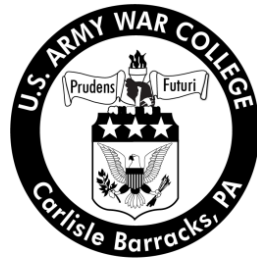


Strategy Research Project

America Needs a National Security Act for the Twenty-First Century

by

Colonel Robert L. Kelley Jr.
United States Army



United States Army War College
Class of 2013

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Abstract

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For the United States to maintain her current position in the global order and successfully achieve her national interests in the twenty-first century, the nation must understand clearly the character of modern war and reorganize the national security structure at the regional level accordingly to integrate all instruments of national power, improve whole of government unity of effort and execute comprehensive strategies with precision. The world is a much different place than it was just 60 years ago. The notion that today's strategic environment is significantly more complex than that of the past stems from a lack of appreciation for the character of twenty-first century warfare, underscored by awkward attempts to pursue national interests through a national security organization that was established more than six decades ago. The character of war has changed. It is time for the United States government to change accordingly.

America Needs a National Security Act for the Twenty-First Century

As United States Naval War College professor Dr. Milan Vego observed, “All wars consist of features that are unchangeable or constant regardless of the era in which they are fought and those that are transitory or specific to a certain era.”¹ Marine Lt Gen Paul Van Riper echoed this idea in an interview following his controversial employment of the opposing force during the joint integrating event Millennium Challenge 2002. “In reality, the fundamental nature of war hasn’t changed, won’t change, and, in fact, can’t change.”² “What is changing – in fact, is always changing – is the character and form of war...”³ Several attributes of today’s strategic environment combine to create a distinct character of twenty-first century warfare. For the past two decades, the United States military has struggled to understand the character of modern war. This lack of understanding manifests itself in the overuse of acronyms such as VUCA (volatile, uncertain, complex, ambiguous) to describe the strategic environment. In the 1800s, classic war theorist Carl von Clausewitz used very similar terms to describe the enduring nature of war. The modern battlefield is not more complex than those of previous eras. The complexity of today is simply different than the past. If one accepts that the environment is too volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous to comprehend, there is little utility in trying to do so. Hence, the military often looks to technology to define the character of war in this era. Focusing on technology led the United States to a capabilities-based approach to organizing and equipping. Such an approach ignores the true character of contemporary warfare and instead, is based on how the United States prefers to fight.⁴ The conduct of Millennium Challenge 2002, although largely ignored, revealed the risks inherent in a capabilities-based approach; most notably, the enemy may prefer not to behave as the United

States desires. That is not to suggest that the United States should abandon her focus on technology. In fact, the United States military's overwhelming technological advantage has often enabled it to prevail despite flawed strategy. Still, as the government enters a period of prolonged fiscal austerity, the nation will require efficiency as well as effectiveness in the application of national power.

As Clausewitz stated, "The first, the supreme, the most far-reaching act of judgment that the statesman and commander have to make is to establish by test the kind of war on which they are embarking; neither mistaking it for, nor trying to turn it into, something that is alien to its nature."⁵ To that end, this paper describes the character of twenty-first century war by focusing on five defining and interrelated factors that affect ends, ways, and means: (1) limited political objectives, (2) rising power of non-state actors, (3) proliferation of information and communication technology, (4) 24-hour news media, and (5) United States domestic politics. Combined, these five factors expose seams in the national security organizational structure and frustrate traditional military planning paradigms. For the United States to maintain her current position in the global order and successfully achieve her national interests in the twenty-first century, the nation must understand clearly the character of modern war and reorganize the national security structure at the regional level accordingly to integrate all instruments of national power, improve whole of government unity of effort and execute comprehensive strategies with precision.

