



Mad Libs: War Edition

March/April 2013

AMERICA'S NO. 1 GEOPOLITICAL FOE IS...

Iran. —**Graham Allison, David Barno, Gian Gentile, Seth G. Jones, Peter Mansoor, Barry Pavel, Dov Zakheim** • China. —**Douglas Birkey, Kenneth Gause, Paul Kapur, Thomas Keane, Edward Luttwak, Thomas Mahnken, Merrill McPeak, Paul Pillar, Danielle Pletka, Christopher Twomey** • China's air, naval, and missile buildup presents the largest and most consequential military challenge since the U.S. and Europe faced the Soviet Army during the Cold War. —**Robert Haddick** • Pakistan. —**Thomas H. Johnson** • North Korea. —**Tad Oelstrom** • Leadership vacuum in the Middle East. —**Jeffrey Dressler** • Weakening of central authority and the rise of ungoverned spaces in Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. —**Richard Kohn** • Authoritarianism. —**Frederic Wehrey** • The implosion of Mexico is the most serious near-term threat. —**James A. Russell** • Russia, whose resources, large military, nuclear arsenal, geostrategic position, and intentions make it the most powerful counterweight in the world to the United States. —**John Arquilla** • We haven't had one since the USSR fell apart. —**William Rosenau** • We don't have a "top geopolitical foe." The most serious threats the U.S. -- and the global community -- face are currently collective in nature (climate change, disease, economic crisis). —**Rosa Brooks** • Changeable. The world just isn't that simple anymore. —**John Nagl** • Rising anti-Americanism in parts of the developing world, much of it the result of U.S. policies. —**Donald Snow** • It's own unrestrained tendency to meddle. —**Gordon Adams** • Ourselves, because we are so internally conflicted and confused. —**Henry Rowen** • Our Congress, which does not have the seriousness of purpose needed to do its job. —**Rachel Kleinfeld** • Our collapsing political system. More briefly, us. —**Heather Hurlburt**

OBAMA'S DRONE POLICY IS...

Reducing collateral damage, timely, well controlled, and effective. —**Abraham Karem** • Politically seductive but insufficient and possibly even counterproductive for combating terrorism in the long run. —**Amy Zegart** • The most pragmatic solution for the problem, and it saves lives. —**Robert D. Kaplan** • Effective in targeting some terrorists, though it needs to be complemented with other security, economic, and political instruments that help address the causes of terrorism. —**Seth G. Jones** • Commendable. —**Edward Luttwak** • Questionable and may set a dangerous international precedent. —**Gordon Adams** • Sensible. —**Graham Allison** • Ludicrously secretive. —**William Rosenau** • Controversial, but effective. —**Richard Burt** • Tactically and operationally effective, but risks -- at the strategic and political levels -- establishing norms we won't want to live

with. —**Nathaniel Fick** • Overrelying on this one lethal tool and also is in need of a stronger and more transparent legal framework. —Paul Pillar • Meeting a key security need in a dangerous world. —David Barno • A tactic in search of a strategy. **Current overreliance on drones is likely doing more strategic harm than good.** —**Rosa Brooks** • Quite apart from its lack of oversight and constitutional ambiguities, an attempted response to a symptom. By focusing on drones, we ignore the underlying causes of extremism and often actually exacerbate it. —**Sarah Chayes** • Something the U.S. Congress should debate and authorize (or not) country by country. —**Benjamin H. Friedman** • Prudent because it focuses on projecting precise power without projecting undue liability and vulnerability. —Douglas Birkey • Legal, but too central to our counterterrorism policy, and problematic. —**Eliot Cohen** • Legal, but an evasion of responsibility and likely to have diminishing returns once the U.S. retreats from Afghanistan. —Danielle Pletka • Effective but should not be overplayed if it contributes to the instability of Pakistan or other countries. —**Thomas Henriksen** • Reasonable, but could be strengthened with judicial oversight. —John Nagl • Difficult to comprehend given the limited and recently decreasing transparency provided by the White House. —**Micah Zenko** • The beginning of a brave new world of conflict. Since World War II, American presidents have been balanced in their use of force by having to weigh congressional support and the cost of American lives. Now presidents will be less constrained. —**Kevin Ryan** • Narcissistic. It lures us into a belief that war is too easy and painless. —Donald Snow • Due for a speech outlining America's vision on where the technology and the policy should evolve to next. Who better than a commander in chief/law professor/Nobel Prize winner to give that speech? —**Peter Singer**

THE RIGHT AMOUNT OF ANNUAL U.S. DEFENSE SPENDING IS...

Somewhere in the \$300-\$400 billion range. —Donald Snow • \$450B. —**Kori Schake** • About \$450 billion (wild guess), simply to maintain our splendid military institutions. —**Henry Gaffney** • Somewhere around \$450 billion in constant FY 2013 dollars. —**Gordon Adams** • Determined by strategy and below \$500 billion. —Heather Hurlburt • On the order of \$500 billion. —Merrill McPeak • At least \$550 billion, plus overseas contingency operations. —Dov Zakheim • \$500-\$600 billion, depending on operational contingency spending. —Jeffrey Dressler • About \$575 billion, adjusted for inflation and not including overseas contingency ops. —David Barno • \$600B. —**John Deni** • 3 percent of GDP; we need economical expansion and also need to win the "defense-per-dollar" competition with China! —Abraham Karem • At most, 3.5 percent of GDP when no major threat exists, as is the case today. —Christopher Twomey • Approximately 3.9 percent of GDP. —Thomas Henriksen • 4 percent of GDP. —Eliot Cohen • Dependent upon changing strategic needs, but probably not too different from the FY 2013 level. —**Richard Aboulafia** • Roughly what we are spending now, with a greater emphasis over time on recapitalizing the Navy and Air Force. —Thomas Mahnken • Less than it is now. There's a lot of waste in the current system. —Rosa Brooks • Much less than the last 11 years. —**Robert Cassidy** • What we spent in the 1990s at most -- 30 percent plus reduction in real terms. —Benjamin H. Friedman • More akin to the 2001 level than today's. —**Barry Pavel** • It depends on the U.S. grand strategy it is intended to support. —Micah Zenko • Dramatically less if capabilities were better suited to what our military is actually called upon to do. —**Russell Rumbaugh** • That which can accomplish the nation's security strategy and priorities with minimum risk. —**David Deptula** • Ideally somehow linked to our national strategic and economic security situation (to dream the impossible dream). —Peter Singer • Unlikely to be reached given

