

As *Jane's Defence Weekly* went to press, the US election remains undecided. The hopes and ambitions of Vice President Al Gore and Texas Governor George W Bush remain adrift in a sea of "chad" – a word all Americans have learned refers not to a place in central Africa but to the tiny punch-holes in machine-read ballots – and subject to the deliberations of the Florida Supreme Court, the machinations of the two candidates' legal teams and, above all, the furious "spinning" of the Democratic and Republican spokespersons.

No matter which candidate is declared the winner by US judges, the strategic questions facing the world's single remaining superpower will be the same. And whichever candidate raises his right hand on the Capitol steps in January, the new US president and his administration will try to mould US strategy at a time when the American people couldn't care less.

Complicating matters is the legal requirement for the new administration to complete a new US national security strategy within the first six months of taking office, or by mid-July 2001. This was imposed for the first time by the requirements of the 2000 National Defense Authorization Act. Past administrations have had the luxury of waiting for a full year before revising basic US strategy, and merely submitting an amended defence budget request during the first year.

Yet Congress felt it necessary to impose this short deadline in order to ensure that next year's

Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR), was consistent with larger security policy – it made no sense to make fundamental decisions about the US military establishment without broad strategic guidance.

A second hurdle facing the new administration will be the QDR itself, to be completed by 30 September 2001. The first QDR, done in 1997, proved unsatisfactory largely because it left unresolved what proved to be a large and growing gap between US security and defence strategy and military resources; a mismatch between ends and means that has left US forces constantly attempting "to do more with less", as Rep Floyd Spence, chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, put it. In mandating a new defence review, Congress tried to force the Pentagon to resolve this mismatch by directing that the 2001 QDR should "determine a defence strategy designed to protect the full range of US national security interests and to identify the forces sufficient to do so at as low a risk as possible." A successful review, concluded the report on the law, "should be driven first by the demands of strategy, not by any presupposition about the size of the defence budget".

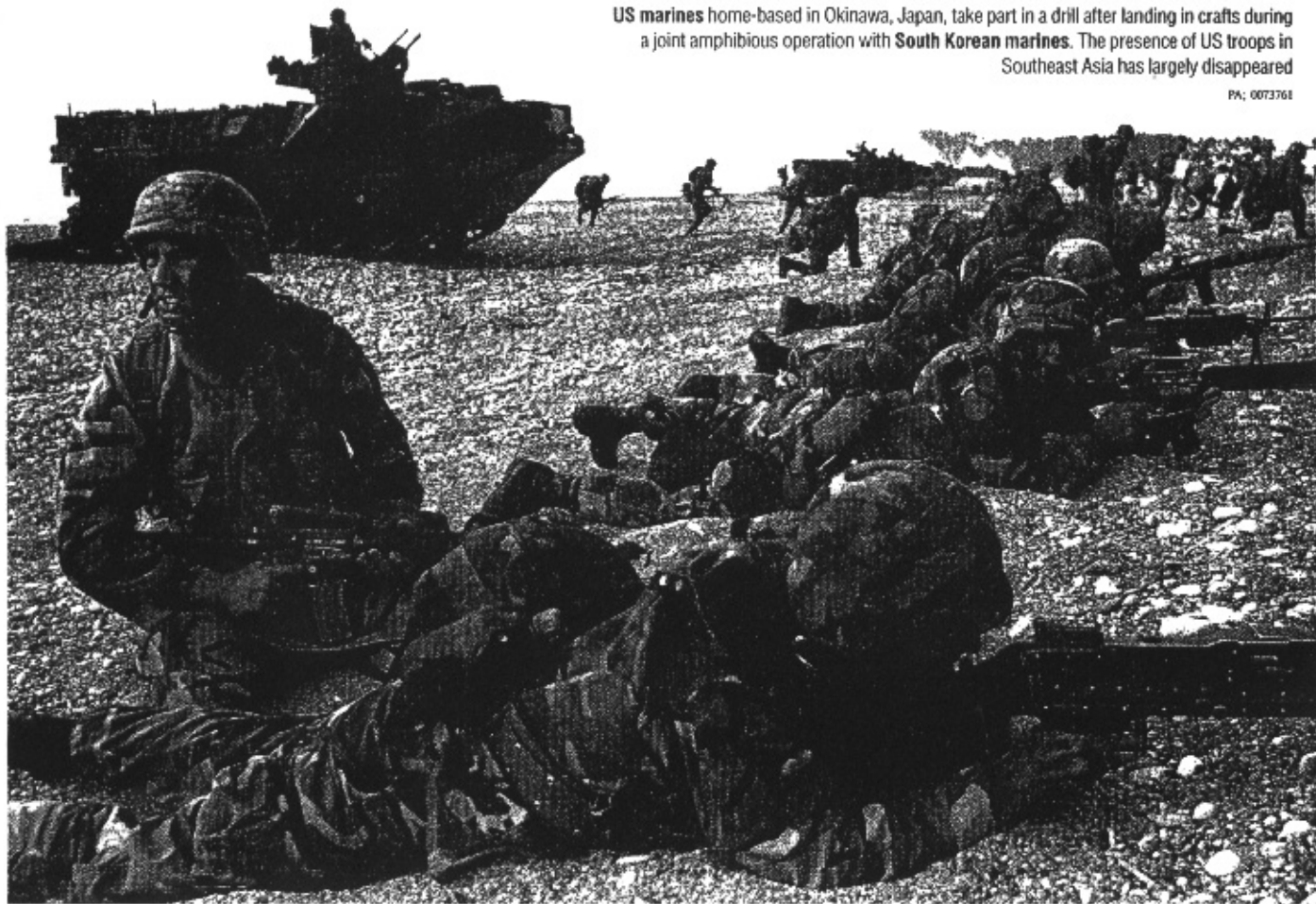
With this clear mandate, the Department of Defense (DoD) has, for the past year, prepared an extensive analytical framework for next year's defence review. This 'pre-QDR working group' at the National Defense University has been reviewing a variety of issues under the direction of Michèle Flournoy, a senior analyst who helped shape the 1997 QDR. Remarkably, considering Flournoy's credentials as a long-

