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# **Rebalancing the Force: Major Issues for Quadrennial Defense Review 2010**

**By  
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It is great to have a chance to talk to you about the Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) that we have just kicked off. I seem to be unable to escape QDRs, much as I try; but, you know, this one is really, I think, going to be one of the more important ones we have done in a long time. As you know, the QDR is congressionally mandated; and it really provides a vehicle for establishing the Department of Defense's (DOD's) strategic direction in support of the President's national security vision. This one will comprehensively assess the threats and challenges that the United States faces, with an aim to rebalancing U.S. and DOD capabilities and forces in support of the President's strategy and the Secretary's strategy. We are going to seek to better address the needs of today's conflicts, but also tomorrow's threats.

As I said, the QDR will provide an overall strategic framework for the Department's annual processes, including force development, force management, and the fiscal year (FY) 2011 budget bill. We are going to be addressing some very difficult questions of how do we balance our present operational needs with preparing for an uncertain and complex future. The review has to get back to Congress, the results of the review, by early 2010, a little less than a year from now; and Secretary Gates has just signed off on the terms of reference. But many key insights and decisions will actually need to come before then in order to influence the FY 2011 program and budget process.

Today I am probably going to frustrate a lot of you because I am not going to be able to give you the answers that we will have in six months or twelve months, but I thought it was important today to start out with how do we see the strategic environment and what are some of the implications of that environment for U.S. strategy and the QDR?

So let me start by trying to characterize the security environment [as] we see it. I do not think it is an exaggeration to say that we face one of the most daunting inheritances in generations. Most obviously, we are involved in two ongoing wars. We have nearly 200,000 U.S. military personnel currently deployed in harm's way in two conflicts and in the broader fight against extremism, and we are seeking to draw down our forces in Iraq as we shift greater resources towards Afghanistan. But, given the U.S. vital interests at stake in Iraq and the Middle East, this period of transition is likely to occur over some time; and in Afghanistan we are likely to face a commitment that will last for some time. So these two ongoing conflicts will be with us for a while as part of the security picture, but they are not the sum total. There are many new, emerging security challenges that we need to pay attention to: the rise of violent extremist movements more broadly, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, rising powers and the shifting balances of power, failed and failing states, [and] increasing tensions in the global commons.

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Many of these challenges are fueled and complicated by a number of powerful trends that are fundamentally reshaping the international landscape; and these trends include obviously the global economic downturn, prospects of climate change, cultural and demographic shifts, growing resource scarcity, and the spread of potentially destabilizing technologies. I want to spend a little time saying a word about each one of these; so let me start with the five key security challenges, as I see them.

First, we do, as we all know, face a very long and global struggle against violent extremism. Globalization has clearly brought many benefits to humanity; but, as you know, it is also got a dark side. Revolutions and communications and transportation have enabled the rise of non-state actors, some benign and some very far from benign.

The emergence of al Qaeda and associated groups is just one case in point. And thanks to globalization, such organizations can now both recruit and operate transnationally, challenging states in increasingly significant ways. Despite some very substantial counterterrorism successes in the past decade, al Qaeda continues to morph and regenerate in various theaters. It is now regaining strength in the Pakistan-Afghanistan border region and also spreading elsewhere.

The second key challenge I want to highlight is the proliferation—continued proliferation of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, as these also pose increasing threats to our security. We have to respond to states such as Iran [and] North Korea, who are seeking to develop nuclear weapons technologies; and, in a globalized world, there is also an increased risk that non-state actors will find ways to obtain these materials or weapons. And so we have to put particular focus on policing up loose materials, securing weapons stockpiles where they exist, and so forth, hence the President's pledge in Prague to try to really get after this problem in a four-year time frame.

Third, we are witnessing some fundamental shifts in the global balance of power. We are in an increasingly multilateral, multi-polar environment. While the U.S. continues to be the economically and militarily dominant power, states such as China and India are also emerging as major players. In the case of China, we face the challenge of simultaneously engaging [with] and hedging [against them].

We certainly must look forward to new areas of cooperation, whether it is in the case of economic, trade, climate change, and so forth. We also need to continue investing in efforts to counter emerging Chinese military capabilities, be it in the cyber domain with regard to keeping space free of threats and with regard to protecting our access to the critical regions in East Asia. We must also forge strong strategic partnerships with both India and Pakistan while striving to reduce the tensions between these two countries.

Russia also presents both challenges and opportunity. We have all talked about resetting the relationship. And I think there is promise there, but it is also a state that is experiencing some worrisome trends as a somewhat nationalistic and autocratic leadership is empowered by petro wealth.

