



What will be the immediate strategic repercussions, if any, of the scheduled radical pruning of the size of the American military?

# STRATEGIKA

CONFLICTS OF THE PAST AS LESSONS FOR THE PRESENT

## **Military History in Contemporary Conflict**

As the very name of Hoover Institution attests, military history lies at the very core of our dedication to the study of “War, Revolution, and Peace.” Indeed, the precise mission statement of the Hoover Institution includes the following promise: “The overall mission of this Institution is, from its records, to recall the voice of experience against the making of war, and by the study of these records and their publication, to recall man’s endeavors to make and preserve peace, and to sustain for America the safeguards of the American way of life.” From its origins as a library and archive, the Hoover Institution has evolved into one of the foremost research centers in the world for policy formation and pragmatic analysis. It is with this tradition in mind, that the “Working Group on the Role of Military History in Contemporary Conflict” has set its agenda—reaffirming the Hoover Institution’s dedication to historical research in light of contemporary challenges, and in particular, reinvigorating the national study of military history as an asset to foster and enhance our national security. By bringing together a diverse group of distinguished military historians, security analysts, and military veterans and practitioners, the working group seeks to examine the conflicts of the past as critical lessons for the present.

## **Working Group on the Role of Military History in Contemporary Conflict**

The Working Group on the Role of Military History in Contemporary Conflict examines how knowledge of past military operations can influence contemporary public policy decisions concerning current conflicts. The careful study of military history offers a way of analyzing modern war and peace that is often underappreciated in this age of technological determinism. Yet the result leads to a more in-depth and dispassionate understanding of contemporary wars, one that explains how particular military successes and failures of the past can be often germane, sometimes misunderstood, or occasionally irrelevant in the context of the present.

## ***Strategika***

*Strategika* is a journal that analyzes ongoing issues of national security in light of conflicts of the past—the efforts of the Military History Working Group of historians, analysts, and military personnel focusing on military history and contemporary conflict. Our board of scholars shares no ideological consensus other than a general acknowledgment that human nature is largely unchanging. Consequently, the study of past wars can offer us tragic guidance about present conflicts—a preferable approach to the more popular therapeutic assumption that contemporary efforts to ensure the perfectibility of mankind eventually will lead to eternal peace. New technologies, methodologies, and protocols come and go; the larger tactical and strategic assumptions that guide them remain mostly the same—a fact discernable only through the study of history.

## **Editorial Board**

Victor Davis Hanson, Chair  
Bruce Thornton  
David Berkey

## **Contributing Members**

Peter Berkowitz, Max Boot, Josiah Bunting III, Angelo M. Codevilla, Thomas Donnelly, Colonel Joseph Felter, Josef Joffe, Frederick W. Kagan, Kimberly Kagan, Edward N. Luttwak, Peter Mansoor, Walter Russell Mead, Mark Moyar, Williamson Murray, Ralph Peters, Andrew Roberts, Admiral Gary Roughead, Kori Schake, Kiron K. Skinner, Barry Strauss, Gil-li Vardi, Bing West, Amy Zegart

# STRATEGIKA

CONFLICTS OF THE PAST AS LESSONS FOR THE PRESENT

July 2014 | Issue 16



THE HOOVER INSTITUTION  
Stanford University

Copyright © 2014 by the Board of Trustees of Leland Stanford Junior University

# CONTENTS

STRATEGIKA · JULY 2014 · ISSUE 16

---

## BACKGROUND ESSAY

5



### **Size Isn't All that Matters**

By Angelo M. Codevilla

## FEATURED COMMENTARY

12



### **Pruning the U.S. Military: We Will Do Less But Must Not Do It Less Well**

By General Jim Mattis

15



### **The U.S. Cannot Wish Away Its Present Security Concerns**

By Kiron K. Skinner

## RELATED COMMENTARY

21

### **Security and Solvency**

Kori Schake

22

### **Provocation in a Time of Uncertainty**

Colonel Eric Shirley

26

### **The Defense Budget vs. History**

Max Boot

27

### **Ever Less Bang for the Buck**

Ralph Peters

29

### **Democracies Like Military Cuts**

Bruce Thornton

30

### **Today's Military Needs to be Run More Like a Business**

Kori Schake

## EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS

31

### **Discussion Questions**

# Size Isn't All that Matters

*By Angelo M. Codevilla*

Repercussions of quantitative changes in military forces are relative strictly to those forces' specific missions and deployments. By itself, the reduction of U.S. forces envisaged by the 2014 *Quadrennial Defense Review*—of roughly five percent across the board—does not *change* their capacity to perform any of the missions entrusted to them. Nor would an *increase* of similar size do so. History confirms military logic: Battles are won or lost by forces that get there "*fastest with the mostest*"—by forces that establish superiority in specific places at specific times. How to do that should be the question at hand.

A glance at the number of U.S. combat units, ships, and aircraft, as well as where they are forward-deployed around the world in defensive positions, is suggestive of a climber whose extremities are fully spread to tenuous toe-and-finger holds on a vertical rock, and for whom movement in any direction is perilous. (See Anthony H. Cordesman, *The FY2015 Defense Budget and the QDR: Key Trends and Data Points*, pages 40-47.)

Now as ever in history, the key to success lies less in the overall size of forces than in their location and above all in the strategy that matches specific forces to specific missions.

