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Making the Military Matter in an Age of Uncertainty

**An Essay Submitted for the Core Courses on Geostrategic Context
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**Powell A. Fraser, Jr.
Captain, U.S. Navy**

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Making the Military Matter in An Age of Uncertainty

"The old international order of the cold war was very familiar to us. It had form, substance, and ideology. It could be seen, touched and heard. It had its devils, demons, and armies. It seemed as a single point of focus for the free world's response. That focus is now blurred. The form and substance are disappearing before our eyes, vanishing in a whirlwind of change and still more change that appears daily on TV screens."--General Colin L. Powell, USA¹

"The real threat we now face is the unknown, the uncertain." 1992 National Military Strategy²

"Nor had (the)...leaders of democracy (during the Vietnam era) bothered to involve the people of their country in the course they had chosen: they knew the right path and they knew how much could be revealed, step by step along the way. They had manipulated the public, the Congress and the press from the start, told half truths, about why we were going in, how much we were spending, and how long we were in for...So they lost it all." David Halberstam in The Best and the Brightest³

I. Why Read This Essay?

You should read this essay because it examines how the U.S. military can win support for the National Military Strategy of the United States in an age of international and national uncertainty. You should read it because it will propose some new approaches to making the military matter when many think the military is no longer relevant. And finally, you should read this essay because it may help prevent some historian years from now writing of our times and saying: "They lost it all."

Life just isn't what it used to be. We used to have an enemy; we used to have clearly defined threats. Our political, economic, and military and foreign policies were all centered on containing communism. Capabilities necessary to meet this threat were determined; then

forces needed for these required capabilities were built. Objectives - threats - strategy - capability - forces: that was the orderly manner of the military programming and budget process for decades.

Now we find the future isn't what it used to be either. First the Berlin Wall falls. Then Germany unites. Next the Warsaw Pact disappears. Democracies break out in central and eastern Europe. Finally even the Soviet Union disintegrates. Two years ago 1.5 million NATO and Warsaw Pact troops faced each other across the West German border; this year less than half that number will remain. "By the grace of God, America won the Cold War," proclaimed President Bush in his State of the Union Address.

At the same time, America's ability to compete economically has been slowly but visibly declining. In our efforts to maintain a standard of living, we are running the world's largest international trade deficit and have become the world's biggest debtor nation. Our domestic investment rate is only half that of Japan and well below all other international competitors. Our savings rate is the lowest of any industrialized country. Paul Kennedy uses these economic problems to predict that the American share of world manufacturing will steadily decline in a relative sense. The resulting strain between available resources and political and military commitments will cause the United States to lose its 'great power' status. Kennedy feels tough decisions will have to be made between immediate military security and long range economic security.⁴

As Alvin Toffler noted in his book *The Third Wave*: "Old ways of thinking, old formulas, dogmas, and ideologies...no longer fit the facts...We cannot cram the embryonic world of tomorrow into yesterday's conventional cubbyholes. Nor are the orthodox attitudes or moods appropriate."⁵

So where do we go from here? Robert Nye contends that despite current economic problems, the United States still retains enormous power, but "the ultimate irony would be for Americans to perceive short term problems as indicators of long-term decline and respond by cutting themselves off from the sources of their international influence. This need not be

the case if Americans react appropriately to global changes."⁶ Americans are already responding to some global changes. A look at newspaper headlines shows strong debate on what the new world order may mean to the military:

- *"Defense Budget Can Be Cut In Half"* -- Chicago Tribune
- *"Top Congressman Proposes Deeper Cuts in the Military"* -- New York Times
- *"The Pentagon's Scramble to Stay Relevant"* -- U.S. News and World Report
- *"Battle Shaping Up Over Defense Cuts"* -- Los Angeles Times
- *"Debate Over Military's Future Escalates"* -- Washington Post

If the Armed Forces are to maintain what they think are adequate force levels, they are going to have to, as David Halberstam stated in the quote at the beginning of this essay, "involve the people of their country in the course they (have) chosen." The National Military Strategy must be sold as relevant to the people, to the press, and to the politicians of Congress. Different relationships will be needed with all of these groups. To prove the need for new approaches, the age of uncertainty will be examined from the viewpoint of old and new realities: geostrategic, political, economic, and military. Then specific recommendations will be made on how to improve relations with each of the three groups: the people, the press, and members of Congress.