Fourth, we face increasing threats stemming from state weakness and failure. And here, I think this is really worth significant attention. Historically, most security challenges have come from state strength, from aggressive, powerful states overstepping the bounds of international norms and international law. We are now in a world where many of the security threats we face will come from state weakness and the inability of states to meet the basic needs of their population. There are many states where we see the uneven integration that goes with globalization, weak states that are basically struggling to meet the needs of their population and to secure their own territory. And that leads to the possibility of the emergence of an increasing amount of ungoverned spaces, as we have called them

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and those become potential safe havens for terrorists, for criminal organizations, for illicit activities of all kinds.

Fifth, we also see in some cases the rising tensions in the global commons. And by that I mean sea, space, cyberspace, and so forth. And those are really a lot of the connective tissue of the international system, and we have a very strong economic interest and security interest in keeping those global commons open and free from threat. So, as I said, these are five emerging security challenges and they are made more difficult and more complex by a number of powerful trends. I listed five of these as well, and you can get the trend here. When you work in the Pentagon, you have to think in fives so there are five challenges and five trends.

The first is, as I mentioned, the global economic downturn, which is certainly putting greater pressures on particularly weak states, increasing poverty, increasing inequality, [and] decreasing state resources for coping with some of the challenges I just outlined.

Global climate change, I believe that over time, as the results of this manifest, it's going to be an accelerant. It is going to accelerate state failure in some cases, accelerate mass migration, spread of disease, and even possibly insurgency in some areas as weak governments fail to cope with the effects of global climate change.

Demographic changes this is the third may also prove destabilizing. In some regions we are seeing tremendous youth bulges. We can all point to a number of countries in the Middle East and elsewhere where the average age is twenty or younger. Contrast that with the number of aging societies in Europe, Japan, [and] Russia where you see [a] depopulation trend happening in some of these major powers.

Fourth, key natural resources are increasingly scarce, and we are likely to see in the future increase in competition for everything from oil, gas, [and] water. And so that is likely to exacerbate some of our challenges.

Fifth, we see the continued spread of destabilizing new technologies, not only at the high end such as Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD), but also at the low end, [be] it Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) or the capacity for cyber warfare.

So let us come back to, what does all this mean for the Department of Defense? All of these new challenges and trends really shape the operating environment for the U.S. military, and they will require us to adapt and change. For the military there are two challenges that I would say are particularly acute, and these have been highlighted by Secretary Gates and others.

First, we face the challenge of increasingly hybrid forms of warfare. America's conventional dominance gives our adversaries, both state and non-state actors alike, incentives to explore asymmetric strategies; strategies that they can use to undermine our strengths and exploit our weaknesses. Preparing for this operating environment is extremely challenging because it will pull us, I believe, in and this is a personal view in two very different directions. On the one hand, we must be ready for irregular forms of warfare, warfare among the people, as some of the academics say, in which non-state actors use tactics like IEDs, like suicide bombings, mixing in with the population, mixing noncombatants, combatants and so forth, very much along the lines of what we have experienced in Iraq, Afghanistan, [and] what the Israelis experienced with Lebanon.

On the other hand, we also have to prepare for what I would call high-end asymmetric threats where rising regional powers and rogue states can use highly sophisticated technologies to deny us

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access or deny us the ability to use some of our advantages. Here I am thinking of sophisticated anti-satellite capabilities, anti-air capabilities, anti-ship weapons, undersea warfare, as well as weapons of mass destruction and cyber attacks. So this is a much more high-end manifestation of hybrid warfare, of [the] asymmetric challenge that we also have to be prepared for in the future. And so you can see that we are going to be pulled in different directions in trying to cover the range of challenges in the future.

Further complicating this is the fact that in some cases we may see sort of sophisticated non-state actors using some of these very high-end capabilities, whether it is WMD or things like guided rockets or munitions, as we saw in Lebanon. I think this whole really unpacking hybrid warfare, asymmetric threats, along the spectrum will be one of the principal challenges, intellectual challenges, we face in the QDR, understanding the implications for how we need to shape our forces now and in the future.