Limited Political Objectives

War, whether total or limited, is simply a means to achieve a political objective. Clausewitz described war as, "...not merely an act of policy but a true political instrument, a continuation of political intercourse, carried on with other means."⁶ He

further stated that, “The political objective is the goal, war is a means of reaching it, and means can never be considered in isolation from their purpose.”⁷ The dictionary defines limited war as, “war conducted with less than a nation’s total resources and restricted in aim to less than total defeat of the enemy.”⁸ Notice that the definition does not suggest that limited war is less deadly than total war. The United States and her allies have lost hundreds of thousands of lives in limited wars.⁹ The salient point from the definition is that limited political objectives inherently limit the ways and means to attaining those objectives. Since the end of World War II, the United States engaged predominantly in limited wars with varying degrees of success. The introduction of nuclear weapons led national leaders of the time to question the feasibility of total war. The military, however, generally prefers to see limited war as the exception and total war as true warfare. The military, therefore, focuses little energy on a theory of limited war.¹⁰ An objective review of United States military activity since 1950, however, would reveal that limited war is the norm and total war is the exception.

Prosecuting a limited war presents several challenges for the military. First, as previously stated, limited ends inherently limit ways and means.¹¹ The restraints imposed by political leaders often reduce the military power available to a United States commander to a level near that of the adversary.¹² Second, limited wars foster greater political control over military plans and operations.¹³ Such political control, a frequent point of contention with military leaders, does not necessarily preclude successful military operations, but it can make translation of policy into strategy a difficult task for military planners.¹⁴ Each limitation has a political purpose, whether it is protecting the domestic agenda, preventing escalation, or any number of others. Consequently, each

limitation is, of itself, an additional political objective that must be considered in the planning and execution of military operations. For example, the overarching political objective of the Vietnam War was to prevent the spread of communism from North Vietnam to South Vietnam. President Johnson's determination to avoid escalation with China was another political objective. In practice, avoiding escalation restricted ways and means available to the military, provided sanctuary to the enemy, and ultimately impeded the military's ability to achieve the overarching political objective.¹⁵ Third, attainment of some political objectives in limited war may not be militarily feasible.¹⁶ The military element of national power is extremely effective creating physical effects on the battlefield, but only moderately effective, at best, achieving some political, institutional or psychological effects. Last, the typical tempo, duration, and transparency of a military campaign for limited political objectives accentuate the effects the four remaining factors have on the character of modern war.

Rising Power of Non-State Actors

The 1648 Peace of Westphalia established the primacy of the nation-state in the international system. This concept of world order consisting of sovereign nation-states served as the basis for international politics for the past 364 years. While the nation-state system does not provide continuous stability across the international community, it does provide a fairly predictable level of rationality. In the twenty-first century, the primacy of the nation-state is eroding as non-state actors take on a greater role in the international community. Non-state actors fall into four basic categories: international governmental organizations, multi-national corporations, non-governmental organizations, and terrorist and transnational criminal organizations. In the 1950s, only a handful of such organizations existed. Today, there are more than 25,000 recognized

non-state actors.¹⁷ The number and diversity of these organizations increases each year.¹⁸ Because the obstacles to their participation in international political discourse are diminished,¹⁹ the influence and reach of non-state actors has grown to unprecedented levels.²⁰ Non-state actors are capable of setting international and domestic political agendas, negotiating diplomatic outcomes, and implementing solutions to international problems.²¹ While the interests and objectives of these groups are diverse, they all have one thing in common. They are all stakeholders in international politics. Their rise in power alters the strategic environment and lessens the power of the traditional nation-state.

The most prominent international governmental organization is the United Nations, established in 1945, “to prevent war, protect human rights, maintain international law, and promote social progress.”²² The United Nations was created on a foundation of the Peace of Westphalia as an international governing body with the power to contain nation-states from coercive and aggressive behavior. The United States played a significant role in the creation of the United Nations, even hosting the organization on her own soil. In the earlier years of its existence, mostly because of the bipolar nature of the Cold War era, the United Nations exerted little power, particularly in matters of United States’ national interests. Since the Berlin Wall fell, however, the United Nations’ power has steadily grown in scope and influence. As a point of reference, the United Nations Security Council passed 644 resolutions in its first 45 years of existence before the end of the Cold War. In the 22 years that followed, the same council passed 1,441 resolutions.²³ Additionally, the United Nations is increasingly willing to act in opposition to the desires of the United States, historically its most