## *Size*

In 415 B.C. the Athenian Assembly debated and approved a proposal by Alcibiades to send an expedition of some sixty triremes—without hoplite infantry—to Sicily to support the local Segestans and Leontines, with the hope of leading an alliance of Sicilian cities to conquer Syracuse—a major pro-Spartan power. In a subsequent meeting of the Assembly, Nicias opposed

the expedition arguing that it would require a much larger force. The Athenian people did not balk at size or cost. They sent over a hundred high quality ships and 5,000 hoplite infantry, all lavishly equipped to conquer Syracuse by surprise and storm. But this armada's failure to accomplish this was not due to any lack of size or quality, but rather to lack of cavalry. Nicias had not asked for that key element. Athenian forces, then left besieging Syracuse, found themselves gradually enveloped by a counter-expedition of Spartans and allies. In each of the following two years, Athens sent reinforcements—the last consisting of 73 ships and 5,000 more hoplites under Eurymedon and Demosthenes. But doubling the Athenian force did not change its senseless situation: The small harbor in which the ships were operating rendered useless the high tech qualities that would have allowed them to dominate the high seas, and made it possible for the enemy to defeat them with barges. More hoplites could no more storm defended walls than a smaller number. Because the Athenians were applying the wrong forces in the wrong place, size and quality did not matter. Trapped, the Athenians lost their fleet and a total of some 40,000 men. Never again would the Athenian navy be mistress of the sea, nor Athens enjoy secure land borders.

However, forces smaller than the enemy's by factors estimated variously between 3 to 1 and over 10 to 1 had not prevented the Athenians from utterly defeating the Persians on the plain of Marathon in 490 B.C. The smaller force triumphed because quality and tactics were properly adapted to the situation. The Athenians and their Plataean allies having blocked the land exit from the beach where the larger Persian army had landed and having shielded their flanks against its cavalry, waited for an opportunity. That seems to have come when, apparently, the Persian cavalry was absent. At that point, Herodotus tells us, the Greeks attacked at a run. Their phalanx kept its order as it enveloped the Persian mob-in-arms. Pressed on three sides and unable to break through, the Persians fled and were slaughtered.



Poster Collection, US 4642, Hoover Institution Archives

Athens' deployment of its army to Marathon had staked all—just as ten years later, its retreat to the island of Salamis where a naval force much smaller than Persia's saved the city had staked all. But there had been no other choice.

#### *Location*

History suggests, however, that staking all by fighting the nation's main battles far away from home is not a good idea. Consider Rome. In 218 and 217 B.C. Hannibal inflicted on Rome the three worst defeats in the Republic's history. Rome lost

some 30,000 men at the Trebia river in Lombardy, and again on the shores of Lake Trasimene in Umbria. Then, at Cannae in Apulia, Rome lost twice that number along with a substantial part of its aristocracy.

Machiavelli argues in Book II Chapter XII of his *Discourses* that “had the Romans suffered in Gaul, and within the same space of time, those three defeats at the hands of Hannibal which they suffered in Italy, it must have made an end of them; since they could not have turned the remnants of their armies to account as they did in Italy, not having the same opportunity for repairing their strength; nor could they have met their enemy with such numerous armies.” The Roman Republic's wise policy, says Machiavelli, was never to send more than fifty thousand or so legionnaires to fight far away. Thus, no defeat far away could be fatal, while the closer an enemy got to Rome, the greater was the force that Rome could muster. He also tells us that “against the inroad of the Gauls at the end of the first Carthaginian war, we hear of them bringing some eighteen hundred thousand men into the field.”

The contrast with late Roman imperial history could not be more stark: Rome's legions were in garrisons on the empire's edges. They fought one another rather than shift in mutual support against the barbarians. The city, left with forces fit primarily for partisan infighting and for holding down the population, became impotent and irrelevant.

### *Strategy*

The 2014 QDR defines the mission of U.S. forces, spread as they are around the world, as: "*Protect the homeland...deter and defeat attacks on the United States...Build security globally*, in order to preserve regional stability, deter adversaries, support allies and partners, and cooperate with others to address common security challenges. *Project power and win decisively*, to defeat aggression, disrupt and destroy terrorist networks..." These are not statements of strategy, but wishes, unconnected with forces and plans sufficient for realizing them in the face of opposition.

This is not entirely new. Post World War II U.S. forces, their quantity growing or diminishing with the course of U.S. politics or world events, never had the means or the plans (above all, nor was there ever the political will) that would have allowed them forcefully to maintain "containment" by defeating a thrust at any point along the edges of the Communist world. The Korean War made this clear.

The Eisenhower administration, realizing that the U.S. did not have the forces to seal the Communist empire's edges, and that trying to acquire such power would militarize American society, declared that it would respond to challenges to its peripheral deployments with "massive retaliation at times and places of our own choosing." The peripheral forces became "trip wires." Given the efficiency of nuclear forces ("more bang for the buck"), this made sense in principle. But what would happen if the wires were tripped? Senator J.W. Fulbright charged that



Eisenhower and Secretary of State John Foster Dulles were bluffing, challenging them to specify where and how they might redeem this pledge and how they might deal with the consequences.