Secondly, I would just underscore the second challenge is one I have already mentioned, and that is we are going to have to be prepared to operate in a world in which ongoing challenges from strong states are paralleled by increasing dangers posed by weak and failing states. This idea that state weakness and failure may be an increasing driver of conflict and of situations that require a U.S. military response. So can we cope with all of this? And I can see that I have done a good job of cheering you all up . . . I will not pretend that there are any easy solutions to the problems that we face. They are vast, they are complex but we have to adapt. This is not a choice; it is a necessity. And I do not want to leave you all in a state of despair; so let me spend a little time putting our current situation in context, some historical context, and offer some reasons for optimism.

America has faced similar challenges before, at least a similar magnitude of challenge, and we have both survived and thrived. When you think back to the period right after World War II, we sometimes forget how incredible the challenges were in those years. Europe and large parts of Asia lay in ruins. The global economy had stagnated. The specter of another ideological challenge was rising, and the proliferation of nuclear weapons had begun.

You know, talk about a time of paradigm shifts. It took years for American strategists to determine the best way to deal with these challenges; but by the end of the 1940s, a bipartisan strategy had begun to coalesce around the best way forward. And the core of this strategy, we tend to think of containment; but core to the strategy was actually the idea, a very powerful idea that American interests are deeply intertwined with the health and stability of the international system. During the immediate post-war period, the U.S. played a leading role in creating the international architecture of laws and institutions and norms that helped to create stability in the decades that followed.

Think of it. It is truly amazing when you think of how much creativity and institution building was done in such a short period of time, the U.N., the Bretton Woods agreements, the Geneva Conventions, a whole network of alliances, from the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) to others, treaties on all manners of subjects.

And the challenges we face today are certainly different than those we faced after World War II, but they are no more insurmountable. And I take solace from this because we have risen to this level and complexity of challenge before, and I believe we can do so again.

We move forward with the QDR, what we are asking is, in this environment, what are some of the principles of strategy that need to guide us going forward? We are in the process of working on national security priorities that will, we hope, become the basis for a new national security strategy.

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In the meantime, we have a very strong national defense strategy that Secretary Gates has articulated; and I think many of the principles and themes that I am going to highlight to you today are very much consistent with those.

So let me divert from my practice of working in fives and talk about six principles, just to keep you on your toes and to show that we in the Pentagon can adapt, so, six core principles.

First, U.S. strategy has to be grounded in pragmatism rather than ideology. We must base our strategy on a clear-eyed assessment of the challenges and the opportunities and be realistic in our objectives, deriving them, rooting them, in our core national interests.

Second, to protect and advance those interests in a very complex world, we have to remain engaged in critical regions around the world. The interconnected nature of the global environment means that events far from our borders can have enormous impacts on our security and domestic well being. Remaining engaged is absolutely essential. Neo-isolationism is not an option. Engagement means shoring up the fundamentals of the international system that I mentioned before:

- Open commerce based on free and fair access to air, sea, space, and cyberspace
- Strong alliance structures based on respect and willingness to share burdens
- Commitment to international norms that shore up and contribute to the advancement of our national interests
- Securing those global goods that are the backbone of a renewed effort to restore and revitalize American global leadership

A third core principle is that our engagement has to be smarter. We need to be more selective about where, when, and how we use the tools of American national power, particularly our military force. At the same time, we need to be more proactive in the use of our soft power and the non-military elements: diplomacy, information, economics, and so forth.

Fourth, the U.S. has to play, not only play by the rules but champion the rules. We must exemplify the respect for the rule of law in everything that we do, abiding by the treaties and norms that we helped to put in place after World War II, returning to our historical role as champion of rule of law domestically and internationally, and leading efforts to adapt the international order to new realities like transnational terrorism. Here I would like to quote something that Vice President Biden has said, sort of a pithy way of putting this. And he said, “We must lead by the power of our example, not just the example of our power.”

A fifth principle to guide us:

We must recognize that allies and partners are absolutely essential. These are not just . . . nice to have. They are not just window dressing. They are inherently, they are essential in a world in which we cannot achieve our own objectives, advance our own security against transnational threats like terrorism, proliferation, global climate change without joining forces with others. And so, as global power balances shift, this will require revitalizing and in some cases actually re-conceptualizing our alliances and partnerships to deal with these challenges. An exercise like NATO’s upcoming Strategic Concept Review is a real opportunity to rethink, what is NATO for, going forward? How do we want to use this alliance in the 21st century?

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I would say that is true across the board with our major alliances and relationships. We also have a direct interest in helping our allies and partners build their capacity to be security contributors, to be able to step up alongside us in shoring up the international system.