Tom Donnelly reports on the challenges and hurdles the new US administration – Republican or Democrat – faces

serving participant in Clinton administration defence strategy-making, the working group's recently released report began by acknowledging "the responsibility to address mismatch between strategy and resources estimated at

US marines home-based in Okinawa, Japan, take part in a drill after landing in crafts during a joint amphibious operation with South Korean marines. The presence of US troops in Southeast Asia has largely disappeared

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\$30-50 billion per year". The report stated that this mismatch had "damaging consequences: serious tempo and readiness strains chronic inability to meet modernisation objectives, deterioration of morale and quality of life, and recruiting and retention shortfalls".

Although the Flournoy report was intended merely to provide a way to approach the problems facing the US defence establishment in a way that might allow for a closer alignment of US strategy with US forces, and not to provide specific policy recommendations, a close study of the report does reveal the Pentagon's preferences. And it is animated by a sense of urgency, now keenly felt within the DoD, that the strategy-resource mismatch can no longer be simply ignored. Noting that there were at least five major US defence strategy reviews during the 1990s, the Flournoy report observes that "the strategy-resources gap has persisted and, in recent years, widened.

"This suggests the new administration will have to take a somewhat different approach if the 2001 QDR is to be successful," the report continues. "The magnitude of the current strategy-resources mismatch, and the damaging consequences it will produce over time, demand substantial action in one or more of three key areas: increase the level of resources devoted to defence; with Congress to exploit the potential [trade-offs] to reduce costs while maintaining an acceptable level of risk; and reduce the demands of the defence strategy ... This fundamental set of choices – spend more, cut costs, or do less – might be called the iron triangle of the 2001 QDR, and it will require substantial political will and leadership on the part of the new administration to address."

Given the narrowness of the presidential election, Flournoy may be asking a new administration to show a level of will and leadership it cannot summon. During the presidential campaign, neither candidate made a case for increasing overall defence spending by the amounts suggested by the Flournoy report; Gore advocated an average annual increase of \$10 billion, Bush merely \$4.5 billion.