Listed below is a summary of new ideas discussed in this essay:

- New, non-traditional missions for the military
- More involvement in community relations by commanders
- New Reserve system
- New attitudes on press relations
- Formal orientation course for the media
- Formal media training for commanders
- A joint defense-congressional budget panel
- An annual retreat for senior defense and congressional leaders
- A formal orientation course for new congressmen and staffers

II. Understanding the Age of Uncertainty

Old Realities

Two years ago most of the world watched in joyful disbelief as a crack in a wall grew larger and larger. Thousands cheered as the opening grew large enough for a face to appear from the other side. It was the face of a smiling East German guard. The wall that had separated East from West was coming down. Berliners expressed the exuberant spirit of freedom as they celebrated on top of the wall itself. Little did the world know at the time that the fall of the Berlin Wall signaled the collapse of an era. It was the symbolic end to an age where walls -- both physical and political -- played the major role in international economic and political affairs.

Until 1989, walls were dominant aspects of national strategies. From Joshua at Jericho to Hadrian on the Scottish border, from Emperor Ti and the Great Wall of China to Honecker and the Berlin Wall, physical structures divided the world. There have also been invisible political and economic walls that have likewise separated nations. The rise of nation states in early Greece started a movement in history that has continued to this day as central governments have sought to guard their national interests and sovereignty through international treaties, protectionist economic policies, military strategies, and nationalistic fervor. To ensure sovereignty governments often sought to influence or control the policies of other countries using either dominant political or military power to achieve their goals.

For centuries, national power was created and exercised based on a set of forces that dominated the world political scene. These forces placed great weight on the abilities and desires of national leaders, the policies of the governments they led, and the economic and military power at their disposal. Old realities centered on the following:

- The most powerful forces shaping the world were those controlled by national governments.
- Most power was political power underwritten by economic and military power.
- Political, economic, and military powers were mostly invested in national governments and exercised through government policy.
- The political leadership of national governments had tremendous power to shape through their national policies the political, cultural, and economic development of the world.⁷

The dominance of these old realities meant that the quality of the national leaders, their economic and political persuasions, the size of the military they controlled, and the natural economic resources available to them all combined to control international events. There was an order to things. National goals, threats, and policies were generally well known and predictable. There were global and regional superpowers who for the most part controlled the world.

New Realities

General Powell has observed: "The form and substance (of the old international order) are disappearing...vanishing in a whirlwind of change and still more change..."⁸

Congressman Les Aspin has proclaimed: "The national security concerns that drove our national defense for two generations have changed dramatically...It is, quite literally, a new world."⁹ President Bush has stated: "For the past 12 months the world has known changes of almost Biblical proportions."¹⁰

Events of the last two years have dramatically altered the political landscape of the world. Old visible and invisible walls have come down. While the changes in national governments have captured most of the headlines, no less dramatic have been the economic

and technological changes that have been the major causes of political shifts. These developments have been taking place for a number of years and are just now gaining world attention as causes for change.

New forces have created new realities that are replacing the old paradigms. From politics to economics to military strategies, the new world order will dictate different ways of doing business. We must therefore understand these new forces and determine ways to adapt to the new realities. These new realities are centered on forces created by the recent information revolution, the rise of economic power, and the pressures of being globally competitive.

- *Information Revolution.* Forces shaping the world are no longer in the hands of national governments. Individuals are gaining access to information while nations are losing control over what citizens can see and hear. The information explosion over the past 20 years has enabled people throughout the world to have access to information on events and lifestyles in the rest of the globe. Direct contacts between individuals of different nations have put a reign on nationalistic aggression and undermined the efforts of centralized governments to control their populations through propaganda. The hope of democratic ideals and the free market place have gained followers because of the spread of information. Information in all its forms -- communication, processing, management, dissemination, access, and utilization -- is a powerful force that is changing the political landscape with increasing speed.¹¹
- *Economic Power.* The most powerful geostrategic force is now global economics. Political power is playing a decreasing role, and military power has only minor intermittent appearances. Economic power is not wielded through government policies but rather through the forces of the global economy. National economies

are no longer self-sufficient. Products are made on a world scale basis at locations where they can be produced most efficiently. Nations are now closely tied together by internationally based corporations. For example, businessmen were the driving force behind the establishment of the European Community and its progress towards an Economic Monetary Union. American businesses were the forces behind the establishment of the Free Trade Agreement with Canada and the proposed Agreement with Mexico. A failing economy brought down the old Soviet Union and Communism as a world economic alternative to the free market.

