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Readjustment of U.S. military Strategy and the security in Asia-Pacific

Changes in international security situations are caused by various factors. On the one hand, changes in international and regional security situations impel major powers to readjust their strategies in a timely manner. On the other hand, changes in relative strength of major powers and the readjustment of their strategies also determine, to a great extent, the trend of international and regional security situations.

U.S. military force is regarded as a strategic force that has the capability of global deployment and global access whenever necessary. Its global and regional deployment undoubtedly has tremendous influence over international and regional security.

The Pentagon successively submitted *Quadrennial Defence Review* and *Nuclear Posture Review* to the Congress on September 30th, 2001 and January 9th, 2002. The two reports indicated that U.S. military strategy and nuclear strategy have been or will be readjusted in a big way. This provides us a basic clue for our understanding and analysis of international security situations.

I

The “9-11” terrorist attacks changed the U.S.’ judgement on the world security situation and the main threats to its national security to a certain extent. The anti-terrorism war in Afghanistan reflects that the U.S. will more actively seek cooperation with the international community in the fights against international terrorism. But the *Quadrennial Defence Review* issued after the “9-11” attacks shows that the event doesn’t seem to change the basic tendency of U.S. military strategy readjustment.

1, on the judgement of threats, the report believes that U.S. faces diversified threats from sovereign states and non-state entities, and stresses that the security environment in the Asia-Pacific region is poses the biggest challenge to U.S. global strategy.

The *Quadrennial Defence Review* stresses that the U.S. is facing international terrorist attacks, the attacks of chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, and enhanced high explosive (CBRNE) weapons, missile and other asymmetric threats. Such threats are uncertain, surprise and asymmetric. Meanwhile, the report points out, “The East Asian littoral- stretching from south of Japan through Australia and into the Bay of Bengal- represents a particularly challenging area”, “the possibility exists that a military competitor with a formidable resource base will emerge in the region”. And “a broad arc of instability that stretches from the Middle East to Northeast Asia” is vital to U.S. interests, and “maintaining stability and balance in Asia will be an arduous task”.

2, on the military deployment, the U.S. has strengthened and will further strengthen its military presence in Asia-Pacific, and the report also stresses that U.S. military should not only guarantee the absolute security of its homeland, but also can swiftly and decisively strike adversaries.

The “9-11” terrorist attacks demonstrate that U.S. unique geographical position no longer guarantees immunity from direct attack, so homeland defence is the primary and practical task of U.S. military. On the other hand, the report further points out that the U.S. will increase its naval, air force and ground force presence in the Asia-Pacific region. Navy will increase aircraft carrier battle group presence in the Western Pacific, and explore options for home porting an additional three to four surface combatants, and guided cruise missile submarines (SSGNs) in the area. Air force will increase contingency bases in the Pacific and Indian Oceans, as well as in the Arabian Gulf, and ensure sufficient en route infrastructure for refueling and logistics to support operations. Army will strengthen the combat capability of its ground forces in the Arabian Gulf.

3, on the operational concept, the report gives up the combat target of “winning two theater wars”, and proposes new combat task, and stresses that U.S. army

development should shift from “threat-based” approach to “capabilities-based” approach

Quadrennial Defence Review points out that the four tasks of U.S. military are: first, to defend homeland; second, to deter aggression and coercion in critical regions of the world; third, to defeat aggression in overlapping major conflicts in different regions and win the decisive victory in a large-scale conflict; fourth, to conduct a limited number of smaller-scale contingency operations. The Pentagon believes that the changes in security situations and insufficient combat capability of U.S. army require U.S. armed forces not to define its size according to the criterion of “winning two large-scale threat wars”, U.S. military development should focus on the capabilities that adversaries have already possessed or could develop in order to ensure U.S. army can quickly shift between various tasks and project forces, and can make “effective response” to various security challenges.

4, on the development of armament, speed up the development of missile defence system, promote revolution in military affairs, optimise the structure of military forces, and resolve to gain absolute military superiority over any adversary in any theatre.

Quadrennial Defence Review stresses that the continued proliferation of missile and cruise missile technology poses serious threat to the U.S territory, its forces abroad, and its allies . To counter this threat, the United States is developing missile defenses as a matter of priority. What is especially worth mentioning is that U.S. still takes East Asia as the prior region to deploy Theatre Missile Defence system, and actively provides development plans for Japan and South Korea. At the same time, U.S. continuously pushes forward military reform and innovation with certain emphases, and tries to dominate the new revolution in military affairs.

II

Mr. Crouch, the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Policy made a special briefing on the *Nuclear Posture Review* at a press conference on the same day when the Pentagon submitted the report to Congress. At least in theory, the report provides more options of using nuclear weapons when it deems necessary, it increases the flexibility and lowers the threshold of using nuclear weapons.