Flournoy's numbers may be low. The retiring secretary of the Air Force, F Whitten Peters, recently estimated the annual shortfall by \$100 billion. While some senior defence advisers to the campaigns hinted they recognised that closing the strategy-resources mismatch would require higher spending, they admitted that such increases were, in the words of one, "politically incorrect". While the notion of efficiencies, internal trade-offs, or, in the terminology of the Flournoy report, "trade-space" would be politically popular, it is highly unlikely that such measures could generate sufficient savings to significantly reduce the mismatch. And the final

leg of Flournoy's "iron triangle" – reducing the goals of US strategy – would require still greater political will, for it would require the USA to retreat from its position as the world's sole superpower.

Twelve Questions...

The Flournoy report also sets forth a dozen key questions that the incoming administration must answer. Indeed, these are the same basic questions that have confronted the USA since the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet empire; they are the questions that US political leaders have studiously avoided:

- How should the USA define its national interests?
- What are the most significant threats to US interests, and what are the most significant opportunities for advancing those interests?
- What should the USA primary national security objectives be?
- What kind of wars should the US military be prepared to fight over the next 10 to 20 years?
- What are the appropriate uses of the US mili-

tary short of major war?

- What are the appropriate roles and missions for the DoD in support of homeland security?
- What should the objectives of military transformation be, and how urgently should they be pursued?
- What should be the US military's overseas presence?
- What is the appropriate role of nuclear weapons? What mix of strategic offences and defences should be pursued?
- What roles should the USA expect allies and coalition partners to play across the spectrum of operations?
- How should these various strategy elements be prioritised?
- What strategy-based criteria should be used to size the force? And what should be the associated declaratory policy?

Despite the uncertainty over the outcome of the presidential elections – and the delay in forming an administration – it is possible to describe the political landscape against which each of these issues will be addressed. The very closeness of the election suggests that the task for the

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Gore or Bush for president?

Whoever wins will face numerous challenges in the defence arena

PAUL HAYES

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incoming administration will be to create a consensus in answering these questions, rather than breaking new ground. By understanding the state of American political debate on Flournoy's "Twelve Questions," it is possible to divine the likely future path of US security and defence policy.

...Twelve answers?

ONE: Defining US national security interests in the post-Cold-War era has proved elusive to two presidents. Driven by a set of universal political beliefs as well as a pragmatic desire to exercise power, Americans' view of national interests can be a confusing mix of idealism and realism.

In their campaigns, Gore and Bush diverged greatly in their rhetoric about US security interests. Gore's "new security agenda" is expansive – indeed to the point of stretching any traditional understanding of national security beyond recognition. Bush, despite his initial neo-Reaganite visions of a "distinctly American internationalism," increasingly attempted to construe the US role in the world narrowly, emphasising the need for the USA to approach international affairs "humbly," without arrogance. Thus Bush and his senior lieutenants repeatedly hinted at a withdrawal of US troops from the NATO operations in the Balkans.

Yet neither candidate retreated from the assumption that the USA remains the "sole superpower," the ultimate arbiter of security disputes around the world. In Europe, the Middle East and in East Asia, the new administration will expect to exercise the sort of leadership that past administrations have asserted.

TWO: This sometimes casual assumption of leadership prerogatives will stem in large part from the fact that the new administration will not see many serious political threats. The closest US allies in every important region are also the world's wealthiest and most powerful democracies, and the threats of "regional rogue states" – which the Clinton Administration downgraded to "states of concern" – seem manageable. Despite periodic anxieties about terrorism,

proliferation, narcotics traffickers, disease and other "transnational" threats that constitute Gore's "new security agenda," these are now taken as work more for the Justice Department than the DoD, as the reaction to the bombing of the USS *Cole* reveals.