- *Staying competitive globally*. Productivity and international competitiveness have replaced national leadership as the dominant forces that will set government agendas in the future. Productivity is based on a combination of factors: long range capital investment, monetary policy, strength of the infrastructure supporting the national economy(education, transportation, research and development of new technology, public works), savings rates, deficits in national budgets and trade, and the attitudes of the national work force. High productivity levels will make a nation competitive in the global market. Failure to compete globally will result in a gradual loss of power and control over national destiny. Restrictive trade policies can delay the demise of uncompetitive industries, but the costs will accumulate and one day become unbearable. For political reasons, government leaders must now be primarily concerned with keeping their country competitive. They no longer set policies by themselves. Market forces are now in control.

These forces are changing our national objectives. The National Security Strategy of the United States set by the President has "a healthy and growing economy..." as the number two goal -- just after survival as a free and independent country. As the 21st

century approaches, achieving the first objective will depend more and more on reaching the second. The next section of this essay will examine how the military can better present its missions and relevance in this democratic age of rapid information and economic power. It will show how the National Military Strategy can better support the National Security Strategy.

III. Making the National Military Strategy Matter

The Democratic Debate

As a democracy is designed to do, there is currently a major debate over how the new realities should affect military force levels in the future. Without a Soviet threat and with a weak national economy, Americans are asking why national resources should not be diverted from defense to areas where the new realities are threatening our domestic security.

The question is a good one and will be asked continually as long as major military threats to the survival of the United States remain minimal. If there is to be a base force that meets what the military thinks is necessary, then we are going to have to clearly state why the military is relevant in the new era. Why should significant parts of the budget be devoted to protection from future uncertainties? Secretary of the Navy Garrett stated the challenge clearly when he said:

*"Despite our own recent experiences in the Middle East, there is little public consensus on the military dangers we face in the post-cold war period; and at the same time we are facing increased competition for ever-shrinking government resources."*¹²

When the old realities were prevalent, national leaders had to be primarily concerned with a very real security threat from communist military forces. It was easy in those days to

justify the military budget. Soviet forces in Afghanistan, Angola, Cuba, the Mediterranean, North Atlantic, and East Europe were visible demonstrations of the threat.

Today the justifications are not so easy. The case for any Base Force level is going to have to be made with common sense, clarity and conviction. It is going to have to be made in ways previously considered unnecessary. American armed forces are going to have to fight to remain relevant to what people think are their primary threats. Americans will not pay for more than is necessary. If they don't understand the need, they will respond with opinions similar to those expressed in one recent letter to the editors of the *New York Times*:

"I am astonished...that Pentagon planners, whose past planning has been so discredited by world events, are urging new reasons for excessive military spending...These discredited but unrepentant planners want to pour untold new billions into military spending, not to protect the United States from enemies that no one can take seriously, but to protect their own military enterprise and the complex of military industries to which they are linked. They are the real enemy..."¹³

The new realities are upon us. We must show that the military at a Base Force level is still relevant. If opinions like those above are widespread, then the military will be faced with drawdowns similar to the ones done too rapidly after the World Wars, Korea, and Vietnam. To make a force level argument convincingly, the armed forces will have to expand the National Military Strategy beyond traditional missions and at the same time forge new relationships with the American people, press, and politicians in Congress. Let's look at each of these areas closely and determine what specific actions we can take to prevent an "us vs. them" debate.

New Military Missions

The National Military Strategy states that the fundamental objective of America's Armed Forces will remain constant: "to deter aggression and, should deterrence fail, to

defend the nation's vital interests against any potential foe."¹⁴ To accomplish this, four strategy foundations have been articulated:

- ♦ *Strategic Deterrence and Defense:* The threat of global ballistic missile and nuclear weapons proliferation is on the rise. We need a force capable to deter or to eliminate the threat.
- ♦ *Forward Presence:* Overseas deployed forces demonstrate our commitment, lend credibility to alliances, enhance regional stability, and provide crisis-response capability.
- ♦ *Crisis Response:* We need forces to respond on short notice, and unilaterally if necessary, to regional contingencies.
- ♦ *Reconstitution:* A credible capability must be preserved to forestall any potential adversary from competing militarily with the United States.