1, expand the sphere of nuclear strike targets

The *Nuclear Posture Review* reiterates the establishment of the deterrence system of strategic defence and strategic offence, and underscores that the U.S. is determined to change the original military structure, shift the build-up of offensive military power from traditional countering “threats” to deterring and defeating various “capabilities” that can possibly pose threats to the U.S. Accordingly, nuclear weapons are no longer simply for nuclear retaliation or counterattack, they can be directly used to strike conventional military targets. Moreover, the report takes those countries that have possessed or try to possess weapons of mass destruction and are hostile to U.S. as the targets of nuclear strikes.

2, increase the opportunities of first-use of nuclear weapons

According to *Nuclear Posture Review*, U.S. will launch nuclear strikes under three conditions: strike the targets that can stand non-nuclear strikes; retaliate against nuclear, biological and chemical (NBC) strikes; when there are “surprising military weapon development” and dramatic changes in military situations. This means that the U.S. will use nuclear weapons not only under NBC threats, but also when the conventional military strike doesn’t work, and as long as the U.S. believes that there are “surprising military development” and dramatic changes in military situations.

3, integrate hi-tech conventional weapons with nuclear weapons into comprehensive deterrence

The U.S. believes that as the sole superpower in the world, the U.S. is no longer restricted by a hostile peer nuclear power, so the U.S. should untie the use of nuclear weapons in the battlefield without the danger of incurring large-scale nuclear retaliation. But international terrorists and so-called “rogue” states are seeking to develop and possess weapons of mass

destruction. In order to maintain effective deterrence, the U.S. should make full use of hi-tech conventional weapons and nuclear weapons to form “whole-spectrum” deterrence to contain and counterattack possible military challenges to the U.S., especially the threats of weapons of mass destruction to the U.S. homeland and its theatre military intervention.

4, unilaterally restructure U.S. nuclear forces

According to its new nuclear strategy, the U.S. government unilaterally announces plans to reduce its strategic nuclear warheads from current 7013 to 1700-2200 within a decade, and makes proposal to Congress to increase appropriations to the nuclear testing grounds. In fact, 70% of nuclear weapons in the U.S. nuclear arsenal have exceeded designed service term, some parts are aging and broken and they have to be eliminated. So a deeper reason why U.S. reduces large-equivalent and long-range strategic nuclear weapons is to restructure its nuclear forces and produce more small nuclear warheads in order to meet the requirement of new security situations and new threats.

5, build the new triad of strategic forces

For a long time, the triad of U.S. strategic nuclear forces are: intercontinental ballistic missiles, submarine-launched ballistic missiles and strategic bombers. The *Nuclear Posture Review* believes that the U.S. should have a new triad of strategic forces: nuclear and non-nuclear strike capabilities (dramatically reduced nuclear arsenal and hi-tech conventional weapons), active and passive defence system (the missile defence network to protect U.S. and its allies) and strong responsive infrastructure (the military supply industry and weapon supply system that can deal with various threats swiftly). These three capabilities form the new triad of U.S. strategic forces.

III

In the international community, only mutual security is real security. U.S. unilateralism of pursuing absolute military superiority reflected in the readjustment of its military strategy and nuclear strategy has tremendous negative impacts on Asia-Pacific security. First, the U.S. increases military deployment and activities in the Asia-Pacific region, sells large amount of advanced weapons to the region, and speeds up the development of missile defence system. All these will trigger a regional arms race and local unrest. Secondly, the U.S. new nuclear strategy gives new uses to nuclear weapons, and to a certain extent, downgrades nuclear weapons from strategic weapons, or the last resort of war to a war tool that can be used in conventional military operations. This greatly increases the nuclear terror of some regions and countries, and it is not conducive to containment and fight against international terrorism. On the contrary, it will stimulate some forces to retaliate with extreme terrorist actions. Thirdly, the U.S. and Russia, the U.S. and China have reach consensus not to aim their nuclear weapons at each other, but no one knows why the U.S. let media reveal that it has listed China, Russia, Iraq, North Korea, Iran, Libya and Syria as its nuclear strike targets. This is one major power's denial of its own formal commitment. Fourthly, the U.S. refuses to ratify the CTBT (Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty), plans to resume underground nuclear tests, unilaterally withdraws from ABM, and insists on developing its own ballistic missile defence system. All these bring great shocks to the international arms control regime that is already very fragile. And as the U.S. pursues absolute security for itself, other countries certainly will lose the sense of relative security, and the international security situation will become grimmer: for their own security, other nuclear powers will take corresponding countermeasure to improve the quality and strike capability of their nuclear weapons and improve their nuclear force systems in order to maintain the effectiveness of nuclear retaliation; while non-nuclear states will also want to use weapons of mass destruction including nuclear weapons to protect themselves, and try every means to develop and possess nuclear weapons, then global security and stability will be seriously disrupted.