Finally, a sixth principle:

We must recognize in everything that we do that in almost all cases, military power. Well, I do not want to say it that way, let me back up and say, we must recognize that in many cases, military power is necessary but not sufficient to deal with 21st century challenges. The United States will continue to require a strong military that is second to none; but complex problems from Iraq, to Afghanistan, to just about anything you can think of, [require] solutions that integrate all the dimensions of our national power and influence. We need to take this idea of whole-of-government approaches seriously, and we need to operationalize it in virtually everything we do.

This will require fairly major reform of our interagency processes and perhaps, most importantly, a much more balanced investment in the instruments of national security, particularly on the civilian side, where we have, for many years, under resourced the tools available to us, and we discover and rediscover that every time we go into an operation, every time we are trying to deploy assets to influence a situation. We simply haven't invested in what we need [to be] effective.

But we also have to revitalize our military to operate in a more whole-of-government context, particularly giving people the training and the education they need to operate in a very interagency environment; in an international environment; and in an environment where members of our military will often be called to do a number of things that are not nearly military in nature, as we've seen in Iraq and Afghanistan, from mediating community disputes in a local village, to rebuilding damaged infrastructure, to managing detention centers, to securing free and fair elections.

This is all part of the world of irregular and hybrid warfare, and we certainly need to build civilian capacity. But there are situations, particularly when the security situation is most dire, when we will have our military folks needing to at least support in some of these non-traditional areas.

So, those are the six broad principles, on top of the five trends and five challenges. And let me just close with a little bit of a discussion about balancing risk. I think this is a key conceptual idea that is framing a lot of how we're thinking in the QDR.

We have some very difficult choices to make in the DOD among competing priorities. One of the reasons why this QDR is so important is that it's a vehicle for us to think in an explicit way about how best to balance strategic risk, how to make choices about where to buy down risk, where to accept and manage it. In a world in which resources are limited, particularly at a time of economic crisis, we have to be very explicit about how we do this. My own thinking about this is I tend to think about this in three ways.

First, we need to balance risk, just among our current priorities, between our commitment to:

- Iraq
- The Afghanistan-Pakistan theater
- The broader global campaign against terrorism
- The health and the readiness of the force

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And I can tell you that Secretary Gates is particularly seized with this latter issue. You will see as the FY 2010 budget comes out, which I can not talk about in detail; but you will see that a major area is investing in the health of the force, trying to reduce the strain on military personnel and families going forward. So this is a critical aspect of balancing risk in the current time frame.

The second area of balancing risk will come with regard to what kinds of investments do we make to prepare for the future? How do we balance between preparing for different kinds of warfare, different points along the spectrum? Traditionally DOD has emphasized the development of capabilities that have really been optimized for conventional forms of warfare at the cost of preparing for, I would argue, forms of hybrid warfare, more asymmetric challenges. This is one of the principal areas we are going to look at in the QDR. We do need a force that would be able to operate across the spectrum of conflict; but given the dearth of traditional conventional threats on the horizon, greater priority should be given to dealing with emerging asymmetric challenges, as I mentioned before, clustered at both the middle and the high end of the spectrum.

Finally, we have to balance between current needs and future needs, between things like current operations and readiness and investment in capabilities for the future: research, development, procurement. How we balance risk over time is going to emerge, I think, as part of this QDR; but it will be a central pillar of what we are doing, a central focus of the review, and certainly of the Secretary's participation in the review.

Let me close with just a few words about process. I talked about whole-of-government approaches. Even the QDR is going to take a more whole-of-government approach, where we are going to consult widely with our interagency partners, with congressional committees, during the process. We will also be ensuring that the QDR is cross-fertilized, if you will, with the Nuclear Posture Review, the Space Posture Review, [and] the Missile Defense Review, which are all going on at the same time.

We will also be seeking feedback beyond the USG. Many of our allies have actually contributed officers to work as part of the QDR staff. We will also be engaging in extensive consultations, not only at the end but throughout the process. And we will be coming out to places like CSIS to ask for help, intellectual help, from think tanks, from the private sector, and elsewhere, because we do not have a monopoly on good ideas.

So our future security and prosperity depends on how much we respond to this rapidly changing and complex environment, how well we adapt. We can choose [to] look backwards and shore up what we're comfortable with, keep doing what we're doing, what we like to do; but that is not necessarily the right path. We need to look forward in a very pragmatic, clear-eyed way and develop the capabilities we need to [respond] across the spectrum to make sure the U.S. is well-positioned to maintain its security and to advance that security in a changing world. This will not be easy. But we have done it before, and I am confident that as we start this review we will be in a position to move the ball down the field with this review.