The foundations themselves do not justify a base force level. Identifying specific missions for the military in given scenarios and demonstrating how the missions are relevant are the critical steps to winning approval. While Americans today do not feel militarily threatened by any other country, they do understand the need to maintain some level of national defense. That level will not be very high unless the military adopts some new missions that are directly related to the immediate needs of Americans: improving the national economy and productivity, fighting drugs, limiting crime, decreasing unemployment, improving education, and stopping illegal immigration.

With the goal of showing how the military can stay relevant in an age of new realities, an additional foundation could be added:

- ♦ *Supporting the domestic infrastructure:* The military must participate in assisting other public agencies as they attempt to improve our economic infrastructure and keep America competitive. Military missions must be seen as constructive rather than destructive.

Additional missions which the armed forces could undertake to accomplish this foundation are: greater efforts to win the war on drugs, combining the active and reserve system to

improve education through a national technical training and college scholarship program, establishing closer cooperation between military and civilian research and development efforts, and a visible program that allows for quick response to domestic and international emergencies.

Emphasis on these missions would improve the public's perception of the usefulness of the military in an uncertain age where military threats are not clearly perceived. Drugs are rotting our cities and a generation of our youth. Too many individuals are unable to obtain the training they desire or which the country needs in order to stay globally competitive. Too many businesses lack the capital to do high technology research and development that can result in new products. Emergency assistance too often lacks the coordination, transportation, and communications that the military can provide. These are the problems that Americans feel are the most important.

International threats need to be addressed in ways that show why American involvement is necessary. Simple calls for international stability are not enough unless the threats to Americans are clearly defined. The public understands the need for oil from the Middle East; so they also understand that forces are necessary to insure our oil supply is not stopped. The public understands the threat of uncontrolled nuclear proliferation, so they support strategic forces to deter attack. What is not so clear is why hundreds of thousands of U.S. forces still need to be stationed overseas; or why the size of the armed forces cannot be reduced significantly and still provide a capable defense. These questions will have to be answered convincingly through the press and through local contacts.

The domestic needs of the country will vary over the years, so the military will have to be more flexible in adopting new missions that support domestic efforts. In providing for the common defense, unconventional domestic threats will need to be addressed by the military, as will international challenges. Keeping the world open to American trade and maintaining international political stability will mean little if the United States is not competitive in the world markets.

Convincing the public, the press, and Congress that both the old and the new missions are worth the investment of scarce resources remains a significant challenge. The following sections will address some proposals on how best to approach this challenge in the new age of uncertainty.

A New Partnership with the People

The military over the next decade is going to have to make special efforts to keep close ties to Americans. If the relevance of a base force is to be convincing, grass roots approval is needed. The citizen-soldier concept needs to be maintained whatever the cost.

Since World War I, the military has maintained a close relationship with its fellow citizens through a number of means: the reserves; a large number of veterans from World War II, Korea and Vietnam; and frequent news media coverage of events where the military was in action. From threats of a Soviet nuclear or conventional attack to daily reports of the Cold War, America's focus was frequently on the military. These former means of keeping Americans in touch with their armed forces and aware of its strategy may no longer be available in the coming years.

If the reserve system is significantly reduced, if Americans read or see little about their military in the media, and if the number of home town boys in the armed forces is so limited that many people don't ever know of someone in service, then the military is in danger of becoming a secluded, invisible lot who will not gain public support until an emergency arises. Given inevitable budget cuts, dedicated efforts need to be made to keep the military in contact with American citizens. There are three main areas to concentrate our focus:

- *Educating the public on the Military Strategy and required force levels*
- *Involving the public in military activities to keep it informed*
- *Cooperating with the public in areas previously determined to be outside traditional military missions; being constructive as well as destructive*

In educating the public, commanders of units and bases need to assume a larger share of the responsibility in educating local people and media. No longer can the job be done by public affairs representatives and senior officers alone -- the magnitude of effort is too large. Commanders need to spend more time becoming involved with local organizations, ensuring they understand the overall military mission, and not just the local unit's function. Commanders need to understand that the success of their unit depends very much on their efforts in educating those who pay for that unit -- the American taxpayer. Fitness Reports for commanders should include statements of what initiatives they have taken to educate the public. Public Affairs organizations should ensure sections of the country are assigned at least one active military unit commander who can help lead the education effort in that region.

