

CRS Insights

The Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review (QDDR)

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On April 22, 2014, Secretary of State Kerry [announced](#) the launch of the second Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review (QDDR) saying,

This is a review of how we've been doing things, but it's also a preview of what State and USAID need to do in order to put the United States of America in the strongest position to face the challenges and seize the opportunities of tomorrow. This is what we owe to the American people, and we owe it to their elected representatives on Capitol Hill who approve the budget that we live by.

What Is the QDDR?

The Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review (QDDR) was modeled after the Defense Department's long-standing and statutorily required [Quadrennial Defense Review](#) (QDR). In launching the first QDDR in July 2009, then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton sought a process that would provide short-, medium-, and long-term blueprints for how to advance U.S. foreign policy objectives and values through the operations of both the Department of State and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). The process culminated in [a December 2010 report](#) that outlined a broad set of principles and recommendations intended to elevate diplomacy and development to be on par with military power as tools in achieving U.S. foreign policy goals to meet 21st century needs. The 2010 QDDR included recommendations to provide Chiefs of Mission with the authority to supervise and coordinate all civilian personnel at overseas posts; reform foreign aid; improve program coordination; and monitor and assess foreign aid programs to promote performance-based resource allocations in the future.

In addition, the first QDDR (QDDR I) included several overarching themes such as the need to elevate the status of women globally and to leverage technology in pursuing U.S. foreign policy. It also called for some organizational changes that have since been enacted, including establishing at the State Department the positions of Chief Economist and coordinator for Cyber Issues, as well as new Bureaus for Counterterrorism, Conflict and Stabilization Operations, and Energy. (QDDR I's impact, in particular on

foreign aid reform, is analyzed in CRS Report R41173, [Foreign Aid Reform, National Strategy, and the Quadrennial Review](#), by Susan B. Epstein.)

The Second QDDR

After naming former Congressman [Thomas Perriello](#) as his Special Representative for the QDDR in February 2014, Secretary Kerry [formally launched](#) the second QDDR (QDDR II) in April 2014, although internal discussions about the process had been ongoing for more than a year at that time. In leading the review, Mr. Perriello is working in close collaboration with QDDR co-chairs Deputy Secretary of State for Management and Resources Heather Higginbottom and USAID Administrator Rajiv Shah. A final report is expected to be released by the end of 2014.

QDDR II is not required or defined by statute or regulation and, as a result, could take whatever form the Secretary of State chooses to give it, including following (or ignoring) procedural precedents set by QDDR I. Obama administration officials have broadly characterized QDDR II as an opportunity to assess U.S. foreign policy organization, objectives, strategy, planning processes, and recommend reforms.

Administration officials have suggested that the QDDR II process is likely to result in a document with fewer areas of focus and recommendations than the comprehensive, sweeping scope of QDDR I, in order to result in a manageable number of priority reforms. Some believe areas of particular focus may include: the risk posture of foreign affairs agencies in a post-Benghazi era; the use of metrics to assess the impact of foreign affairs activities and of the reforms that the review might recommend; resource requirements and the best use of scarce funding for State and USAID; and a number of emerging issues, such as internet freedom and the use of new technologies and partnerships in promoting development.

Congressional Participation

While congressional action is not required for the Administration to conduct a QDDR, Congress can influence the review in a number of ways. The first is through consultation as the QDDR process is underway; both Secretary Kerry and Special Representative Perriello have emphasized their desire to consult with Congress on the QDDR, and Mr. Perriello has reportedly conducted numerous meetings with Members of Congress and congressional staff. Members and Committees, through hearings on the QDDR process, could weigh in on foreign affairs policy priorities and assess the follow-up on QDDR reforms.

Congress could also legislate requirements for the QDDR as it has for the QDR. It could pass a measure, within appropriations or Foreign Relations

Authorization legislation that would require the Department of State to conduct a QDDR every four years and outline its contents (see, for example, Section 302 of [H.R. 2410](#), the Foreign Relations Authorization Act, Fiscal Years 2010 and 2011, 111th Congress). Having the QDDR codified in law could give Congress a greater role in coordinating with the Administration the development of foreign policy strategies and cost-effective foreign policy goals. Congress could ensure greater participation in the QDDR process by requiring the Administration to submit a concluding report to Congress and updates on implementation.

Conducting a QDDR has a monetary and opportunity cost associated with it. If Congress mandates a review every four years, funding may be needed and personnel may need to forego other work to complete it. While a regular QDDR may result in improved strategic planning and communications between current and future administrations and Congress, if not funded by Congress or implemented by both Congress and the Administration, its value could be uncertain.

Even if Congress is not statutorily involved in the review itself, it may have a role to play in the implementation of any reforms recommended by the QDDR. New initiatives may require new authorizations and appropriations; and proposed reorganizations could be constrained by statutory restrictions, such as the number of Assistant Secretaries authorized in the Department of State. Whatever role Congress plays, it may draw on its experience with the Defense Department's QDR as a guide.