Dulles' retreat into "we do not discuss hypotheticals" and "all options are on the table" supported Fulbright's charge. Then, when the Kennedy-Johnson administration dismantled U.S. air defenses and banned attempts to defend the country against ballistic missile attack, the possibility that the U.S. might use serious force against a serious power by eliminating the capacity of dealing seriously with the consequences thereof vanished. The Vietnam War proved that.

Because—rhetoric and billions of dollars in the service of tokenism notwithstanding—the U.S. government in the Twenty-First Century is still not serious about defending America against missile attack; because, averse as it is to disproportionate force, it is more un-serious about deterrence than ever, it makes as little sense as ever to consider our peripherally deployed forces as "trip wires." Hence, definitions of the mission of U.S. forces such as those of the 2014 QDR are as liable to Fulbright's questions as was the Eisenhower-Dulles doctrine: *Just how are you going to do that with what you've got and where you've got it?*

*How?*

*"Build security globally, in order to preserve regional stability, deter adversaries, support allies and partners..."* Give or take ten or twenty percent of current U.S. forces, as deployed and organized, given current operational doctrine, what is the U.S. government prepared to do, say, to prevent the Western Pacific from becoming a Chinese lake or to prevent the growing legions of Muslim terrorists from striking America?

In case China were to declare the Taiwan Strait to be sovereign waters and occupy the islands therein, or were it to sink Philippine ships that entered into its newly declared economic zone in

the South China Sea and declare that U.S. ships would be sunk were they to enter into such areas without permission, how and with what could the U.S. Navy re-establish our rights in the Pacific as well as affirm the independence of the islands therein?

What difference would it make were the U.S. to send two aircraft carriers or four? These technical marvels, fit to dominate the middle of the ocean, would be vulnerable in narrow seas. China has made reasonable preparations for sinking them there. Supposing they were sunk. How would the U.S. government deal with their loss? Supposing the carriers avoided being sunk. What would their aircraft destroy that would fix the problem? Are there means or plans for dealing with China's reaction in a way that would "protect the homeland?" These questions have no good answers.

Deter and protect, you say? Suppose that a dozen terrorists whose last address was the new Islamic State in what had been Syria-Iraq, or whose last address was Iran or the Palestinian territories, decided to roll suitcase bombs simultaneously into the security lines of a dozen major U.S. airports or to throw Molotov cocktails into a dozen school buses, or to destroy a dozen major U.S. electrical transformer stations: How does anyone think that current U.S. forces, intelligence included, might stop them? What incentive are these forces poised to give to the governments of such states that might lead them to stop such people from striking America? What would the U.S. government do to whom after such outrages that might prevent them from happening again? Would it, yet again, send hundreds of thousands of U.S. troops to nation-build those states while using drones to kill some individuals who someone convinced our intelligence agencies are terrorists? The U.S. government has done that, and it has not worked out so well.

In sum, questions about the size of the U.S. military pale in importance next to ones about how its units, currently spread out and barely able to maintain themselves against serious opposition,

might be reconfigured and redeployed to provide a surfeit of force to overwhelm whatever objectives the country might require for its safety.

The size of a snake is less relevant than whether it is stretched out, or coiled to strike.



ANGELO M. CODEVILLA, a native of Italy, is a professor emeritus of international relations at Boston University. He was a US naval officer and Foreign Service officer and served on the Senate Intelligence Committee as well as on presidential transition teams. For a decade he was a senior research fellow at the Hoover Institution. He is the author of thirteen books, including *War Ends and Means*, *Informing Statecraft*, *The Character of Nations*, *Advice to War Presidents*, and *A Students' Guide to International Relations*. He is a student of the classics as well as of European literature; he is also a commercial grape grower.

# Pruning the U.S. Military: We Will Do Less But Must Not Do It Less Well

*By General Jim Mattis*

Clearly America's military will continue to shrink. Across our body politic from fiscal conservatives to those who support increasing entitlements to those unimpressed with the last ten or forty years of America's role on the international stage, there is no longer in Washington adequate vision or sufficient political will to restrain the downsizing of our military. With scant political leadership to make the case persuasively for sustaining a larger military, it is inevitable that our smaller military will not be capable of doing all that the post-World War II American military has done around the world. This is comforting to those who doubt the efficacy of our military operations, to those who want America to come home, to stop playing the world's policeman, or to stop sending money overseas, and to others with a host of reservations about America's military role in the world. Our countrymen are also increasingly aware that America is on a fiscally unsustainable path: until we elect a government that can govern responsibly our military power will certainly continue to erode.

We can debate the wisdom of downsizing the U.S. military while the world situation is increasingly unstable and our troops are engaged in confronting sworn enemies, but we cannot deny that the reality of ongoing downsizing must impact our use of force and thus our foreign policy.



Poster Collection, US 4403,  
Hoover Institution Archives.

As our military shrinks the implications will be starkly portrayed. While in the event of hostilities our immediate vital interests, if well-defined, can likely be defended at increased risk and cost, we will have significantly reduced wherewithal to undertake discretionary operations. Despite moral outrage or serious humanitarian plight we will rediscover that we have no moral obligation to do the impossible, and our smaller military dictates that many more such operations will be, in fact, impossible. In an age of terrorism our diplomats will be at increased risk

and we will need to pull back diplomatically in some realms. Our allies too will be directly impacted, for they will need to calculate carefully just what they believe America will fight for, then look to accommodate those forces that may no longer gain American military commitment on their behalf. In our own decision making, we will need a level of discipline in our foreign policy that is lacking in our current fiscal policy.

