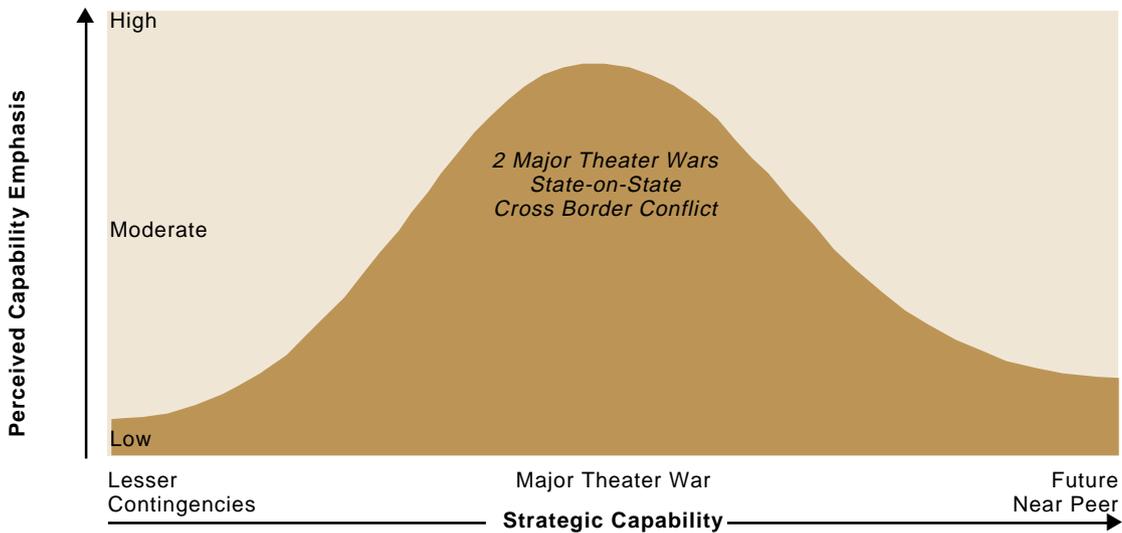


The Rumsfeld Pentagon focuses on other dangers.

Worrying Less About “Traditional” War

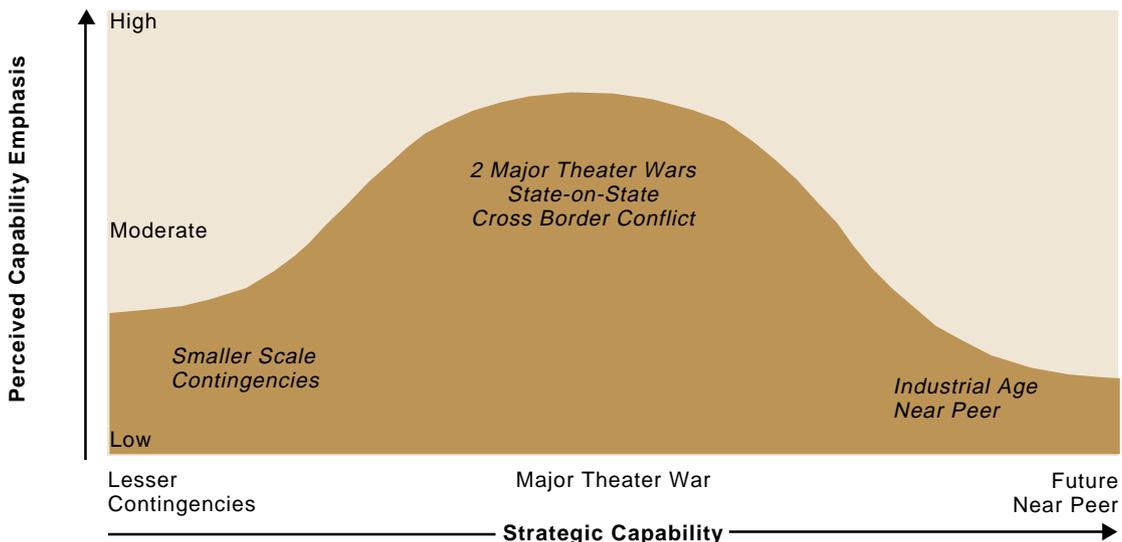
By Robert S. Dudley, Editor in Chief

1993 Bottom-Up Review



After the collapse of Soviet power and the US victory in the Gulf War, the Clinton Administration focused almost exclusively on the need to fight two major conventional wars at the same time.

1997 Quadrennial Defense Review



US military actions in Bosnia, Somalia, and other “failed” states brought more attention to the low end of the spectrum, but conventional war still dominated DOD thinking.

THE four charts on these pages are derived from “A Framework for Strategic Thinking,” a briefing written by top Pentagon officials in preparation for the 2005 Quadrennial Defense Review, or QDR. They show a dramatic change, over time, in DOD’s perception of threats to US security.

The charts are pegged to four major data points—the 1993 Bottom-Up Review, 1997 QDR, 2001 QDR, and a 2004 strategic planning review. Taken together, they show a

major downgrading of “traditional” conventional war in the hierarchy of Pentagon concerns.