Second, we must keep Americans involved in their military. If active duty forces are to be cut in large portions, then the reserve system needs to be maintained at a high level. Even if the cost effectiveness of the reserve force is low, we still need that contact between active forces and citizen soldiers. For over 200 years the militia/reserve concept on which our country was founded has served us well, developing a military-government- people tradition unsurpassed in history. That relationship needs to be kept alive.

In the future, the reserve system need not adhere exactly to the traditional concept. For instance, both military visibility goals and improved national education infrastructure could be achieved by the reserve program offering a large number of college or technical training scholarships in return for basic training and a few years of government or military service. After these few years on the active reserve roster (meeting once a month with a summer training period), all reserves would become inactive, to be recalled to service only in a major national emergency. As there would be no senior reserves, active duty officers and non-commissioned officers would lead all reserve units. Funds saved in paying for the senior reserves and their retirements would be applied to the scholarship program. The Reserves

thus undergo a brief, military training program with scholarships as the incentive. The educational aspects of the program could be directed to help those who otherwise might not be able to afford additional education -- a much needed social program. Combining the Reserves with improving opportunities for higher education would be a step forward in keeping the military in contact with the people and staying relevant through helping improve the educational infrastructure. It would be one example of the military helping Americans.

A New Partnership with the Press

Joint Publication One, *Joint Warfare of the U.S. Armed Forces*, recognizes clearly the need to relate to the media:

*"We in the U.S. Armed Forces must account for our actions with the American people whom we serve, by dealing openly and well with the representatives of the nation's free press."*¹⁵

Our free press, both when it accompanies soldiers into battle and when it covers peacetime strategy debates, performs a unique role. It serves as an eyewitness; it forges a bond between the citizen and the soldier; and it generally strives to avoid manipulation either by the government or by critics of the government through accurate, independent reporting. It also provides one of the checks and balances that sustains the confidence of the American people in their armed forces.¹⁶

The new reality of the information revolution has made relationships between the press and military a critical part of strategic planning. Popular support for the military depends more on this relationship today than at any time in the past. The last really patriotic war was World War II, when, after Pearl Harbor, public opinion and the press rallied behind the nation's armed forces. Trust and cooperation were the prevailing rules of the era. Since then the nature of war has changed and so has the nature of reporting it. These new realities

have exacerbated, perhaps to a dangerous point, the healthy tension that has always existed between the military and the media."¹⁷

Many military commanders have not significantly altered their views of the press since the antagonistic atmosphere developed during the Vietnam War. As a result, at Grenada the press was barred from covering early stages of the attack. In the Persian Gulf some commanders deliberately avoided the press and refused to allow them on unit operations. While some leadership in the military has matured in its press relations, the average field commander has not. He is suspicious, uneasy, and reserved in the presence of the press. After the Persian Gulf War, Rear Admiral Riley D. Mixon, Commander Battle Force Red Sea, on the USS *John F. Kennedy*, said, "*We must learn to play the press better. We tend to avoid them.*"¹⁸

The press is likewise suspicious of the military and the government because of historical lies and efforts to prevent the press from performing its duties:

- ♦ *The Wall Street Journal*, April 23, 1965: "*Time after time high-ranking representatives of government -- in Washington and in Saigon -- have obscured, confused, or distorted news from Vietnam, or have made fatuously erroneous evaluations about the course of the war, for public consumption.*"¹⁹
- ♦ *The New York Times*, October 28, 1983: "*For a brief time there was a responsible concern, but to bar reporters [from Grenada] is a sledgehammer solution...there's another necessity, the same one that led the Air Force to take William Laurence of the Times on the flight that dropped the atomic bomb on Nagasaki in 1945. Democracies depend on trust, and trust in war, small or large, depends on credible witnesses.*"²⁰

The new realities will require a consistent approach to media relations if the American people are to approve modern military strategies and force levels. The good press-military relations developed in some Desert Storm units showed that it is possible for both the media and armed forces to accomplish their missions simultaneously. The units which had the attitude of "trust the troops to tell their own story" proved that relations can have trust and

cooperation. Get the press out with the soldiers and sailors; let them see what they do; don't place too many rules on what can and cannot be reported. Mistakes cannot be hidden forever. Let the press tell it like it is.