The most direct impact will be the absolute requirement to adjust our strategy. Assuming that we are capable of crafting a strategy that realistically links political ends with our reduced means through ways that gain bi-partisan support, the new strategy will demand fundamental rework of our assumptions about the use of force. Specifically we will need to pay increased attention tending to allies with shared security interests. We will need more alliances, not fewer, and they will underpin a world where unilateral American military efforts will at the same time be more constrained. Building those alliances will mean compromising more of our objectives and supporting more of others'. The military aspects

of our strategy will inevitably become more naval in character providing time for political leaders considering the employment of additional or other forms of military power.

An immediate implication of a smaller military is its impact on our military itself. Whatever the reduced size of our Armed Forces brings, our Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines must be capable of fighting well enough on short notice to prevail, composed in a manner that ensures we have the fewest possible big regrets when surprise strikes. When the Commander-in-Chief puts our forces into their next fight, the military must be prepared to make it the enemy's longest day and their worst day. In a time of sequestration-level cuts, emphasizing our fighting capability so we will prevail means that readiness must be prioritized, while recognizing that continued nonsensical cuts, aka sequestration, will eventually doom any service chief's efforts to sustain a balanced capability ready to fight and win.

While we will do less with a smaller military, we must not do it less well. At the point of contact with our foes it must be made painfully clear to a globalized world audience that the size of our military notwithstanding, the quality of our troops and equipment ensures that we are at the top of the game and no one wants to take on the U.S. and our allies. This is the one constant that regardless of size America's military cannot sacrifice even as our military shrinks.



**GENERAL JIM MATTIS**, Jim Mattis, an Annenberg Distinguished Visiting Fellow at the Hoover Institution, is an expert on national security issues, especially strategy, innovation, the effective use of military force, and the Middle East.

# The U.S. Cannot Wish Away Its Present Security Concerns

*By Kiron K. Skinner*

Grand strategy requires states to have a long-term plan. It also requires that means and ends be clearly articulated and calibrated to each other. The Obama administration's long-term plan appears to shift U.S. economic and military assets away from the Middle East and toward Asia.<sup>1</sup> The Middle East, however, shows no signs of relinquishing its role as the world's central battleground. Furthermore, means and ends are mixed together as priorities under the Obama doctrine.

The Obama doctrine holds that fiscal constraints, including the need to reduce the deficit and debt, and rebalancing of the U.S. military away from the "wartime strategy" of the last decade dictate national priorities in defense and foreign policy.<sup>2</sup> These priorities are: protecting the homeland; ending U.S. involvement in the two long wars in Afghanistan and Iraq; countering terrorism and dismantling terrorist organizations, especially in the Middle East and North Africa; rebalancing U.S. economic diplomacy and military resources toward the Indo-Pacific region; enhancing existing relationships with allies in Europe and elsewhere; developing new partnerships with states and regional organizations; maintaining a leadership role in major international organizations; controlling the spread of weapons of mass destruction; reducing

---

1 On the Asia shift, see statements by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and President Barack Obama in the fall of 2011. [http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/10/11/americas\\_pacific\\_century](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/10/11/americas_pacific_century), and <http://www.white-house.gov/the-press-office/2011/11/16/remarks-president-obama-and-prime-minister-gillard-australia-joint-press>, both accessed on August 4, 2014.

2 The *Quadrennial Defense Review*, 2014 notes that "the 2010 QDR was fundamentally a wartime strategy." It then marks off how the national priorities outlined in the *Defense Strategic Guidance*, 2012 and the QDR 2014 are premised on a significantly reduced military. See, for example, page 12. [http://www.defense.gov/pubs/2014\\_Quadrennial\\_Defense\\_Review.pdf](http://www.defense.gov/pubs/2014_Quadrennial_Defense_Review.pdf), accessed on August 4, 2014.



Poster Collection, US 1153,  
Hoover Institution Archives.

U.S. and Russian nuclear stockpiles; resizing the military and reducing the rate of increases in defense spending; and improving and using cyber techniques, drones, and special operations forces to combat state and transnational threats as much as possible.<sup>3</sup>

During the 2008 presidential race, Senator Barack Obama began to articulate his strategic priorities. He declared: "I will focus...on five goals essential to making America safer: ending the war in Iraq responsibly; finishing the fight against al Qaeda and the Taliban; securing all nuclear weapons and

materials from terrorists and rogue states; achieving true energy security; and rebuilding our alliances to meet the challenges of the 21st century."<sup>4</sup> Ending the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan became the top priorities for the White House in January 2009.