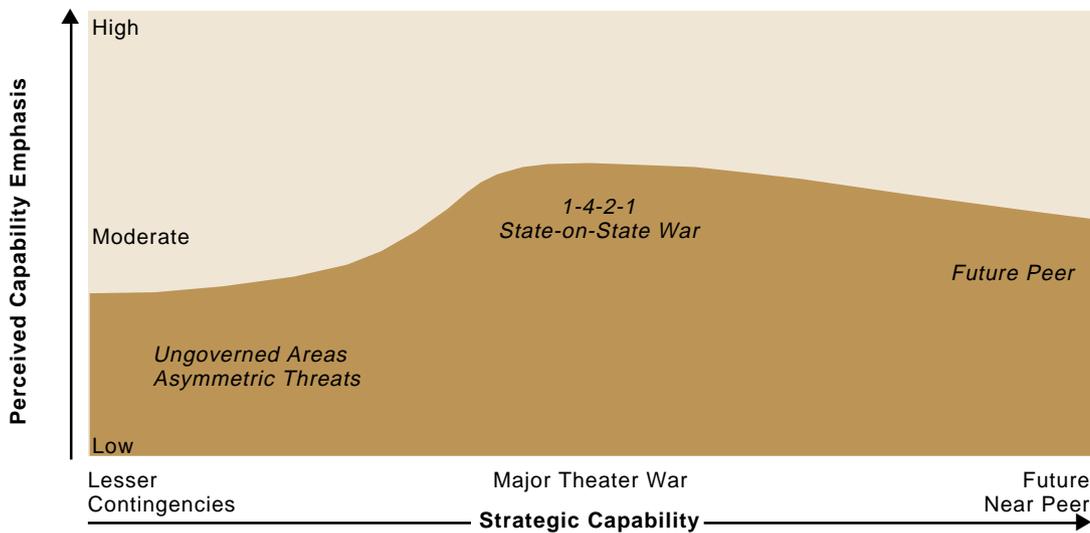
DOD acknowledges it is shaping a new long-term strategy, one which observers say will shift resources away from forces needed for conventional wars—fighters, warships, tanks—toward smaller and more specialized forces optimized for guerrilla war, counterterror operations, and the like.

The briefing describes “traditional” war as “states employing legacy and advanced military capa-

bilities and recognizable military forces in long-established, well-known forms of military competition and conflict.” These wars entail clashes of air, sea, land forces, and nuclear forces of established nuclear powers.

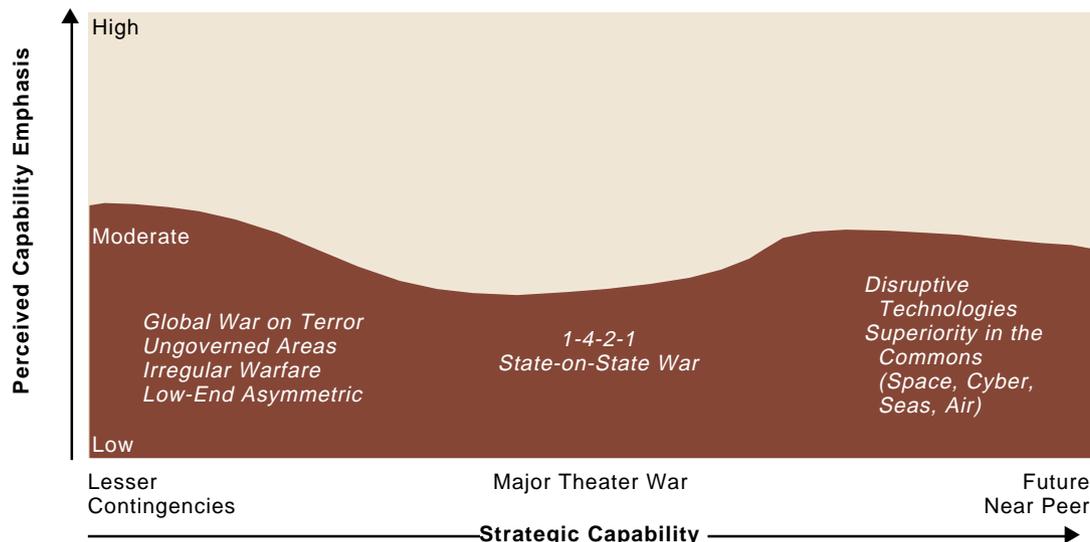
Getting higher priority are so-called “disruptive,” “irregular,” and “catastrophic” types of threats, at the low or high ends of the threat spectrum. The assumption seems to be that the US faces no serious conventional threat from major nations.

2001 Quadrennial Defense Review



In its first year, the Bush Administration still emphasized major theater war, but put strong new emphasis on high-end threats. (The term “1-4-2-1” refers to homeland defense, deterring aggression in 4 theaters, winning 2 wars simultaneously, and changing a regime in 1 nation.)

2004 Defense Strategy Review



DOD thinking now reflects a preoccupation with terror and insurgency at the low end of the threat spectrum and weapons of mass destruction and disruptive technologies at the high end, not major theater war.