



Written by [C. Mitchell Shaw](#) on July 24, 2017

Defense Dept./Pentagon Report Calls for Total State as American Empire “Collapsing”

A recently released Department of Defense risk assessment report shows that the “primacy” of the United States in the order of nations is in danger of collapse. The American empire — like others before it — is falling under its own bloated weight. Rather than suggesting a return to the roots of the American Republic as outlined in the Constitution, the report suggests expansions of force, surveillance, and propaganda to reinforce the crumbling empire.



The [report](#) — entitled *At Our Own Peril: DoD Risk Assessment in a Post-Primacy World* — is the conclusion of a year-long study with input from the U.S. Department of Defense and U.S. Army. Published in June by the U.S. Army War College’s Strategic Studies Institute, the report was sponsored by high-level government and military agencies, including the U.S. Army’s Strategic Plans and Policy Directorate; the Joint Staff, J5 (Strategy and Policy Branch); the Office of the Deputy Secretary of Defense for Strategy and Force Development; and the Army Study Program Management Office.

The findings of the study — as outlined in the report — would be bad enough on their own; the recommendations of the report are even worse.

Predicting (and lamenting) the collapse of “the status quo” of American imperialism, the report leans on one of the favorite beast of burden for statisticians and tyrants: the threat of violence from abroad. The report says:

While the United States remains a global political, economic, and military giant, it no longer enjoys an unassailable position versus state competitors. Further, it remains buffeted by a range of metastasizing violent or disruptive nonstate challengers, and it is under stress — as are all states — from the dispersion and diffusion of effective resistance and the varied forces of disintegrating or fracturing political authority. In brief, the status quo that was hatched and nurtured by U.S. strategists after World War II and has for decades been the principal “beat” for DoD is not merely fraying but may, in fact, be collapsing. Consequently, the United States’ role in and approach to the world may be fundamentally changing as well.

The report goes on to say, “Indeed, while the United States remains a global military power, it no longer can — as in the past — automatically generate consistent and sustained local military superiority at range.”

In short, “the status quo” of interventionism (which stands in sharp contrast to the [non-interventionism](#) of American foreign policy as outlined in the Constitution and explained by Presidents George Washington and Thomas Jefferson as “in extending our commercial relations, to have with them [foreign nations] as little political connection as possible” and “peace, commerce, and honest friendship with all nations, entangling alliances with none”) is — predictably — “fraying” and “may, in fact, be collapsing.”



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That this “fraying” and “collapsing” would be a natural consequence of our national identity crisis (the United States is a republic that calls itself a democracy and behaves like an empire) seems lost on the report’s authors, who — while predicting dire consequences as the result of the fall of the American empire — go on to recommend that the “status quo” be preserved by departing even further (if that were possible) from the founding principles of the United States. The report says, “As a review, status quo forces benefit from and act as the self-appointed guardians of the U.S.-led post-Cold War international order and its components.” As if that were a good thing.

The report goes on to say:

The order and its constituent parts, first emerged from World War II, were transformed to a unipolar system with the collapse of the Soviet Union, and have by-and-large been dominated by the United States and its major Western and Asian allies since. Status quo forces collectively are comfortable with their dominant role in dictating the terms of international security outcomes and resist the emergence of rival centers of power and authority.

It seems never to occur to the statist, tyrannical minds behind this study that the U.S.S.R. collapsed under the bloated weight of trying to maintain an empire in an age that no longer accepts the dual errors of rule by force and dominance through threat of aggression. For the United States to continue to perpetuate those same errors is to invite the same consequence. This would have been the perfect place for the report to recommend abandoning the broken system of imperialism that requires a “dominant role” in unilaterally “dictating the terms of international security outcomes.”

Instead, the report recommends increasing the dosage of poison — as if that will save the patient who is dying from the poison. The report suggests increasing the use of (or at least the threat of) military force, the surveillance state, and the use of propaganda to maintain the status quo.

The report — recommending increased force (both abroad and at home) — says:

As the Pentagon contemplates future strategy and risk, it will need to come to terms with a generalized erosion or dissolution of traditional authority structures. To date, U.S. strategists have been fixated on this trend in the greater Middle East. However, the same forces at work there are similarly eroding the reach and authority of governments worldwide.