The president has remained remarkably consistent about his national security priorities. In January 2012, the Department of Defense issued *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense*.<sup>5</sup> According to White House and Defense Department senior officials, the report emerged from unprecedented conversations among national security principals, including the president, and thus should be viewed as a comprehensive statement of U.S. strategic priorities. To support this new guidance, President Obama, then Secretary of

<sup>3</sup> See [http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/rss\\_viewer/national\\_security\\_strategy.pdf](http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/rss_viewer/national_security_strategy.pdf); [http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/counterterrorism\\_strategy.pdf](http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/counterterrorism_strategy.pdf); [http://www.defense.gov/news/defense\\_strategic\\_guidance.pdf](http://www.defense.gov/news/defense_strategic_guidance.pdf); and [http://www.defense.gov/pubs/2014\\_Quadrennial\\_Defense\\_Review.pdf](http://www.defense.gov/pubs/2014_Quadrennial_Defense_Review.pdf). All accessed on August 4, 2014.

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.nytimes.com/2008/07/15/us/politics/15text-obama.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=1&](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/07/15/us/politics/15text-obama.html?pagewanted=all&_r=1&), accessed on August 4, 2014.

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.defense.gov/news/defense\\_strategic\\_guidance.pdf](http://www.defense.gov/news/defense_strategic_guidance.pdf).



Defense Leon Panetta, and General Martin Dempsey, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, held a joint press conference to highlight the positions presented in the report.<sup>6</sup>

Echoing statements from his presidential campaign, the president declared that the wars against terrorists and tyrants in the Middle East were ending in large part because: “We’ve decimated al-Qaida’s leadership. We’ve delivered justice to Osama bin Laden and we put that terrorist network on the path to defeat.... Now we’re turning the page on a decade of war.... And as the transition in Afghanistan continues, more of our troops will continue to come home.”<sup>7</sup> He then spoke of downsizing the military and the U.S. footprint around the world: “As we look beyond the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the end of long-term nation-building with large military footprints, we’ll be able to ensure our security with smaller conventional ground forces.”

While the Obama administration seeks to have the U.S. military presence recede in the Middle East, it has declared that U.S. military and economic presence in Asia will grow. In fact, the president has said that “budget reductions will not come at the expense of this critical region.” According to the Obama Doctrine, the twenty-first century will be the American-Asia Pacific Century.

Following the president’s remarks, Secretary of Defense Panetta spoke of the administration’s crowning counterterrorism achievement of “hav[ing] significantly weakened al-Qaida and decimated its leadership.” He added that the “serious deficit and debt problem” was a “national security risk” that contributed to the need to reduce the size of the military.

---

<sup>6</sup> According to then Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta, “In my experience, this has been an unprecedented process, to have the President of the United States participate in discussions involving the development of a defense strategy, and to spend time with our service chiefs and spend time with our combatant commanders to get their views. It’s truly unprecedented.” See <http://www.defense.gov/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=4953>, accessed on August 4, 2014.

<sup>7</sup> [.http://www.defense.gov/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=4953](http://www.defense.gov/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=4953).

Reiterating the president's comments, Panetta noted that "the U.S. military will increase its institutional weight and focus on enhanced presence, power projection, and deterrence in the Asia-Pacific." At the same time, however, he said that the U.S. will continue to be a major political and military force in the Middle East.

Panetta also remarked: "The bottom line of what we're seeing happen is that we've just ended the mission in Iraq, and we're in the process of ending a mission in Afghanistan. And I think our view is that we've achieved those missions, or we're in the process of achieving those missions."

As reflected in the strategic guidance document, the secretary of defense in 2012 stated that in addition to the military requirements necessary for the Asia rebalance, cyber security and special operations will be protected in the defense budget. The expectation is that cyber and special operations forces will be central parts of "a force sized and shaped differently than the military of the Cold War, the post-Cold War force of the 1990s, or the force that was built over the past decade to engage in large-scale ground wars."

General Dempsey joined his colleagues when he emphasized the Asia focus of U.S. national security policy: "Our strategic challenges in the future will largely emanate out of the Pacific region."

These priorities are fully reflected in the Quadrennial Defense Review, 2014. In line with the 2012 strategic guidance, the QDR 2014 states that the U.S. "has enduring interests in the Middle East, and we will remain fully committed to the security of our partners in the region."

But “the U.S. rebalance to the Asia-Pacific region” is a priority that is well in the making. The overall rebalancing and resizing of U.S. forces is largely due to “increasing fiscal constraint.”<sup>8</sup> Consider just a few international crises that have bubbled up in the past few months. Russia has annexed part of Ukraine. The Islamic State of Syria and Iraq (ISIS) is a formidable military and political force in Syria and Iraq, and has gained control of more territory than al-Qaeda could have realistically ever hoped to dominate. An ISIS caliphate would redefine the Middle East. Missiles are pointed at Israel from every direction. Hundreds of innocent Palestinians in Gaza have perished in the cross-border conflict that is consuming both sides. These political realities are clearly at odds with the Obama administration’s strategic guidance.

The United States has a mix of priorities that are not specifically tied to the major project of resizing the US military. During his speech at West Point last spring, President Obama once again ticked off major achievements on his priority list: “Al Qaeda’s leadership on the border region between Pakistan and Afghanistan has been decimated, and Osama bin Laden is no more.”

The recent QDR, issued a few months before the West Point speech, presents a different assessment. It states that “although core al Qai’da has been severely degraded, instability in the Middle East and civil war in Syria have enabled al Qai’da to expand its global reach and operate in new areas.” The Obama administration is resizing the U.S. military in the midst of partial fulfillment of its ambitious list of priorities.