influential member. In 2003, the Bush administration expended enormous energy seeking United Nations' specific authorization for the war on Iraq to no avail. While the lack of specific authorization did not stop the United States and her allies from invading Iraq, internationally, it did raise questions concerning the legitimacy of United States' actions and strained diplomatic efforts. United States' influence in the United Nations continues to decline. In June 2012, the United Nations Human Rights Council condemned the United States' use of drone attacks, and in November 2012, the General Assembly overwhelmingly supported the inclusion of Palestine as a non-member observer state against the diplomatic efforts of the United States.²⁴ Proposed United Nations reforms, Security Council reforms in particular, are likely to further increase the power of the United Nations. While international governmental organizations may not be able to prevent nation-states from pursuing their national interests, they can limit, constrain, or at a minimum, complicate the manner in which nation-states apply power.

Non-governmental organizations also play a significant role in international political discourse. The most powerful non-governmental organizations, such as Greenpeace, Amnesty International, and the International Committee of the Red Cross, have specific interests and agendas, global followings, and no national affiliations. They exert tremendous influence over international governmental organizations, domestic political agendas, and global public opinion. More than 3,400 non-governmental organizations hold consulting status at the United Nations, and Amnesty International is an official source for United Nations' sessions on human rights.²⁵ Non-governmental organizations play a substantial role in United States' domestic politics, affecting foreign

policy formulation, and even drafting legislation on certain occasions.²⁶ They also possess an unmatched ability to mobilize public support. On 15 February 2003, several non-governmental organizations coordinated a global protest against United States war intentions with regard to Iraq, likely the largest anti-war protests ever conducted.²⁷

The United States decision to enter Somalia in 1992 serves as an exceptional example of the impact non-governmental organizations can have on international politics, domestic political agendas, and public opinion. The Bush administration followed a realist view of world order and a policy of selective engagement, only committing United States power toward vital national interests. As exemplified in the 1991 Gulf War, the Bush administration subscribed to the Powell Doctrine with regard to employing the military to achieve those vital national interests. Because the humanitarian crisis in Somalia posed no threat to United States' vital interests, the Bush administration was initially reluctant to take action. Unsatisfied with initial United States' reactions to the situation in Somalia, non-governmental organizations, such as CARE and the International Committee of the Red Cross, supplied graphic narratives to American media outlets that lacked regional expertise in the Horn of Africa. They also sponsored the visit of a New York Times reporter to Somalia and provided detailed information about the situation to the Senate Intelligence Committee. The horror of the humanitarian crisis poured across television screens, dominated newspaper headlines, and permeated congressional discussion in the United States. As a result of growing public pressure amidst a presidential election, President Bush reversed course, violated his policy of selective engagement and the Powell Doctrine, and committed United States' forces into Somalia.²⁸ Non-governmental organizations not only limit a state's

application of power in pursuit of national interests, they also possess the capability to compel a reluctant state to act outside its vital interests.

Similar to non-governmental organizations, terrorist and transnational criminal organizations have specific interests, broad international membership, and growing power in the international community. One need only look to the events of September 11, 2001 to realize the power and reach of terrorist organizations. At any given moment, over 2.5 million people are victims of human trafficking, and in 2012, there were 278 incidents of piracy with 27 resulting in hijacking and hostage taking.²⁹ Terrorist and transnational criminal organizations are often the enemy of the traditional nation-state, and they are a borderless and elusive enemy. Globalization and proliferation of dual use technology gives these organizations increasing access to sophisticated weapons.³⁰ Further, they are not bound by international laws, standards or norms. Terrorist and transnational criminal organizations operate outside the influence of international governmental organizations, but they will often leverage non-governmental organizations in their efforts to destabilize societies and weaken the power of the traditional nation-state. Collectively, the rise in power, diversity, and legitimacy of non-state actors presents traditional nation-states with unfamiliar complexity in the pursuit of their national interests.

