

-- Realistic Resource Allocation. U.S. resource allocators in peacetime often do not match money, manpower, or materiel with important deterrent/defense plans.

-- Timely Output. Major U.S. defense plans commonly take two or more years to reach completion and approval, while participants with vested interests and de facto veto powers pull in opposite directions.

-- Impartial Inspection By Professionals. Competent outsiders expressly picked to probe for weak spots rarely review U.S. defense plans before they reach the President or his proxies, who must accept or reject.

REMEDIAL MEASURES

The U.S. defense planning system functions with passable competence, according to supporters who properly point out that no other nation even closely approaches perfection in that difficult field. Many American aims and missions have been, and continue to be, accomplished effectively, if not efficiently. Nuclear deterrence still prevails. Our alliance system still serves useful purposes. Calculated risks over a period of years have proved acceptable. No calamities have occurred, with the arguable exception of Vietnam. Costs could have been greater and we have avoided the problems of a command economy.

Those who believe that the U.S. defense planning apparatus, despite imperfections, works well enough to leave alone should resist attempts to tamper. Those who believe that deficiencies of the system are more obvious than its merits might wish to explore remedial measures.

The following exposition of problems and options makes no attempt to review the full spectrum, with pros and cons for each case. That would require a series of separate studies. It simply presents five samples, outlining a few approaches for each to illustrate the opinion spread.