Curiously, the one serious potential challenge to American leadership, that posed by a rising People's Republic of China, is the one threat both parties and Congress are most anxious to downplay. As noted above, the overwhelming vote to grant normal trade status to Beijing is an indicator of how widely accepted the Clinton policy of "engagement" has become. Even as China strikes an increasingly bellicose note toward Taiwan, press reports mount of China's military modernisation, and DoD research organisations churn out chilling analyses of China's ambitions and strategy, the US political debate is as one-sided as the 85:13 vote on the trade bill.

For its part, the Pentagon is only now coming to consider that the USA is in a long-term strategic competition with China, and military planners are still reticent publicly to prepare against such an eventuality, such as defending Taiwan in a crisis. Look for the 2001 QDR to equivocate on this issue as did the 1997 review.

THREE: Defining US strategic objectives is perhaps the most difficult task of all. Nonetheless, this will remain the goal of the new administration. The fact is that a globally dominant power cannot easily withdraw from even the most inconsequential parts of the world, lest its very absence prove destabilising and an inducement to violence. Gore may cloak his policies in talk of transnational threats and international law that alternate with slogans like the Clinton-era boast that America is the "indispensable nation." Bush and his coterie of Kissingerians may agonise about military overstretch, but like his father he will be driven by the imperatives of US leadership.

FOUR: Perhaps clearer is the US understanding of the kinds of wars its troops may be called upon to fight. The core paradigm of post-Cold-War combat for the DoD remains the 1990-91 Gulf War, but the proliferation of peacekeeping, peacemaking and other similar duties has made

constabulary missions the steady diet for US forces for a decade; no longer are they dismissed, as they were during the 1993 defence review, as "lesser included cases" of larger-scale wars.

Also reasonably well understood is how missile proliferation and the increasing availability of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons may alter the conduct of such wars, and how the dispersion of information and other advanced technologies that make up the "revolution in military affairs" may alter the conduct of future wars. What remains obscure is how specific potential future adversaries may exploit these developments.

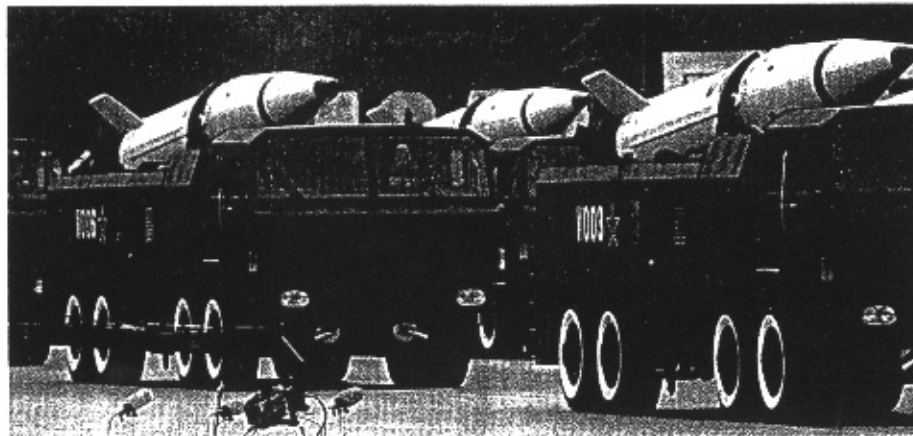
FIVE: The repeated uses of US forces in constabulary and other missions short of major war have been one of the major miscalculations of American strategy-making during the post-Cold-War era. The problem originated in the conclusion by the 1993 'Bottom-Up Review' that such missions could be considered "lesser included cases" of major-war planning.

The Pentagon continues to consider this kind of mission, which it now calls "smaller-scale contingencies," as outside the scope of enduring security interests. Thus, the continuing NATO mission in the Balkans still is not regarded as an extension of the basic interest of the USA in European security, but a temporary phenomenon that might end at any time.