Proliferation of Information and Communication Technology

Long gone are the days of the slow and expensive telegraphs, telephones, and vacuum-tube computer systems. Globalization of the world marketplace combined with rapid advancements in communication and computing technologies have made massive amounts of information available in real-time to a far greater percentage of the earth's population, at ever decreasing costs of ownership. "Computing power doubled every

eighteen months for thirty years, and by the beginning of the twenty-first century it cost one-thousandth of what it had in the early 1970s. If the price of automobiles had fallen as quickly as the price of semi-conductors, a car would cost \$5.”³¹ As of March 2009, there were 1.7 billion internet users worldwide, representing 25% of the earth’s population and a 362% growth in use since 2000.³² Also in 2009, there were more than 900 million social network users, an increase of 25% since just 2008.³³ Whereas phone service and telegraph transmissions were expensive in the past, Skype is free to anyone with a computer and an Internet connection. By the end of 2012, there were more than six billion mobile subscriptions worldwide, with the greatest increases occurring in developing nations.³⁴

Information is a key power resource historically controlled by the nation-state, but the ability to communicate and access information from anywhere at any time is quickly becoming universal. Beyond access, cellular telephones equipped with camera and video capabilities create an ability to produce information in real-time and rapidly disseminate it globally. Seventy percent of all information generated annually is produced by citizens through e-mail, Internet blogs, and video postings on the worldwide web.³⁵ Moreover, governments struggle to control the content and distribution of the information.³⁶ Essentially, the worldwide web is an ungoverned domain that transcends national boundaries. An impact of the proliferation of information is a dissipation of polarity in world order, thereby diffusing the power of the world’s strongest nations.³⁷

As the power of nation-states diffuses, the power of non-state actors increases. In the information age, non-state actors possess real, tangible, and inexpensive

instruments of power. The expansion of information and communication technology greatly enhances the ability of non-governmental organizations to affect public perception and influence political decisions.³⁸ Political leaders have no choice, but to share the stage with non-state actors in their efforts to influence public opinion.³⁹ Further, it enables terrorist organizations to build a global network.⁴⁰ Terrorist organizations use the Internet as a virtual sanctuary to recruit and train new members, spread their ideology, and coordinate, resource and finance operations.⁴¹ Technology empowers terrorist groups, with little infrastructure requirements, to procure weapons covertly, create virtual training environments, and communicate unencumbered. The global nature of the al Qaeda terrorist network, the internationally coordinated protest against the United States war in Iraq in February 2003, and the multi-nation Arab Spring that started in 2010 are all glaring examples of the impact information and communications technologies have in the strategic environment of the twenty-first century.

24-Hour News Media

While news media has influenced public opinion and domestic politics for centuries, the industry has evolved considerably over the past 20 years. Three nightly network news programs and daily newspapers gave way to continuous media broadcasts on scores of cable news networks, thousands of journalistic websites, and smart phone applications that instantly push headlines to citizens as news occurs. These tremendous increases in frequency and medium of delivery have been accompanied by a corresponding increase in competition between media outlets that now prioritize speed of delivery above accuracy. The result is that political and military leaders of the twenty-first century operate in a transparent environment.⁴² Media sets

and prioritizes the political agenda, establishes the tone for each issue and controls the volume of the debate.⁴³ Journalists and media outlets set the agenda by deciding which issues to call to the public's attention and which issues to ignore.⁴⁴ They choose the lead broadcast stories, headlines above the fold in the daily newspaper and the events pushed to citizens via smart phone applications. Media sets the tone, positive or negative, simply by the headline they attach to the issue.⁴⁵ The following is the headline from the New York Times lead article on August 6, 1945, "First Atomic Bomb Dropped on Japan; Missile is Equal to 20,000 Tons of TNT; Truman Warns Foe of a 'Rain of Ruin'".⁴⁶ An alternative headline could have been, "Over 150,000 Japanese Civilians Indiscriminately Killed by Atomic Bomb." While both headlines are factually accurate, they certainly send opposite messages. The frequency, amount, and duration of reporting on an issue or event set the volume of the discussion. Many citizens get their understanding of the world from headlines and sound bites. Essentially, the media can tell the public what to think about, how to think about it, and how much to care about it.