the sausage-making appropriations process. —**Richard Fontaine** • Inherently elusive. —Frederic Wehrey • Unknown. —Richard Kohn

THE RIGHT AMOUNT OF ANNUAL U.S. DEFENSE SPENDING IS...

Troubling and opaque. —**David Barno** • Worrying. —**Kori Schake** • Destabilizing, especially in Northeast and Southeast Asia. —Dov Zakheim • Worrisome, but its sustainability is uncertain. —Paul Kapur • A challenge to its neighbors that the U.S. needs to be involved in managing, without slipping into "active" as if it were all targeted at us. —**Heather Hurlburt** • Overblown. They still have less than half the major naval combatant ships that the U.S. has (even including the rather small amphibious ships they have) and are hardly adding to their numbers. —**Henry Gaffney** • Normal for a country of its size and the size of its economy. —Robert D. Kaplan • Following the historical pattern of great-power emergence. —**Mark Hagerott** • Inexorable. —Robert Cassidy • Inevitable, but not necessarily threatening if handled with careful diplomacy. —Richard Aboulafia • Just what we would do in their shoes. —**Erik Dahl** • Predictable, understandable, but concerning for the U.S. and Asia. —Graham Allison • Complicates U.S. power projection in the Asian littoral, but is of limited effect beyond. —Christopher Twomey • Not a threat to the United States. There are many regional states neighboring China, large and small, that can balance against it quite well. —John Arquilla • Real, and a potential threat to its neighborhood, requiring America to ensure freedom of navigation and diplomatic rather than military decision-making in the Asian region. —Rachel Kleinfeld • Insignificant. They are a land power, incapable of any real power projection. —James A. Russell • America's greatest geopolitical challenge (see No. 1 above). —Robert Haddick • Something the United States needs to address in a balanced and thoughtful manner. —Kenneth Gause • Medium-term, not long-term, threat. —Edward Luttwak • Consistent with its increasing status in the world, its security needs, and its growing population. —Tad Oelstrom • Cautious and predictable. —Henry Rowen • Its military modernization is still pitiful compared to U.S. capability, or to achieve Chinese geopolitical aims. —Russell Rumbaugh • Unfortunate but expected. One result, however, is that it will make the U.S. an even more valuable ally to have. —**Jim Walsh** • Intended to degrade American influence in the Asia-Pacific and give the Chinese decisive coercive advantage. —Amy Zegart • Likely to continue. —**Jack Riley**

THE WORST THING ABOUT THE CONFLICT IN SYRIA IS...

The human destruction. —Richard Fontaine • The slaughter of innocents. —Henry Gaffney • The many casualties. —Henry Rowen • Child casualties. —William Rosenau • Thousands of civilian deaths for what appears to be the inevitable fall of Assad. —John Deni • Other than the significant loss of life, the uncertainty surrounding the disposition of its chemical munitions. —David Deptula • The length of time it has continued, causing untold misery within the country and destroying hope for establishing long-term stability post-Assad. —Thomas Keaney • It has the potential to set off regional and sectarian conflict whose costs dwarf the already terrible toll in Syria and hold back the entire region from realizing the dreams we saw during the Arab Spring. —**Heather Hurlburt** • Al Qaeda's growing involvement in the insurgency. —Seth G. Jones • The growing likelihood that it will end up enhancing the influence of extremists in Syria and the region. —**John McLaughlin** • That a victory by the rebels, which is probably inevitable at this point, will provide al Qaeda a base in the heart of the Middle East and will stoke the simmering sectarian conflict in Iraq -- with no U.S. forces to bail the Iraqis out of the quagmire this time around. —Peter Mansoor • It has the potential to draw the

U.S. military into it, and as both Iraq and Afghanistan showed, it is really easy to get into wars but quite difficult to get out of them. —Gian Gentile • How it reveals that so many American "experts" have learned so little from the past decade of war. —Nathaniel Fick • That President Obama has said that Bashar al-Assad "must go" but has done precious little to make that happen. —John Arquilla • That the U.S. has stood by and done nothing to try and affect the outcome. —James A. Russell • The geostrategic factors that prevent a more assertive Western involvement (chemical weapons, Russian opposition). — Christopher Twomey • The missed opportunities in strategic and humanitarian terms if the U.S. had played a leadership role. —Barry Pavel • It would be so easy, and relatively risk-free, to take a military role in determining the outcome. —Merrill McPeak • The pressure by liberal interventionists to engage without having thought out the serious military/operational aspects of ideas such as no-kill zones. —**Sean Kay** • The unfair criticism of Obama's wise restraint. —Edward Luttwak • There is no good solution. Assad's departure won't solve the unrest anymore. —**Juliette Kayyem** • The fact that the most likely outcomes are continued dictatorship and anarchy. —Benjamin H. Friedman • That it's difficult to imagine a happy outcome. —Richard Aboulafia • What will come after. —**Kevin Ryan**