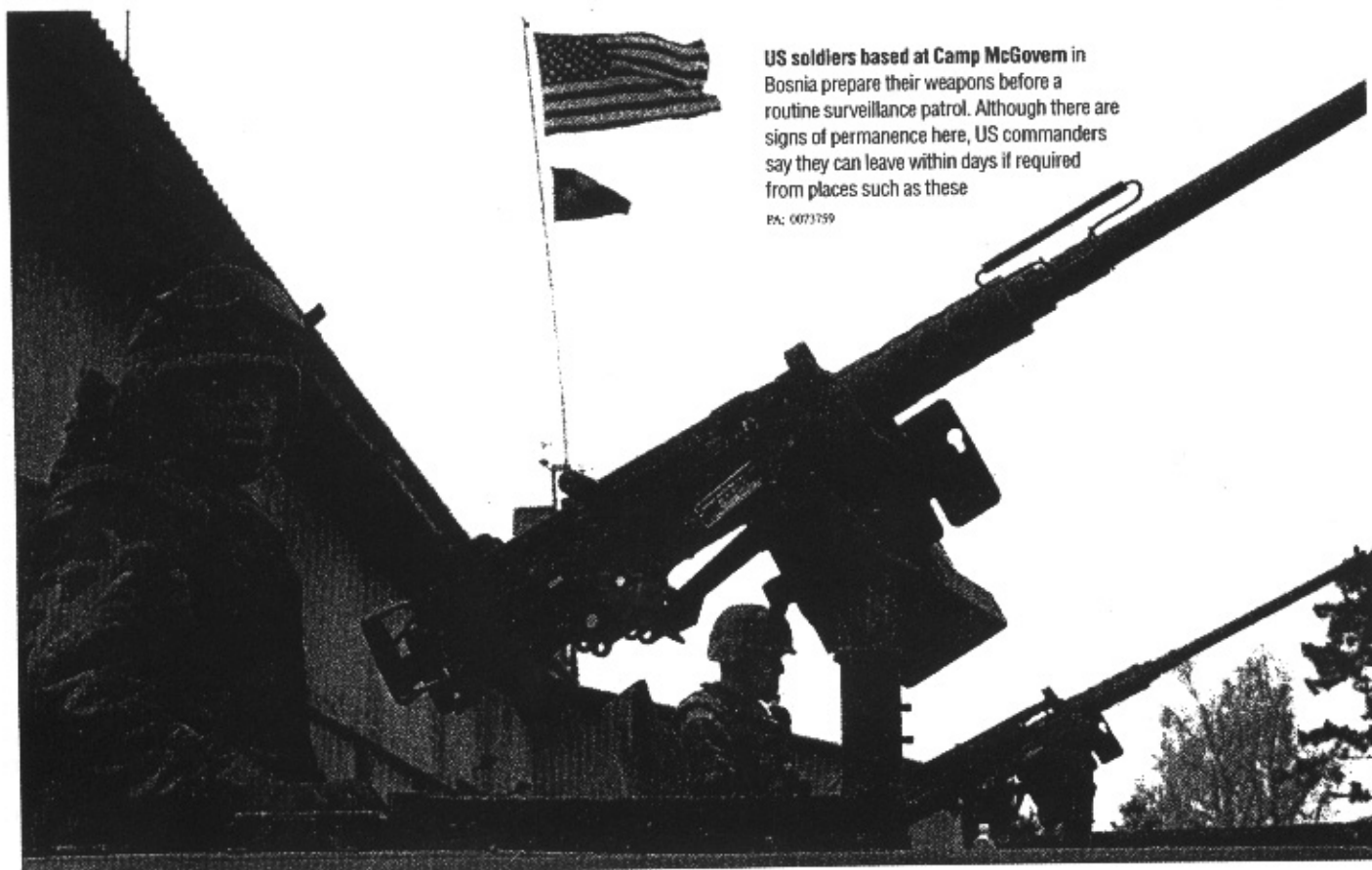
For their part, American politicians, including Gore and Bush, accept this false distinction, and thus eternally seek an "end state" for such missions. But when might America's interest in a stable Europe, a peaceful Middle East, or a secure East Asia cease? What is the "exit strategy?" The Flournoy report has asked the new administration to answer a disquieting question.