Because of the media's influence on public opinion, both nation-states and non-state actors carefully factor the media in their approach to achieving their interests, and often compete for positive coverage of their efforts. The Department of Defense acknowledges the competitive media environment and the impact of losing that competition. "In this age of instant communications, actors have become proficient at crafting their accounts of events into a compelling story or narrative. The intent of this narrative is to influence not only the local population but the global community as well."⁴⁷ Losing the narrative competition can have disastrous effects. On March 26, 2006, a United States Special Force unit accompanied an Iraqi Special Forces unit during

Operation Valhalla. The operation was an engagement between United States and Iraqi soldiers on one side and Jaish al-Mahdi insurgents on the other. Valhalla was typical of many operations during 2006. United States and Iraqi forces killed 16 or 17 insurgents, captured 16 others, and destroyed a sizable weapons cache without losing a soldier. The remarkable part of this story is what transpired in the hour after the shooting stopped. By the time United States forces arrived back at their compound, photographs of the killed insurgents were on the Internet with all weapons removed and the insurgents posed as if they were praying when killed. American and Arab media outlets quickly picked up the story. A month-long investigation ensued, during which, the United States' Special Forces unit could not conduct operations.⁴⁸ While the Jaish al-Mahdi, clearly lost the tactical engagement, they were successful operationally in removing a highly trained United States unit from action for 30 days. The media can impact the strategic level as well. As previously discussed, non-governmental organizations leveraged the media to compel the United States decision to commit military forces into Somalia in 1992. Less than a year later, as video footage of deceased United States soldiers being dragged through the streets of Mogadishu was flooding televisions in the United States, America announced her decision to withdraw from Somalia.⁴⁹ Media possess a tremendous ability to influence not only public opinion, but also domestic and international politics as well.

United States Domestic Politics

While national security professionals tend to overstate the volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous nature of the international environment, they understate those same attributes with regard to the United States' domestic political environment. Clausewitz wrote of the paradoxical trinity including the people, the government, and the

military. He believed a theory of war should, "...maintain a balance between these three tendencies, like an object suspended between three magnets."⁵⁰ Achieving such a balance is difficult during a war for limited political objectives. On December 8, 1941, and September 12, 2001, Presidents Roosevelt and Bush, respectively, had no difficulty establishing balance in the trinity. An absence of similar circumstances makes creating the proper balance an arduous task, and regardless, maintaining that balance becomes increasingly difficult throughout the prosecution of a protracted war. Partisan domestic politics combined with an impulsive American public destabilizes the trinitarian balance and adversely impacts strategy formulation and execution.

In the domestic political arena, national interests in limited wars compete with domestic political agendas for resources and commitment, and often limited war interests do not compete well. Whether it was President Johnson's Great Society versus the Vietnam War⁵¹, or President Obama's health care initiative competing with Operation Enduring Freedom⁵², domestic issues tend to receive greater priority than limited war objectives. The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq had no genuine impact on domestic life in the United States.⁵³ Two Presidential administrations, one Republican and one Democrat, decided not to raise taxes to avoid burdening the American population with even the costs of the wars.⁵⁴ The increasingly partisan nature of politics in America, fueled by rapid national election cycles and associated political campaigning prohibits comprehensive strategy formulation. American politics are more parochial today than ever in our nation's history.⁵⁵ Political parties, lobby groups, and non-governmental organizations use the media as a battleground in the fight for positive

public opinion. Often, partisan political debate results in a compromise to the lowest common denominator, certainly not a recipe for winning the nation's wars.