---

8 [http://www.defense.gov/pubs/2014\\_Quadrennial\\_Defense\\_Review.pdf](http://www.defense.gov/pubs/2014_Quadrennial_Defense_Review.pdf) (page iv).

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/05/28/remarks-president-united-states-military-academy-commencement-ceremony>, accessed on August 4, 2014.

[http://www.defense.gov/pubs/2014\\_Quadrennial\\_Defense\\_Review.pdf](http://www.defense.gov/pubs/2014_Quadrennial_Defense_Review.pdf) (page 8).

As the only superpower, the United States provides extended deterrence for much of the world. When its leadership fails to tie priorities to an overall strategy that can be clearly articulated and understood by domestic and international audiences, it is no surprise that chaos ensues even in countries where the White House once claimed to have helped improve security and secured sovereignty. The absence of a strategy is also why President Obama's recent speech at West Point fell flat for many Democrats and Republicans. As a warning to adversaries, it lacked credibility.



KIRON K. SKINNER is the W. Glenn Campbell Research Fellow at the Hoover Institution, Stanford University. At Carnegie Mellon University, she is founding director of the Center for International Relations and Politics; director of the Institute for Strategic Analysis; university adviser on national security policy; and associate professor of political science. Her areas of expertise are international relations, US foreign policy, and political strategy. Since 2004, she has served on the Chief of Naval Operations' Executive Panel. In 2010, Skinner was appointed to the advisory board of the George W. Bush Oral History Project. In 2012, Pennsylvania governor Tom Corbett appointed Skinner to his Advisory Commission on African American Affairs. Skinner's coauthored books *Reagan, in His Own Hand* and *Reagan, a Life in Letters* were New York Times best sellers. Her opinion pieces appear in leading newspapers and national online outlets.

# Security and Solvency

*By Kori Schake*

*This piece was published by the Foreign Policy Research Institute. The full article can be found here:*  
<http://www.fpri.org/articles/2014/07/security-and-solvency>

The past three budget cycles have been bruising for the Department of Defense. Not only has funding been lower than anticipated, but the dire warnings of the Secretary of Defense and Joint Chiefs of Staff appear not to have changed a single vote in Congress on the budget. The only entitlement cuts Democrats and Republicans could agree upon, including in the Murray-Ryan budget deal that replaced sequestration, were to military accounts—and those did not even exclude current service members. While the cuts were rescinded, they are likely to resurface when budgets for 2016 and beyond are put together.

Read the full article here: <http://www.fpri.org/articles/2014/07/security-and-solvency>

KORI SCHAKE is a research fellow at the Hoover Institution. She has held the Distinguished Chair in International Security Studies at the United States Military Academy and worked in the Pentagon, State Department, and National Security Council and as senior policy adviser to the 2008 McCain presidential campaign. Her most recent book is *State of Disrepair: Fixing the Culture and Practice of the State Department*.

# Provocation in a Time of Uncertainty

*By Colonel Eric Shirley*

*This piece was originally published as part of the Hoover Institution's "History in the News" series.*

*"Of the four wars in my lifetime, none came about because the U.S. was too strong." —Ronald Reagan*

As was widely anticipated, the 2015 defense budget proposal follows the narrative of the postwar drawdown of the U.S. Army. As Secretary of Defense Hagel rightly states, "The world is growing more volatile, more unpredictable, and in some instances more threatening to the United States." It therefore may seem ironic that a Viet Nam veteran infantryman serving as Secretary of Defense would foreswear future ground wars given our Nation's history. As we look forward to the possible impacts of reducing our Nation's Army to pre-World War II force levels, it may be prudent to recall the instruction of history. In each decade from the 1940s, 50s, 60s,

70s, 90s, 2000s, through 2014 the United States has engaged in sustained ground wars, regardless of the political party in power or administration preference for protracted land campaigns, counterinsurgencies, or nation-building exercises. Even during Presidents Reagan and George H.W. Bush's brief post-Cold War peace-dividend decade of the 1980s, the United States scrimmaged in the Caribbean, fighting in both Grenada and Panama.

The world is indeed volatile and uncertain; Mideast turmoil continues, Iranian proliferation concerns are unresolved, North Korea remains a precarious but active belligerent in North East Asia, and Ukraine may soon see Russian tanks dictating political terms. To the last point, the

only U.S. tanks in Europe stand ready not in the motor pools of brigade combat teams, but as training sets in pre-positioned storage sites. The U.S. Navy and Air Force, the finest in the world, cannot stabilize such political flashpoints from offshore or regional bases. Our Air Force and Navy dominate the commons of air, space, and sea, but they cannot by themselves preserve political decision space for fledgling governments or allied nations under pressure from internal or external opportunists. The Air Force and Navy provide assured access to potential combat zones, but their presence is transitory in nature, providing effects that shape the theater but do not conclude hostilities. The U.S. Army's mission, drawn from Title 10 of the U.S. Code, is to win America's wars by providing prompt and sustained landpower. The nation's Army in the very near future may not be able to do that in more than one place at a time. Despite the tremendous competence of Special Operations Forces, the unblinking stare of UAVs and their precision strike options, the crowded littorals and mega city conflicts of the future (or old-think problems in North Korea, Iran, Syria, or Ukraine) will require combined arms formations on the ground to deter conflict or deliver a decision. However, as noted quite astutely by the Chief of the Australian Army in regards to China, America's ability to shape the security environment and deter conflict is underpinned by our ability to fight and win wars.

