
New Forces for Engagement Policy

By WILLIAM W. MENDEL

The premise of U.S. strategy is that we must counter an array of challenges to our interests: the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), regional conflicts, militant nationalism, deterioration of political and economic reform in the former Soviet Union (FSU), and transnational (gray area) phenomena such as terrorism, warlordism, refugees, narcotrafficking, environmental crises, and famine. Our national security strategy emphasizes transnational threats to nation-states by non-state actors as well as non-governmental processes and organizations which are viewed by many analysts as far more probable than general war involving WMD.

Additional challenges are weapons proliferation (including black market transfers of nuclear material or WMD by rogue states, terrorists, or criminals), conflict over resources, environmental issues, spread of serious diseases, transnational links of drugtrafficking and other criminal activity with terrorism and insurgency, illicit electronic capital movement, illegal immigration, and areas in megacities and the countryside where government control has eroded. Unconstrained by borders and international protocols, such dangers threaten nation-states used to state and alliance systems. But our doctrine and force structure are based on concepts of overwhelming force to achieve decisive victory against states—hardly a formula for coping with these new threats.

Collective Decisionmaking

The linkage of the active engagement vision and the extended range of security threats is a shift of emphasis in defending the Nation. In January

1993, for instance, the Bush administration stated in the *National Security Strategy of the United States*:

Foremost, the United States must ensure its security as a free and independent nation, and the protection of its fundamental values, institutions, and people. This is a sovereign responsibility which we will not abdicate to any other nation or collective organization.

By contrast, the Clinton administration's national security strategy provides different guidance:

The U.S. government is responsible for protecting the lives and personal safety of Americans, maintaining our political freedom and independence as a nation, and providing for the well-being and prosperity of our nation. No matter how powerful we are as a nation, we cannot secure these basic goals unilaterally. . . . Therefore, the only responsible U.S. strategy is one that seeks to ensure U.S. influence over and participation in collective decisionmaking in a wide and growing range of circumstances.

Thus global engagement is a core belief in our national security strategy. It portends the criticality of effective military interaction in multi-agency and multinational operations. Events will show how closely the administration follows these policy guidelines. Certainly there has been disillusionment with the United Nations since the Somalia debacle. On the other hand, American leadership sought U.N. rather than congressional support to enter Haiti by force.

Peacetime Military Roles

How will the military instrument be used to support national security strategy? The goals of sustaining security interests and promoting democracy abroad suggest a wide range of military roles. These goals and related military objectives will be achieved mostly by overseas presence and operations other than war (OOTW). The Nation will maintain the forces to win two nearly simultaneous major regional contingencies (MRC) in concert with regional allies. It will engage in

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arms control, nonproliferation, and counterproliferation. It will retain strategic nuclear forces sufficient for deterrence. Engagement around the world will involve overseas presence, disaster relief, fighting terrorism and drug trafficking, conducting peace operations, and providing nation assistance to counter insurgency, lawlessness, and subversion.

To promote democracy abroad, the United States will assist countries that affect its security interests, such as those with large economies, critical geostrategic locations, nuclear forces, and the potential for refugee flows. Russia and the states of Central and Eastern Europe are examples, as are the democracies of the Asia-Pacific region. Given these roles, are the Armed Forces structured to support the national security strategy? This is an important consideration since, before a national security policy was formulated, the Pentagon had determined a force structure for the next century. The process used to define that force, however, was not carried out in a vacuum.

During the summer of 1993—one year before the administration issued a national security strategy—then Secretary of Defense Les Aspin conducted the *Bottom-Up Review* (BUR) to define force structure, modernization programs, industrial base concerns, and the infrastructure to counter new dangers.

How well does the BUR recommendation match the President's national security strategy? Can it counter such diverse perils as WMD, regional war, deterioration in the former Soviet Union, and transnational (gray area) phenomena?

Strategic Forces for New Threats

Deterrence, nonproliferation (prevention with political and economic instruments backed by force), and counterproliferation (efforts to combat proliferation) are WMD concerns. The Nation is reducing its nuclear arsenal under the START treaties, but the process will take a decade, assuming it stays on track. Given the uncertainty

in Russia, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine, and the potential for unfriendly nuclear states in other regions, programmed strategic force seems necessary and capable of its deterrence and warfighting missions—at least in the traditional sense. However the utility of strategic forces for deterrence has been diminishing as suggested by the advocates of a revolution in military affairs (RMA) which stresses dramatic effects of new military and civilian technologies. The consequences of RMA, such as information and intelligence dominance, nonlethal weapons, and precision standoff strike systems, may offer more for deterrence and countering proliferation than strategic forces and, in turn, may lead to the marginalization of nuclear weapons.