Press relations lessons of Desert Shield/Storm provided good guidelines on how to improve media relations in the age of uncertainty. We should keep these main findings in mind:

- The high-tech news media with instant communications required guidelines different from past wars. Absolute open access is not possible when the enemy is watching CNN. The press needs to understand this. Most of them do.
- The huge number of media people covering the war posed major logistic and security problems. In Vietnam there were about 700 accredited reporters in-country. In Saudi Arabia there were 1,600. Pre-planned procedures are necessary to handle large numbers.
- Commanders must give more attention to accommodating the news media. Dedicated transportation to remote units needs pre-operation planning.
- In this information age, if press representatives are not available, local commanders should use Combat Camera Groups or unit assets to cover events of interest.²¹

In addition to these battle tested lessons, there are other areas where the military-press relationship can be improved in the peacetime environment:

- Always tell the truth. Establish integrity as the foundation of the relationship. Tell the good news and the bad news. Don't try to use the press to put an untruthful spin on an event.
- Establish a formal media training course for commanders. Teach military leaders to be aggressive, unafraid, and truthful in press relations. Provide them an appreciation of the needs of the press and a realization of the commander's responsibility to assist the media in their jobs. Require commanders to attend this course prior to assuming command.
- Establish a formal joint media orientation course. Set up a schedule of joint briefs and base or ship visits to acquaint the media with the joint organization, strategy, capability and procedures. Let them see first hand the challenges, rewards and

frustrations. This would not be a propaganda effort but rather a means of providing the press a background on which to base future reports. We should aggressively encourage the national media to attend this course.

- Report on media efforts in commanders' fitness reports. Performance in coordinating media relations has become a major responsibility. Efforts to expose the press to the military can no longer be left to just the public affairs officers.

We can build on Desert Shield/Storm if we take the initiative and maintain our integrity. Democracy survives on a free press and an informed public. We need to remember that during military operations. As the Chief of Naval Information recently observed:

*"The reason a busy commander must learn to practice good media relations skills in war or in peace is not for personal publicity or gratification, but for recognition for our people - to tell their story to our families and the general public."*²²

A New Relationship with Congress

In addition to working in new ways with the American people and press, the armed forces must develop better working relationships with Congress. The antagonistic atmosphere has grown so large in recent years that "dead-on-arrival" is now the annual comment made by members on the President's defense budget. Beyond the budget debate, there is also a major gap in opinions on the direction our national military strategy should take in the future. These major differences are detrimental to maintaining an adequate military force. Both sides need to better understand each other. The right base force -- one forged not only on military considerations, but political and economic as well -- will emerge if the acrimonious debate can be avoided every year. The challenge is to get Congress to better understand military considerations and for military planners to better understand the political and economic considerations.

There is also another problem. Too many members of Congress and their staffers do not trust the military. Integrity is an issue. "It's hard not to be skeptical about the honesty of the services," commented House Armed Services Committee majority staffer Rudy deLeon. "Members are cautious; some have been burned in the past."²³ He was referring to the Navy's now canceled AX bomber program. The system is not based on integrity.

This lack of understanding and lack of trust between the executive and legislative branches of government needs to be corrected. "In the long run," says Aaron Friedberg of Princeton University, "reestablishing a consensus on the various aspects of policy will be the key to improving the country's strategic performance."²⁴ The solutions are not complex, but they entail a willingness to change some traditional ways of doing business. Three actions are recommended to improve the levels of understanding and trust:

- Establish a high level, three day annual retreat for senior defense and legislative decision makers
- Include Members of Congress in Defense budget development process
- Conduct a week long joint military orientation course for Congress and staff

Other than formal testimony, a few lunches, and social meetings, there appear to be few opportunities for defense leaders and members of Congress to really talk with each other. Fundamental concerns, perceptions, and opinions are not, therefore, understood among those responsible for setting the defense course. One way to overcome this communications problem is to conduct an annual retreat where the major decision players meet for three days somewhere outside of Washington. This meeting would be entirely off the record: no media, no reports, no discussing "who said what" with non-attendees. This would be a chance to exchange views without the need to be concerned with public posturing. It would allow an opportunity for communicating real concerns, reasons for opinions, and new ideas. Three days a year of frank discussions would go a long way toward improving understanding and integrity issues.