Former Secretary of State George Shultz recalls that President Reagan used military force only a hand full of times. These brief operations in Grenada and Libya resulted in positive strategic effects balanced against the tensions of the Cold War. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the post-Cold War international order promised to be one of free markets, a trend toward the ascendance of democracy, limits on nuclear proliferation, and waning wars of aggression. That world is unraveling. The unraveling accelerates without American leadership and the assurance and deterrence provided by the moderating influence and credibility of American arms on the international stage. The pace of U.S. military operations has demonstrably increased over the past 20 years, even prior to 9/11. There has been no indication that the pace of requirements will lessen going forward, only our willingness—and soon capacity—to address those requirements

will lessen with the military instrument of national power in the lead or in support of diplomacy and economic efforts.

Policymakers have stated that our nation can accept the risk of a smaller Army. This notion is supported by the assertion that the American people will no longer support extended land wars. The strategic surprises of December 7, 1941, June 20, 1950, and September 11, 2001 saw the will of the people and the government change overnight. Today's All Volunteer Force was previously drawn down (from over 770,000 active duty Soldiers in 1989 to 480,000 on September 10, 2001) in the wake of a transformed world order following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. Deep cuts to the ground forces were underway that year as Saddam Hussein's Iraq miscalculated and seized Kuwait. Even deeper cuts were envisioned by President George W. Bush's administration in light of technologically enabled Net Centric Warfare at the dawn of the 21st century. An All-Volunteer Force of 480,000 active duty soldiers proved insufficiently sized to meet the nation's pressing security requirements of two medium sized counterinsurgency campaigns in the wake of 9/11. Rapid force reductions to the current All-Volunteer Force will cast long shadows over the future; not least of which will be the credibility of the institution that will show thousands of soldiers the door through involuntary separations even as combat continues in Afghanistan.

A future security environment predicated on an active duty Army with 440,000 Soldiers (or 420,000 should budget sequester persist post-2016) might yield unintended second and third order effects. Assurance of allies and deterrence of adversaries will suffer inasmuch as the flexibility of our military to respond with sustained force to more than one strategic surprise is constrained. The choice for Japan and South Korea not to seek a nuclear deterrent could conceivably be reconsidered. Likewise, the Gulf Sunni states may not rely entirely on the prompt and sustained presence of the U.S. for deterrence in response to an Iranian nuclear state. It is not inconceivable that a rogue nation or group of state or non-state actors could act in concert or independently at or near the same time to challenge U.S. interests abroad or those of our allies.



A less robust military instrument of national power may prove deleterious to our diplomatic efforts to forestall these bad actors on the international stage.

An Army of 440,000 may not appear provocatively weak in the eyes of adversaries today, but in a time of uncertainty and growing threats, we must very carefully consider the invitation to miscalculation this decision may open for the future. If our nation chooses to step back from a leadership role in the world, we must be willing to accept that eventually others will fill that role.

COLONEL ERIC SHIRLY, representing the US Army, was a national security affairs fellow for the academic year 2013–14 at the Hoover Institution.

# The Defense Budget vs. History

By Max Boot

*This piece was published by Commentary Magazine. The full article can be found here:*  
<http://www.commentarymagazine.com/2014/02/24/the-defense-budget-vs-history/>

Traditionally, military planners have operated under a worst-case scenario: i.e., what do we need to have in place to respond if nothing goes as planned? The Obama administration and Congress appear to be operating under a best-case scenario: i.e., what is the minimum force we can field on the assumption that nothing will go terribly wrong?

Read the full article here: <http://www.commentarymagazine.com/2014/02/24/the-defense-budget-vs-history/>

MAX BOOT is a leading military historian and foreign policy analyst. The Jeane J. Kirkpatrick Senior Fellow in National Security Studies at the Council on Foreign Relations in New York, he is the author of critically acclaimed New York Times best seller *Invisible Armies: An Epic History of Guerrilla Warfare from Ancient Times to the Present*. His earlier books include *War made New: Technology, Warfare and the Course of History, 1500 to Today* and *The Savage Wars of Peace: Small Wars and the Rise of American Power*. Boot holds a bachelor's degree in history, with high honors, from the University of California, Berkeley (1991), and a master's degree in history from Yale University (1992). He was born in Russia, grew up in Los Angeles, and now lives in the New York area.

# Ever Less Bang for the Buck

*By Ralph Peters*

A pacifist administration and an irresponsible Congress have made an unholy bargain that cuts muscle to preserve fat. The administration, which distrusts the armed forces under its command, wants fewer troops—on the principle that the smaller the military, the less it can do, and less U.S. military engagement is good for all the world. For its acquiescence in cuts that chop seasoned veterans from the rolls, Congress gets continued funding for key weapons systems whose lack of relevance is exceeded only by their lack of reliability.

In a system of “legal corruption” within the U.S. defense industry cartel, there is no serious accountability for how defense dollars are spent. A side-by-side comparison of global defense budgets convinces the layperson that our defense spending guarantees that we shall remain without peer. Yet, potential competitor states, despite undeniable corruption, get more useful weapons systems per unit of expenditure than we do. Worsening the situation, their personnel costs are much lower.