It is not clear how strategic nuclear forces will affect WMD use by rogue states with little to lose or terrorists and international criminal groups. It has also been suggested that proliferation is all but inevitable and the task is to hedge against increased risks and exploit available opportunities.

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Another challenge is counterproliferation, which is aimed at controls on fissile material, increased support for inspection teams under the International Atomic Energy Agency, intelligence to locate and destroy nuclear weapons programs, and forces to operate against a WMD-armed enemy.

U.S. strategic forces are not capable on their own of countering proliferation and the kinds of gray area threats seen today. This requires new concepts for using technology, intelligence, and units specially trained to operate in a cooperative multiagency and international environment. One place to look for new capabilities may be in the conventional force structure advanced in BUR.

The force structure recommended in the *Bottom-Up Review* for funding in the future year defense program (forces extant in 1999) was designed by the current administration to sustain two nearly simultaneous major regional contingencies, peace operations, overseas presence operations, and operations to counter gray area threats, although not all simultaneously. The need for a force structure to fight two MRCs nearly simultaneously has been challenged. Holding forces in reserve to deter a second regional threat does not square with our experience in Korea, Vietnam, and Iraq, which were one-war events. Moreover, the two-MRC force may not be structured to leverage new technologies and concepts to counter the global dangers as stressed by RMA.

A conventional war with Russia is now virtually inconceivable since its military is in great disarray and represents little threat to the United States and its allies. America is not well equipped to tackle instability or gray area phenomena inside FSU, but these are possible threats to stability. Should the failure to reform result in a breakdown of the Russian or an East European government, the scope of a relief effort may be too large for the Western allies. Military operations other than war (such as Bosnia) will be the most likely application of U.S. military resources. It makes little sense to send combat divisions and air wings, but who else would do the job?

Danger in the Gray Areas

While general purpose forces are designed for warfighting, the military instrument of national power must be appropriate for countering transnational threats and gray area phenomena. The administration has stated that its emphasis on engagement, prevention, and partnership means that U.S. forces are more likely to be involved in operations short of declared or intense war. But in spite of repeated use of conventional force structure and doctrine to accomplish such missions, there have been few clear successes, as our experiences in Panama and Somalia have illustrated.

Panama provided an opportunity to employ overwhelming force to achieve decisive victory which culminated in the apprehension of Manuel Noriega. Perhaps American military leaders were captives of the traditional conflict paradigm: that is, reliance on correlation of forces and firepower, faith in technological solutions and quantification, need for an eminent cause, and thinking that war suspends politics. In Somalia, U.S. forces led Unified Task Force (UNITAF) to provide security for the delivery of aid and transferred command to U.N. Operations for Somalia (UNOSOM II) to help peace enforcement create stability. The mixture of forces and international, interagency, and nongovernment organizations, each with its own viewpoints and operating methods, contributed to operational risk and the eventual erosion of political will to support the Somalia mission.

Finding the proper blend of doctrine, strategy, and forces for military operations other than war is fundamental to engagement and enlargement. But as Secretary Aspin advised about forces for peace operations, “these capabilities could be provided largely by the same collection of general purpose forces needed for MRCs, so long as the forces had the appropriate training.” This conflict paradigm got the United States in trouble in Southeast Asia. The Army pursued counterinsurgency in 1965–66 by deploying combat formations to destroy North Vietnamese divisions and

main force Viet Cong units. The American military worked from the top down, while communists conducted a range of social, political, and military actions from the village level up. When asked to explain their operations, U.S. officers gave the textbook answer, to close with and destroy the enemy.

At a Crossroads

A national security strategy of engagement and enlargement demands forces and concepts for OOTW, but the force is said to be designed for fighting two MRCs. The global environment of transnational threats and gray area phenomena already challenge U.S. interests. Can our military capabilities to meet these dangers be improved?

