82nd Airborne is from Condoleezza Rice, "Remarks on Transformational Diplomacy," Georgetown University, (Washington, February 12, 2008), <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2008/02/100703.htm>. See also U.S. Department of State, Fact Sheet on Transformational Diplomacy, (18 January 2006), <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2006/59339.htm>. For an overview of FY 09 proposals, see Gordon Adams, "New funds for foreign aid," *The Bulletin Online*, (February 13, 2008), <http://www.thebulletin.org/webedition/columnists/gordon-adams/new-funds-foreign-aid>.

¹⁷ Quote re Defense bands is from David J. Kilcullen, "New Paradigms for 21st Century Conflict . . .," *eJournal USA Society & Values*, (May 2007), <http://usinfo.state.gov/journals/itps/0507/ijpe/kilcullen.htm>.

¹⁸ Quotes re foreign assistance are from Richard L. Armitage and Joseph S. Nye Jr., Co-chairs, Report of CSIS Commission on Smart Power, (November 6, 2007), http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/071106_csis-smartpowerreport.pdf. For an excellent overview of the militarization problem, see Stewart Patrick and Kaysie Brown, "The Pentagon and Global Development: Making Sense of DoD's Expanding Role," *Center for Global Development*, (November 2007), <http://www.cgdev.org/content/general/detail/14815>. See also Gordon Adams, "U.S. foreign policy and foreign assistance: The momentum for reform," *The Bulletin Online*, (December 18, 2007), <http://www.thebulletin.org/webedition/columnists/gordon-adams/us-foreign-policy-and-foreign-assistance-the-momentum-reform>.

¹⁹ Re the need to strengthen the authority of U.S. Ambassadors, see Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, *Embassies Grapple to Guide Foreign Aid*, 110th Congress, 1st Session, S. Prt. 110-33, November 16, 2007, http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=110_cong_senate_committee_prints&docid=f:38770.pdf.

²⁰ Quote from Rice (endnote 16).

²¹ Re doubling of foreign assistance, See Mary K. Bush, Chairman, *Beyond Assistance: The Help Commission Report on Foreign Assistance Reform*, (December 2007), http://www.helpcommission.gov/portals/0/beyond%20assistance_help_commission_report.pdf. For Obama's position, see Barack Obama, Speech, "A New Strategy for a New World," (Washington, D.C., July 15, 2008), http://www.barackobama.com/2008/07/15/remarks_of_senator_barack_obam_96.php

²² Data on U.S. military presence overseas are from Quadrennial Defense Review Report (endnote 10).

²³ See *ibid.* for force planning construct. Re new Defense Strategy, see "Gates Sees Terrorism Remaining Enemy No. 1," *The Washington Post*, July 31, 2008.

²⁴ Gates, endnote 14. Re new core mission for DoD, see Patrick and Brown (endnote 18.)

²⁵ For ODA quote and Section 1206 funds, see Patrick and Brown.

²⁶ The terms "guarantor of global security" and "global first responder" are from Lawrence J. Korb and Max Bergmann, *Restoring American Military Power: Toward a New Progressive Defense Strategy for America*, (December 10, 2007), http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2007/12/restoring_military.html. Re smaller-scale contingencies, see William S. Cohen, Secretary of Defense, Report to Congress on U.S. Military Involvement in Major Smaller-Scale Contingencies Since the Persian Gulf War, (March 1999). This report identifies more than 50 SSCs involving major military deployments outside the U.S. over an eight-year period in the 1990's.

²⁷ See Korb and Bergmann. For the position of the Democratic candidate, see Barack Obama, "Renewing American Leadership," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 86, No. 4 (July/August 2007). It should be noted that many military officers strongly support the position of Korb and Bergmann. For example, in a recent survey of 3,400 active and retired officers at the highest levels of command, 88% agreed that the war in Iraq has stretched the U.S. military "dangerously thin." See "The U.S. Military Index," *Foreign Policy*, (March/April 2008), p. 72.

²⁸ Re FY 09 budget request, see White (endnote #1). Re 4% of GDP as spending level, see Gordon Adams, "The Undisciplined Pentagon Budget," *American Security Project*, (February 20, 2008), http://www.americansecurityproject.org/essays/the_undisciplined_pentagon_budget. For quote on spending rationale, see Richard K. Betts, "A Disciplined Defense," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 68, No. 6 (November/December 2007), pp. 68-9.

²⁹ For interview with flag officers, see "Reinventing War," *Foreign Policy*, (November/December 2001), pp. 39-40. Re annual ceilings, from this writer's experience, there is a great deal of room for trade-offs in the defense budget. DoD can always find ways to make cutbacks, especially if forced to do so by firm spending limits.

³⁰ Korb and Bergmann. Stiglitz and Bilmes (endnote 6), p. 34.

³¹ For quote on U.S. military spending, see Marte and Wheeler (endnote 4), p. 185. For "hard" vs. "soft" power, see Armitage and Nye.

³² Linda J. Bilmes and Joseph E. Stiglitz, "The Iraq War Will Cost Us \$3 Trillion, and Much More," *The Washington Post*, March 9, 2008. Re USNORTHCOM, the Posse Comitatus Act is a possible limitation on its domestic role. But USNORTHCOM can play a lead role domestically without violating this Act under circumstances expressly authorized by the Congress. These circumstances include disaster relief during a national emergency.



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