SIX: Much heat and less light have been brought to the issue of US homeland security in recent years. Indeed, the term "homeland security" encompasses traditional, if controversial, missions like missile defence, as well as military assistance in times of natural or man-made disaster, like floods, earthquakes, or a terrorist bombing, aftermath of a nuclear or chemical attack – what the Pentagon dubs "consequence management". These non-traditional missions have garnered more public and political attention in recent years, driven in part by the popularity of a number of movies on these themes, but it is unlikely that they will drive major changes in US military structure, though they may prove important in raising the requirement for special types of equipment and units.

The future of American missile defence programmes will prove a contentious issue for the new president. During the summer, President Clinton elected to defer any decision on his proposed national missile defence system, leaving it to the new administration. Indeed, after opposing missile defences, downplaying the threat, and confounding Pentagon management of previous programmes, Clinton came to consider the deployment decision only when domestic political pressure drove him to it. A Gore Administration would, if anything, be even more



A Dong Feng-15 missile on parade in Beijing exemplifies China's recent military modernisation efforts. A rising PRC is an issue both rivals for US leadership wish to downplay. A PHOTO: OMB/944



US soldiers based at Camp McGovern in Bosnia prepare their weapons before a routine surveillance patrol. Although there are signs of permanence here, US commanders say they can leave within days if required from places such as these

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devoted to maintaining a strict interpretation of the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty and willing to sacrifice missile defences, setting up a replay of the confrontation between congressional Republicans and the president. Conversely, Bush campaigned to expand the capabilities and coverage of US missile defence programmes to include space-based systems and to protect US allies. Yet the cost of such a programme – and even the cost of the very modest Clinton Administration national missile defence system – may well cause some conflict with congressional Republican “budget hawks”.

SEVEN: There also has been much ink spilled on the issue of military transformation, or the revolution in military affairs. However, among the devotees of the issue on Capitol Hill was the junior senator from Connecticut, Joseph Lieberman, Al Gore’s running mate. Likewise, candidate Bush made the issue of transformation an important element in his initial speeches on defence.

Yet as the campaign developed, Bush switched his emphasis from the future to the problem of current combat readiness, famously declaring during his acceptance speech at the Philadelphia convention that two army divisions, if called to fight, would have to answer “not ready for duty” because of peacekeeping duties.

Perhaps more profoundly, the advocates of transformation face a difficult fight against the giants of the US defence industry, particularly the companies that have a stake in the three mammoth

US tactical aircraft programmes: the Boeing F/A-18E/F, the Lockheed Martin F-22, and the Joint Strike Fighter. New concepts of warfare based on new weaponry would put these programmes at risk, and threaten tens of thousands of defence industry jobs. The 1997 QDR resolved this dilemma by simply pasting a “transformation” label on current programmes, and it would be a surprise if the 2001 QDR proved much different. The DoD’s true feelings about transformation are reflected in its lukewarm support and lack of funding for the joint experimentation project. Short of a Pearl Harbor-like disaster this demonstrates the obsolescence of current systems and concepts of operations, the process of transformation will remain a slow one.

EIGHT: The presence of US forces overseas today remains a relic of the Cold War in many ways. US troops in Europe are centred in northern and western Europe, while the continent’s security challenges are to the south and east. Five years after US troops crossed the Sava River into Bosnia, the Balkans mission remains a contingent one. Even as Camp Bondsteel, the main US base in Kosovo, bristles with antennas, air conditioners, recreational facilities and other signs of permanence, base commanders insist they could be packed and gone in a matter of days.

On any given day in the Persian Gulf, the air force maintains a massive force of aircraft of all types, the army an armoured brigade, and the navy a constant carrier presence, a legacy of the 1990-91 Gulf War and reflecting the US role as