To combat this “eroding reach and authority” of the empire, the study says it is necessary to have a “wider and more flexible military force that can generate advantage and options across the broadest possible range of military demands” saying:

While as a rule, U.S. leaders of both political parties have consistently committed to the maintenance of U.S. military superiority over all potential state rivals, the post-primacy reality demands a wider and more flexible military force that can generate advantage and options across the broadest possible range of military demands. To U.S. political leadership, maintenance of military advantage preserves maximum freedom of action. Further, it underwrites yet another bedrock principle of American defense policy — nuclear and conventional deterrence. Finally, it allows U.S. decision-makers the opportunity to dictate or hold significant sway over outcomes in international disputes in the shadow of significant U.S. military capability and the implied promise of unacceptable consequences in the event that capability is unleashed.

In other words, America should complete its abandonment of “peace, commerce, and honest friendship with all nations, entangling alliances with none” for a policy of “do it our way, or be destroyed” and “resistance is futile; you will be assimilated.”



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Since (both abroad and at home) communication technology makes interconnectivity and communication both instantaneous and simple, allowing people to share ideas and collaborate on a wide range of ideas, the report sees this as a threat:

Finally, it is impossible not to recognize the profound atomization of resistance as well. The United States and its population are increasingly exposed to substantial harm and an erosion of security from individuals and small groups of motivated actors, leveraging the confluence of hyperconnectivity, fear, and increased vulnerability to sow disorder and uncertainty. This intensely disorienting and dislocating form of resistance to authority arrives via physical, virtual, and psychological violence and can create effects that appear substantially out of proportion to the origin and physical size or scale of the proximate hazard or threat.

Thus, the report recommends ramping up the surveillance state and the thought-control methods of propaganda and controlling the flow of information:

Further, the United States possesses the largest and most sophisticated and integrated intelligence complex in world. With it, it can reach into the darkest most threatening corners by either or both human and high-tech collection. Leveraging the U.S. intelligence community's enormous human and technical analysis capability, the United States is also able to generate insight faster and more reliably than its competitors can, if it chooses to do so.

Finally, the United States' ability to knit together into a seamless whole its substantial alliance relationships, military forward presence and power projection, intelligence capability and capacity, virtual reach, and its latent allure as a security partner of choice potentially leave it in an enviable position of strength. That strength, however, is only as durable as the United States' willingness to see and employ it to its advantage. To the extent that the United States and its defense enterprise are seen to lead, others will follow and contribute meaningfully to solving many of the world's most complex and threatening collective security challenges.

And:

High-end U.S. military advantage will continue to erode as the United States struggles to translate global reach into local superiority. At the same time, the U.S. homeland, individual American citizens, and U.S. public opinion and perceptions will increasingly become battlefields.

And:

Indeed, to date, American strategists have focused to the point of distraction on defense against the purposeful interruption or destruction of the United States' information-focused connective tissue, as well as intrusion into and damage to sensitive information repositories. However, consequently, they have been less focused on the purposeful exploitation of the same architecture for the strategic manipulation of perceptions and its attendant influence on political and security outcomes.

So, having opened Pandora's Box of surveillance and hacking, the United States is now threatened by the fact that others have access to that same technology. The proposed answer is to stop being "focused to the point of distraction" on keeping our systems safe and instead transfer that energy into both hacking and exploiting the systems of others (which — since "the U.S. homeland, individual American citizens, and U.S. public opinion and perceptions" are seen as "battlefields" — would certainly include domestic hacking and exploiting). Furthermore, since "public opinion and perceptions" are seen as threats (which — even if true — is likely a result of the overreach of what the authors of the study see as



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“authority”), the study recommends the “strategic manipulation of perceptions” (read: propaganda and control of the flow of information).

Reducing matters of independence, national security, and personal liberty to a zero-sum game is slow (but sure) suicide for a nation founded on the principals of non-interventionism and the primacy of liberty. The authors of the study make the argument that more independence, liberty, and national security for our foreign neighbors means less for the United States. Nothing could be further from the truth. It is in America’s best interests to back out of “entangling alliances” and start minding our own business. This report — while claiming otherwise — proves that by predicting the end of American dominance. In a world where the United States has been the “dominant” “giant” in a “unipolar system” where the powers-that-be have been “comfortable with their dominant role in dictating the terms,” the United States would do well to return to our roots before the empire collapses and the chickens come home to roost.

Rather than face the fact that American imperialism is a failed experiment, the study — which reads like a chapter of Orwell’s *1984* — presses for a more powerful, more heavy-handed, less liberty-friendly total state leveraging more force, more manipulation, and more surveillance. If followed, these recommendations will inevitably lead to the collapse of not just American imperialism, but America itself.

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