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# Defense Report

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## **In Our Rapidly Changing World, What Price Leadership?**

Recently we have witnessed a parade of critics who loudly proclaim that the United States can no longer afford the luxury of world leadership. These naysayers use the trade imbalance, the budget deficit and the national debt to back their argument. Many even go so far as to suggest that, with the advent of Gorbachev, the need to maintain our military strength is of decreasing relevance. Therefore, they postulate, there is some hope that by radically reducing our defense budget, we may somehow survive.

This clouded thinking seems to overlook the fact that, whatever Gorbachev's interests, they are certainly not related to the advancement of American democracy, but rather to the continued pursuit of great power status—economic as well as military. With that in mind, there is every likelihood that internal tension and external coercion will continue to characterize Soviet affairs for many years.

It is the view of the aforementioned critics that we should reduce our spending for defense because it has been excessive and it is becoming increasingly unnecessary. Such faulty reasoning ignores the fact that, with a \$4.7 trillion Gross National Product, we are hardly paupers. Concerns about our economic situation are only relative, as other nations have prospered—to a large extent as the result of American largess since World War II. But we also need to recognize that our incredible economic dominance was both a product of the markets we created and of our willingness to protect our destiny by having the military strength to ensure stability and to extend our influence.

We have succeeded dramatically in providing a more stable world for free people and free markets and we cannot afford to withdraw now. We do pay a price for leadership but not to preserve the interests of Japan, or Korea or of Europe. The price we pay is to preserve American interests—and it's worth every penny.

Upon serious appraisal, it is difficult to believe that tension and opposition inside China and the Soviet Union, or terrorism, and conventional weapons proliferation elsewhere can somehow promise a more stable world. The question is, can we afford to preserve our own destiny—to lead? The answer is we cannot afford not to do so!