Second, some years ago, before Defense Secretary McNamara started the PPBS cycle, members of Congress participated in the Defense Department's budget development process. They were in on the formulative stages and contributed throughout the internal Defense Department process. When the budget proposal was presented to Congress, there was thus already a core of Congressional support that helped shepherd the bill along.²⁵

We can establish the same process today. Congressional participation in the budget development process would work if the executive arm of the government would be willing to compromise earlier on budget challenges. This is hard to do when different political parties are dominant in the legislative and executive branches, but it is possible if the final budget proposal still is that of the Secretary of Defense. He and the administration have the option of changing whatever parts they desire in the budget before it is formally presented to Congress.

Finally, a formal orientation course for congressmen and staffers needs to be developed. This joint, OSD sponsored course would brief military strategy, procedures, plans, and capabilities. Visits to installations and ships would provide exposure to the operating forces. Discussion on the National Military Strategy, joint command structure, military commitments, and desired force levels would all provide the basis on which well-reasoned decisions could be made. This would not be a propaganda course, but rather a series of high-level briefs conducted by knowledgeable senior officers. Senior political party leaders would be asked to urge new members and staffers to attend this course which would cover why and how so much of the discretionary federal budget is spent. Service oriented trips would be supplemental follow-ons to this introductory course.

IV. What You Should Remember from this Essay

Old realities have given way to new realities. New realities require new approaches. If the military is to maintain a capable force to meet what it perceives to be the threats of the future, then it must learn to operate in a national and geostrategic environment where new relationships are needed. Otherwise, as Terry Deibel of the National War College states:

*"The most likely scenario, if the current approach(to foreign policy) continues through 1996, is not a major crisis but a slow, insidious ebbing of power and position; not a sharp violation of the national interests in security, prosperity, and basic values, but their gradual erosion...without a real closing of the budget deficit, all the tools of foreign policy -- military, economic, and political -- will be in ever short supply."*²⁶

As the military seeks to convince the American people that our National Military Strategy and proposed force levels are appropriate, we should remember three things:

1. *That the world today is both technically and economically, as well as geostrategically, different than it ever has been in history.* The information revolution, rise of economic power over political and military power, and dominance of global economic competitiveness on national priorities mean that the world is much different than it was at the end of World War I, a period some strategists say this multi-polar world now resembles. For example, the recent agreement at the International Convention on the Use of Frequencies held in Spain in February means radio frequencies are now available for satellites that can be positioned so that portable telephones in the Amazon jungle or in the heart of Africa can direct dial New York. The information revolution is speeding up. The world is coming together technically as well as economically. Strategy makers need to keep this in mind as they develop plans that must make sense to the American people.

2. *That domestic and international threats are no longer viewed separately by the American people.* With Communism no longer a threat to America (a fear instilled over the past forty-five years to justify defense budgets), Americans now put domestic concerns ahead of military threats. Military strategists need to remember that internal threats may in fact be more important right now. As Zbigniew Brzezinski recently observed:

*"America's special status...is threatened by its own domestic shortcomings...Unless America pays more attention to its domestic weaknesses a new global pecking order could emerge early in the next century...Accordingly, U.S. policy will have to strike a more deliberate balance among global needs,...the desirability of devolution of U.S. regional responsibilities, and the imperatives of America's domestic renewal."*²¹

3. *That military missions and relationships may need to change in non-traditional ways if the armed forces are to stay relevant.* "Conventional cubbyholes" of traditional geostrategic thinking need to be reviewed for relevancy and common sense. We need to explain the military strategy to the American people in new ways; we need to work with the nation's media to instill mutual trust and better understanding; we need to establish a more cooperative atmosphere with Congress based on greater exchanges of opinions; and we need to work in a more formal manner to expose Congress to military strategies and capabilities.

The United States military is going to have to aggressively take the lead in maintaining relevancy if it is to avoid the political paralysis that has pervaded much of the rest of government. Initiative has long been an American characteristic. We need to use it now to build a better bond between the armed forces and the citizens of the United States. New missions and relationships are the only way to obtain a capable base force that executes

a well-supported military strategy. They can also insure the success of our National Security Strategy

Winston Churchill once observed that Americans can always be counted on to do the right thing -- after all the other possibilities have been exhausted. In taking the lead, we may avoid the alternatives.

Notes

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²²Baker, Brent, op. cit., p. 64.

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