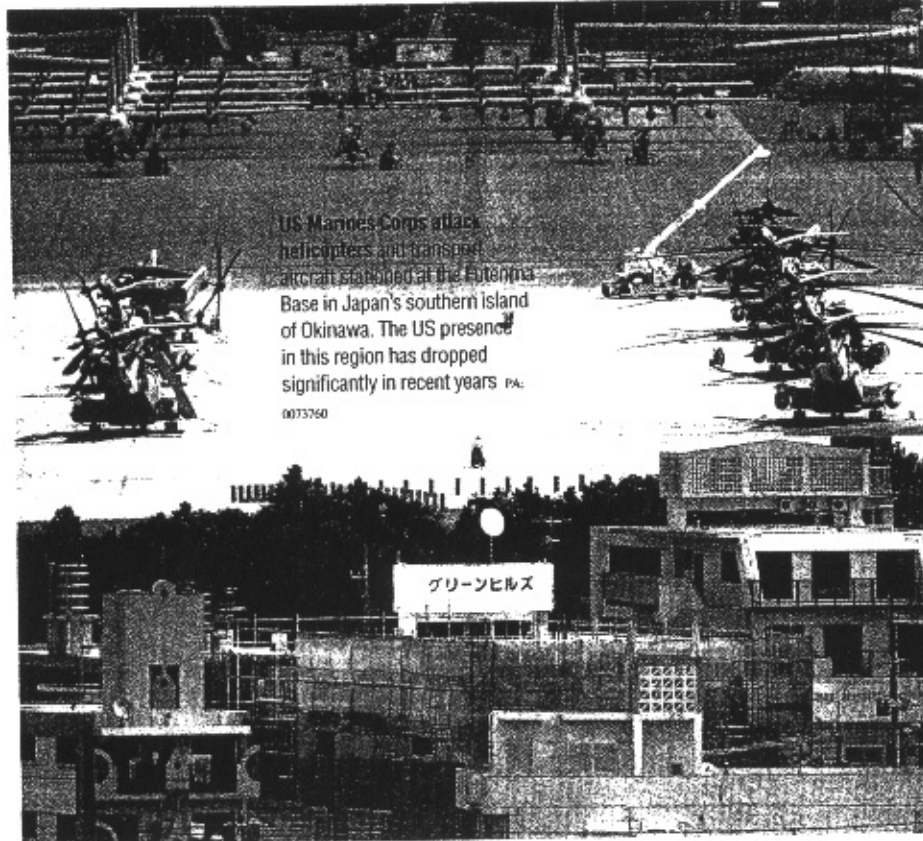
the guarantor of the industrial world’s energy supplies. Yet, as in Europe, Pentagon force planners are enjoined from considering these as permanent missions. The situation is even more critical in East Asia where, as concerns about China go, the American presence has disappeared from Southeast Asia and in Japan and Korea reflect wars fought 50 years ago.

The American defence debate, however, remains focused on reducing the base infrastructure in the USA, on attempting further rounds of the base closure and realignment process. Thus the questions of overseas presence that flow from the changing needs of American geopolitical leadership, while essential to the formulation of US military strategy, promise only political headaches for a new president.

NINE: Nuclear strategy likewise remains mired in Cold War habits, a prisoner of the bipolar, US-Russia “balance of terror”. Though a variety of America’s adversaries from Iraq and Iran to North Korea seek to develop strategic arsenals – and indeed, Kim Jong Il is cleverly obtaining US support for his dictatorial regime through nuclear blackmail – formal strategy has yet to acknowledge the more complex emerging global nuclear equation. And the US intelligence community has concluded that China will both expand and modernise its nuclear arsenal to bur-nish its status as a great power and preserve its deterrent capability in the event of the USA deploying a limited missile defence network.

Though the Joint Chiefs of Staff have declared

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US Marine Corps attack helicopters and transport aircraft stationed at the Futenma Base in Japan's southern island of Okinawa. The US presence in this region has dropped significantly in recent years. PA.

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that, at the low levels of warheads now being contemplated under a third round of strategic arms reduction talks with the Russians, both candidates have expressed support for further cuts in US nuclear weapons. Further, what Congress termed the Clinton Administration's policy of "erosion by design" of the US nuclear infrastructure, ensures that the cost of developing new nuclear weapons, whether from military need or for heightened safety, will be prohibitive. Simply maintaining a safe and effective deterrent capability may widen the current "strategy-resources gap".

