

Opinion

Is the Marvel Cinematic Universe 'DOOMED?'

By **RYAN HAJE**
Contributing Writer

Last summer at the world's biggest fan convention — San Diego Comic-Con — Marvel Studios took the stage at Hall H and unveiled its mind-blowing announcement — Tony Stark's actor, Robert Downey Jr. is returning to the Marvel Cinematic Universe.

What should have been an exciting announcement has instead brought me feelings of anger and confusion.

The MCU started all the way back in 2008 with Jon Favreau's "Iron Man," starring RDJ as Tony Stark. For over 10 years, he played this iconic character and was the face of the MCU until his final film as the character in "Avengers Endgame" in 2019 when Stark sacrificed himself to save the universe. Since then, RDJ has expanded past the MCU starring in films like the critically acclaimed "Oppenheimer" which won him his first and only Oscar. This brought the actor back into the mainstream once again.

What made the announcement of his return so frustrating for me was not the actor himself, but his casting. Instead of reprising his role as the iconic Stark/Iron Man, in a bizarre turn of events, they casted RDJ as Doctor Doom.

Doctor Doom is the main antagonist to the Fantastic Four — a well respected and

cherished Marvel villain. Out of all the characters to cast RDJ as, why Doctor Doom? To have two such pivotal characters played by the same actor is the laziest thing Marvel has done in the past few years, and they have done some pretty lazy stuff. The most confusing bit of all of this is the statement RDJ released when the announcement first came out: "New mask, same task."

My frustration over this casting goes much further, it goes to how Disney is handling Marvel as a whole. According to Matt Belloni of Puck News, "Marvel Studios" paid RDJ over \$100 million for both "Avengers: Doomsday" and "Avengers: Secret Wars." This money could instead be going to the hundreds of visual and digital effects artists who pour blood, sweat and tears into these movies.

Not to mention there has been no build up to Doctor Doom within the past movies. In the Infinity Saga, the main villain, Thanos, was slowly hyped up over the span of six years, and when it came for his time to shine, Josh Brolin blew the audiences away. I'm not saying RDJ can't achieve this praise, but with only three years between the casting announcement and "Avengers: Doomsday's" release in 2027, I think we should be worried.

If I was in "Marvel Studios" shoes, I

would have stuck to the original plan of having Kang the Conqueror as the main villain in "Avengers: Kang's Dynasty" before the RDJ casting, but recast Jonathan Majors due to his controversy. By now, Kang could have been a fleshed-out and respected villain that fans would look forward to seeing on the big screen. Sure Kang was flawed before the controversy, but Marvel could have fixed their mistake and made something the fans were sure to remember.

As for the larger question of, is the MCU doomed? I think so.

With the start of James Gunn's new DC Universe and superhero fatigue being more prevalent than ever, I think we're reaching the end of the MCU. Superhero movies will not be leaving any time soon but I believe we are moving away from the MCU and into the age of the DCU, beginning a new era for the action movie genre.



Our new Department of War: A testament to diplomacy or dominance?

By **JOANNA FARRELL**
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In another unsavory, yet unsurprising move by President Donald Trump's administration, the Department of Defense (DOD) has taken on a new name: the Department of War.

According to the Historical Office of the Secretary of Defense, the department held the name since 1949, with this being the first change to the DOD's name in 76 years.

What does that mean for us? What does the word "war" imply that "defense" does not? It comes down to one word, or rather, the absence of it — diplomacy.

War is complex, defense is not. War entails different elements that defense simply doesn't. War considers economics, personal gain, allyship, as well as the actual act of war and fighting.

Defense, however, is quite simple. If someone attacks you, you have the right to defend yourself. Defense is the reaction from an offensive move by another country or enemy — very different from the complexities that make up war. Countries only need a department of war when they are considering war or trying to scare other countries out of it.

Does this mean that we're heading toward a time when a war department is more relevant than a defense department?

It boils down to one, albeit, scary, statement posted to The White House website, "This name sharpens the Department's focus

on our own national interest and our adversaries' focus on our willingness and availability to wage war to secure what is ours."

This statement is not simply a justification of the name change as some would lead you to believe. This is a declaration of dominance, a grasp at power and a complete dismissal of the diplomatic nature of the U.S. One that says we are no longer concerned with the success and stability of other nations, but ours and ours alone.

Trump claims that the change comes because we won both World War I and World War II with a war department, not a defense department. However, if we look back in history, both wars were won on the defensive after attacks on the U.S. Our entrance into WWI came after the sinking of the RMS Lusitania and the Zimmerman Telegram, and our entrance into WWII came after the bombing of Pearl Harbor.

One Democratic representative summed it all up in a statement he made to NBC News; "It's hard to adequately plumb the depths of the stupidity of everything that goes into this," Rep. Adam Smith said.

Stupid would be a polite way to put exactly what this change will mean for the average person.

According to an article by The Independent, this rebranding of the Department of Defense to the Department of War is projected to cost U.S. taxpayers over \$1 billion, as they will now have to change the name on

stations around the world. This will involve changes to signage, uniforms and even down to minute details like the branded notepads and pens the Department of Defense uses.

This comes at a time when direct costs to citizens have been at the forefront of everyone's mind. We're currently experiencing nationwide concerns over tax hikes and tariffs that have been slowly increasing the cost of everyday goods. While this change might spark joy in some, the savvy economist knows that no name change comes without cost to the citizen.

While at the beginning of the year we were focused on cutting government spending and waste, we're now spending over \$1 billion from the budget that took months to pass on a name change that has no impact on the effectiveness of the department or the work it does.

To those of us who have been closely following this administration since the changing of the guard in January, this news comes as little shock. Since Trump's inauguration, the U.S. has withdrawn itself from the World Health Organization, United Nations Human Rights Council and will withdraw from the United Nations Edu-

cational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as of Dec. 31, 2026.

The removal from further United Nations programs remains up for debate by the White House, but any further withdrawals will reinforce the idea that once again, for the next nearly three and a half years, the United States will be acting in its best interest and solely for the interest of the U.S.