The other key component of the domestic political landscape is the American people. As Bernard Brodie observed, "The capacity of the American public is likely to be precarious, and certainly not to be counted upon if that war is prolonged."⁵⁶ The American public has a long history of intolerance for extended wars, particularly limited wars. Many scholars, national security analysts, and even United States' enemies contend that this intolerance stems from an American public aversion to casualties.⁵⁷ Essentially, the theory is that the American public will tolerate a certain number of casualties, after which, public support for the war effort will erode. Other scholars, further postulate that the number of casualties the public is willing to accept is directly proportional to the value of the national interest at stake.⁵⁸ These scholars view Somalia and Vietnam as wars conducted for marginal national interests, and therefore, public tolerance for casualties was low. Conversely, World War II and Afghanistan represented survival interests for the United States, making the American public's tolerance much higher. Still another school of thought, and one that ultimately may be more accurate, is that the American public's tolerance level for casualties is proportional to the perceived probability of the United States winning the war effort.⁵⁹ In other words, the American people are not casualty averse; they are averse to losing. While public support did wane with regard to Korea and Vietnam as casualties grew, levels of public support aligned more closely with perceptions of winning and losing.⁶⁰ Public support for the war in Iraq followed a similar pattern.⁶¹ In the total wars the United States has fought, while few in number, the military pursued clear political objectives with few, in any, limitations on the

ways and means available to achieve those objectives, and the result was always victory. In this era of transparency, political objectives in limited wars are most often vague, and many prove elusive to the use of military power. Domestic agendas, partisan politics, and a variety of non-state actors directly and indirectly impose limitations on the ways and means available to achieve those elusive objectives. Under these contemporary conditions, military campaigns often protract, and the perceived probability of winning varies over time, creating imbalance between the people, the government, and the military. As Sun Tzu warned centuries ago, “For there has never been a protracted war from which a country has benefited.”⁶² The United States is no exception.

Limited political objectives, rising power of non-state actors, proliferation of information and communications technology, 24-hour news media, and United States domestic politics combine to create a unique character of twenty-first century war that differs greatly in complexity from previous eras. As Clausewitz succinctly stated, “War is thus an act of force to compel our enemy to do our will.”⁶³ In the contemporary security environment, compelling the enemy to do our will must be accomplished in the midst of a transparent, sophisticated, interconnected system of state and non-state actors, each with their own interests and objectives. Seminal international relations theorist Hans J. Morgenthau stated, “Political power is a psychological relation between those who exercise it and those over whom it is exercised.”⁶⁴ In the twenty-first century, political power is diffused amongst numerous actors. While the United States possess the greatest military power in the world, in a war for limited objectives, that military power is restrained and the restraints inhibit effective translation of policy into military strategy.

More often than not, the result is a protracted war in which public support parallels media assessments of whether the United States is winning or losing. Seldom does the United States fully achieve her national interests at costs commensurate to the value of those interests.

Given the character of twenty-first century war, attainment of national interests requires complete integration of all elements of national power into coherent and comprehensive strategies accompanied by precise execution. Success necessitates whole of government unity of effort and clear, consistent strategic communications. All relevant stakeholders must be addressed. Some actors will have convergent interests that potentially provide leverage; others will have divergent interests and require obstruction. Moreover, strategists must understand plainly the political objectives, the operational environment, and the internally and externally imposed limitations on the application of power to pragmatically balance ends, ways and means and develop a clear conception of conflict termination. Precise execution requires continuous and complete assessments to determine effects of actions taken by friendly, enemy, and neutral actors, progress toward desired end state, and the appropriateness and attainability of the desired end state. The current national security structure at the geographic regional level, created by Cold War era legislation, is incapable of effectively and efficiently achieving foreign policy objectives in this contemporary security environment.

A True Whole of Government Approach

The character of war changed significantly after World War II because of the advent of nuclear weapons and the bipolar balance of power that ensued. The National Security Act of 1947, recognizing the increased scope of the United States' global

interests and responsibilities, created the National Security Council to assist the President with respect to the integration of domestic, foreign, and military policies relating to national security, and to increase effective cooperation between departments.⁶⁵ The primary purpose of the Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986, in the wake of several ineffective military operations, was to improve integration between the military services. Conditions exist today that are similar to those that stimulated both of these landmark legislative initiatives. Globalization of the world economy and the dramatic rise of non-state actors have increased the scope of United States' national interests. Furthermore, seams, not between the military services but between departments and agencies, are preventing the effective application of national power. As then Secretary of Defense, Robert Gates remarked, "In the Afghanistan and Iraq campaigns, one of the most important lessons...relearned is that military success is not sufficient...These so-called soft capabilities along with military power are indispensable to any lasting success, indeed, to victory itself as Clausewitz understood it, which is achieving a political objective."⁶⁶ Government structure for foreign policy unity of effort exists at the national level with the National Security Council and at the bi-lateral level through ambassador led country teams. No corresponding organization exists at the regional level.