TEN: Professing concerns for allies is a time-honoured ritual of US security politics, and both Gore and Bush observed the tradition. However, the Clinton administration often broke with that tradition, courting Russia and China while often ignoring long-time friends in Europe and East Asia, pressuring Israel to make concessions to the Palestinians. Yet whether a new administration would revert to a more consistent set of policies and how Congress might react are unclear.

During the campaign Bush often criticised the Clinton record in regard to allies, and many of his senior advisers, such as Paul Wolfowitz, under-secretary of defense for policy during the Bush Administration, have long advocated close cultivation of US allies and friends around the world. He also made a strong statement late in the campaign about expanding NATO. Yet Bush knew he would cause consternation in Europe by his suggestions of withdrawal from the Balkans and a new "division of labour" within NATO. For his

part, Gore was quick to criticise the Texas governor for his Balkans statements, but the vice president has been an important part of Clinton administration policy toward China and, especially, Russia. Whether it is unlikely that, for example, either would push Congress to set aside its "burden-sharing" debate, an annual competition in which the most liberal and conservative members of the House of Representatives compete to decide who can express the greatest outrage at faithless friends.

The equally serious question of how to plan for coalition operations is unlikely to get much attention, however. As the gap in capabilities between US and allied military forces continues to grow, and to become more public in cases like the Kosovo air war, it may make sense for US forces to acquire additional command, control, communications and logistics capabilities to better facilitate coalition operations, even as allies undertake their own initiatives such as the European rapid reaction force.

ELEVEN: Setting strategy priorities honestly and explicitly also carries risks and benefits. Past defence reviews calculated constabulary missions as lesser included cases of force-planning for big wars, and thus avoided any need to make trade-offs between the two kinds of missions. The canonical Iraq-plus-Korea "two-war scenario" that drove this force planning assumed that there would never be another major operation in Europe. However, the Kosovo campaign, which required a greater proportional effort by the US Air Force than did the 1990-91 Gulf War, made clear that these planning scenarios did not

capture the range of potential large operations.

Unfortunately, the experience of the past decade suggests that American politicians and policy-makers are quite willing to tolerate even very large gaps between US strategy and defence resources. No president has yet had to pay a heavy domestic political price for failing to set strategic priorities; indeed, the presumption is that the USA can enjoy leadership on the cheap.

TWELVE: What strategy-based criteria should determine the size and shape of US armed forces? Loosely translated, these are questions about the desire and prudence to renounce the two-war standard. Reducing that standard would allow the DoD to deal more forthrightly with constabulary missions and perhaps free up resources needed to undertake genuine transformation.

The enduring strength of the two-war standard is that it expresses the measure of a global superpower. It means that it will not abandon its commitments in one region even while it is engaged in a major operation elsewhere. Japan, Korea and Taiwan must not fear Chinese pressure while the USA conducts operations against Serbia or Iraq. Conversely, it will be difficult to maintain global-power influence if the USA renounces the standard, or even if it is perceived to renounce the standard. Nor can any strategy based on deceiving one's friends be successful for long.

Unfortunately, the reality is that US forces are increasingly unable to meet the two-war standard. The Joint Chiefs of Staff admitted as much when, during Kosovo operations, they declared that the risk elsewhere was "unacceptable". The \$30-to-50-billion estimate of the strategy-resources gap reflects a de facto renunciation of the two-war standard, even though it is undeclared. The charge by Congress that the QDR define the missions associated with "the full range of US national security interests" is a prompt to include the sum of theatre-war, constabulary and transformation missions, not to trade off one against the other.

These 12 questions go a long way to defining the range of challenges that the new administration faces – one entering office with a razor-thin political mandate and at a time of intense partisanship. "Although the new team may come into office with priorities other than defence in mind," concludes the Flournoy report, "addressing the gap between defence strategy and the current level of resources available to support the strategy will loom large as one of its primary responsibilities. Failing to close this gap would harm the armed forces greatly, so the stakes are high ... With this responsibility, however, comes the opportunity to craft a strategy and programme that protects and advances national interests and maintains the unparalleled quality and strength of the US military well into the 21st century." It also presents an opportunity to secure the peace for America and its allies around the world.

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