Thus, we are left with the paradox of a mammoth defense budget and a shrinking, weakening force.

A striking example of the lack of accountability is the F-22 multi-role fighter, which now has been in our inventory for over a decade—without having flown a single combat mission. A breathtakingly expensive, fragile aircraft, it was promoted as a universal answer to defense requirements (including, laughably, defeating terrorists). Hugely costly, the program has added nothing to our national defense. Now we are buying an equally troubled, less-agile fighter, the F-35. Even its defenders cite program costs of half a trillion dollars, while critics believe that total

costs will exceed a trillion. At no point has there been a serious value-added-for-cost analysis. Nor has anyone calculated the sortie rates for such delicate aircraft in a war that lasts more than a month or two. Meanwhile, the most important players in the defense industry are no longer the engineers, but the lawyers who insure that the government pays, whether or not the weapons work.

Congress never stints on praise for our troops, but it willingly sacrifices them to preserve funding for favored defense industry titans. And that most-versatile weapon system, the individual soldier or Marine, has few defenders willing to take to the legislative barricades.

It has become fashionable for those who support higher troop levels to note that our Army will soon be at a level of manning lower than at any time since the eve of World War II. In terms of trigger-pullers, that's incorrect. Given the tooth-to-tail ratio in today's ground forces, the number of front-line soldiers will be closer to the Army of the Indian Wars.

Military personnel are expensive, indeed. But defeat is a great deal costlier.

RALPH PETERS is the author of twenty-nine books, including works on strategy and military affairs, as well as best-selling, prize-winning novels. He has published more than a thousand essays, articles, and columns. As a US Army enlisted man and officer, he served in infantry and military Intelligence units before becoming a foreign area officer and global scout. After retiring in 1998, he covered wars and trouble spots in the Middle East and Africa. He now concentrates on writing books but remains Fox News's strategic analyst. His latest novel, *Hell or Richmond*, a gritty portrayal of Grant's 1864 Overland Campaign, follows his recent *New York Times* best seller, *Cain at Gettysburg*, for which he received the 2013 Boyd Award for Literary Excellence in Military Fiction from the American Library Association

# Democracies Like Military Cuts

*By Bruce Thornton*

*This piece was published by Frontpage Mag. The full article can be found here:*  
<http://www.frontpagemag.com/2014/bruce-thornton/democracies-like-military-cuts/>

President Obama has been rightly chastised for his proposed cuts to our military budget. Critics have gone after his Quadrennial Defense Review and its plan to shrink the armed forces, not to mention the clumsy optics of issuing pink slips to thousands of officers still serving in Afghanistan. More troublesome is the reduction of the military's global mission from its traditional purpose of being able to fight and defeat two enemies at once, to only defeating one while keeping a second from "achieving its objectives," a conveniently fuzzy criterion.

Read the full article here: <http://www.frontpagemag.com/2014/bruce-thornton/democracies-like-military-cuts/>

BRUCE S. THORNTON is a research fellow at the Hoover Institution. He received his BA in Latin in 1975 and his PhD in comparative literature—Greek, Latin, and English—in 1983, both from the University of California, Los Angeles. Thornton is currently a professor of classics and humanities at California State University in Fresno, California. He is the author of nine books and numerous essays and reviews on Greek culture and civilization and their influence on Western civilization. His most recent book, *Democracy's Dangers and Discontents: The Tyranny of the Majority from the Greeks to Obama*, was recently released by the Hoover Institution Press.

# Today's Military Needs to be Run More Like a Business

*By Kori Schake*

*This piece was published by the New York Times. The full article can be found here: <http://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2014/07/14/what-would-a-new-us-military-look-like/todays-military-needs-to-be-run-more-like-a-business>*

In the near term, the threats to our interests are numerous small-scale contingencies against militaries not our equal but with pockets of high-tech or disruptive capabilities, like nuclear weapons, cyber or accurate ballistic missiles. In the longer term, there is the potential for China to become a military threat that could challenge us across the military spectrum.

Read the full article here: <http://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2014/07/14/what-would-a-new-us-military-look-like/todays-military-needs-to-be-run-more-like-a-business>

KORI SCHAKE is a research fellow at the Hoover Institution. She has held the Distinguished Chair in International Security Studies at the United States Military Academy and worked in the Pentagon, State Department, and National Security Council and as senior policy adviser to the 2008 McCain presidential campaign. Her most recent book is *State of Disrepair: Fixing the Culture and Practice of the State Department*.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



What will be the immediate strategic repercussions, if any, of the scheduled radical pruning of the size of the American military?

1. Are the scheduled Pentagon reductions driven by budget considerations alone or a larger desire to reduce the U.S. profile abroad—or both?
2. Can a future administration fairly easily restore Pentagon budgets and military readiness?
3. What dangers loom most immediate as the Defense Department shrinks?

# STRATEGIKA

CONFLICTS OF THE PAST AS LESSONS FOR THE PRESENT

Hoover Institution | Stanford University | [www.hoover.org](http://www.hoover.org) | 650-725-3461  
Copyright © 2014 by the Board of Trustees of Leland Stanford Junior University





**THE HOOVER INSTITUTION**  
Stanford University

Copyright © 2014 by the Board of Trustees of Leland Stanford Junior University