Civilian agencies cannot handle OOTW tasks because they lack organizational and logistical assets for large-scale operations, especially when security is a dominant concern. Moreover, they

liaison representatives from interagency, private, and non-government organizations. It would be tasked to support regional CINCs with JTFs trained and deployed according to regional strategies. Such a joint engagement command (JEC) located in the United States would either report directly to the national command authorities or serve as a subunified command of U.S. Special Operations Command. It could operate in an international and multiagency environment by virtue of its access to the joint planning community, multiservice design, and unique mission. Joint Pub 3-08, which addresses interagency coordination, points to the need for a functional command for engagement.

This standing joint force would be organized functionally to integrate diverse capabilities of the services. The Reserve components would play a major role: for example, a nation assistance element would include engineer, medical, and civil affairs assets, all areas of Reserve expertise. Security police also would contribute to joint force operations as well as training assistance to host nation military and police units. Logistics and

transportation assets would provide air and ground transportation and a staff deployment planning function, and signal assets would support command and control for multiple deployments around the globe. A security assistance organization would oversee military support to CINC security assistance initiatives. Finally, a special mission element would be largely built around special operations forces with additional psychological operations and military intelligence units. Each service would share the burden by providing forces.

Some JEC missions would need combat units to provide force security, maintain escalation dominance, or even close with and destroy enemy forces. For this reason, joint force packages of combat units could be apportioned by the Joint Staff for planning and operations with JEC.

This is not an issue of creating more force structure, but of better organizing what is now on hand. There are advantages of a joint force for peacetime engagement operations. It would free conventional units from tasks which degrade combat readiness. The units apportioned to JEC for planning and deployment would be mainly support units that could quickly be reassigned to a force deployment troop list for an MRC. While assigned units would train to meet command standards for joint mission essential tasks, units in functional commands would not have to be situated with a joint headquarters. Primary task lists would support peacetime engagement operations, but JEC units would be available for conventional contingency operations. By assigning

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clearly cannot exercise the upper hand in contested situations when ascendant military power is needed. In the gray area environment it is not always clear where civilian responsibilities end and military tasks begin. Once again it is time to address the doctrine and force structure for supporting national security policy. What kind of forces could help to counter WMD proliferation, incipient causes of regional war, aspects of instability in FSU, and transnational phenomena?

One answer is a standing military staff for OOTW. If we intend to enhance participation in collective decisionmaking in a growing range of circumstances, a specially organized joint planning staff is needed with apportioned forces to optimize military support of security policy. A joint command should be trained and ready to join with government, non-government, and international organizations in tackling transnational threats or supporting OOTW tasks. The permanence of such a command could develop expertise on the interagency and international environment. Ready to go into action unilaterally or with partners, it could add a new dimension of deterrence to conflict short of war. While such a specially designed force might detract from the conventional force structure, it would be cost-effective for engagement strategy. Significantly, it will protect the readiness of conventional combat forces by relieving them of most OOTW missions.

To support engagement strategies, a joint command should be established on a functional basis without regard to a specific geographic area of responsibility. Its headquarters would include

Aviano Air Base, Italy.



U.S. Air Force (Lynn Walters)



Destroyers off San Clemente Island.

U.S. Navy (J.P. Guzman)

specific units to the command, other service units would be free to concentrate on conventional combat training.

JEC would go a long way toward solving a long-standing problem: the American proclivity for satisfying political decisions by using conventional forces to produce effects that are foreign to them. Under JEC, a few uniquely organized units could train for missions requiring long-term and indirect approaches to achieving U.S. objectives. The Armed Forces could remain unbedeviled by OOTW missions, free to concentrate on training for decisive battles of annihilation.

Among the most critical dangers facing the United States are gray area phenomena such as conflicts over scarce resources, ethnic and religious conflict, transnational crime (with its linkage to terrorism and insurgency), migration and illegal immigration, famine, and nations on the verge of collapse. But the military instrument of national power will not be effective in countering

these threats if the traditional way of war is applied to OOTW. This is not the time to discard Clausewitz and the operational art, but there is room for innovation in structuring forces for the 21st century. Perhaps RMA will offer opportunities not only through technological innovation but also through new operational concepts and organizational adaptation. Success in operations other than war will depend on adjusting to the new security environment. One certain catalyst for change would be the creation of a new military organization for engagement operations—a joint engagement command. The Armed Forces may then be able to advance beyond new technologies for fighting old wars, to reshape our doctrine and force structure for engagement and enlargement.

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