All Geographic Combatant Commands recognize the absolute necessity of a whole of government approach and have made significant efforts over the past decades to affect such an approach.⁶⁷ They have all established some form of a Joint Interagency Coordination Group. These groups have evolved and improved since their creation in 2001, but they are still insufficient to meet the demands of the contemporary

character of war. Department and agency participation is voluntary, significant information sharing problems exist, and interagency representatives lack decision-making authority.⁶⁸ Even if these problems were adequately addressed, the military would continue to dictate the discourse.⁶⁹ Joint Interagency Coordination Groups are not the answer. The military, by design, is not and should not be the lead for regional foreign policy implementation, but because of the Geographic Combatant Command's overwhelming resources and capabilities and a corresponding lack of the same in the State Department, the military dominates in the regional foreign policy arena. The Geographic Combatant Commander is the President's defacto regional representative, often viewed as more important and influential than country ambassadors.⁷⁰ In February, 2001, the United States Commission on National Security/21st Century, labeling the Department of State as a, "...crippled institution...",⁷¹ recommended an institutional redesign of the national security structure to, "...integrate more effectively the many diverse strands of policy that underpin U.S. national security in a new era..."⁷²

The character of warfare in this new era necessitates government reorganization at the regional level. A true whole of government approach requires a true whole of government organization. It is time for a twenty-first century national security act that creates civilian led, regional government headquarters with representation similar to that of the National Security Council and regionally tailored to implement United States' foreign policy interests in their respective regions. The leader of the headquarters, perhaps a regional ambassador, should be presidentially appointed and congressionally confirmed. The regional ambassador should be advised by the Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense and other cabinet members as required, but should report directly

to the President through the National Security Council. All government personnel operating within the region, including Geographic Combatant Commands and country teams, should be subordinate to the regional ambassador. A regionally focused, whole of government headquarters will facilitate unity of effort, improve strategic communications, and better translate policy into coherent strategy that integrates all elements of national power at the regional level. This regional government headquarters will encompass the diverse cultural and political perspectives and expertise Geographic Combatant Commands are searching for today. The result will be improved understanding of the environment, the relevant actors, and the potential outcomes of United States actions. Additionally, such a restructuring will reestablish the primacy of civilian control of foreign policy.

There are several arguments against implementing this proposed restructuring. First, Department of State and Department of Defense use differing boundaries to define the regions of the world. Both views have merit, but a compromise is achievable. Second, each department and agency possesses its own unique culture that will prevent unity of effort. The same was said of the military services in the 1980s. The military services maintain their distinct cultures today but also easily operate in a joint environment. Third, there are substantial legislative hurdles to overcome. A new national security act would be contentious, as would modifications to the Unified Command Plan and Title 10, but Congress recognizes the significance of the problem. As former Representative Geoff Davis stated, “National Security organizational reform is of vital importance to our nation.”⁷³ Fourth, Departments and agencies outside the Department of Defense lack the capacity to contribute broadly at a regional level. This

argument highlights a glaring problem the United States faces today in Afghanistan. Increasing the capacity of Department of State and others, likely at the expense of the Department of Defense, would be essential to the creation of regional whole of government headquarters, and thereby would address one of today's biggest challenges. Last, enacting a major governmental restructuring such as this would be expensive. While no government restructuring is without expense, it pales in comparison to the costs of pursuing national interests with a regional structure incapable of effectively integrating all the instruments of national power. Many of these arguments are similar to those heard in 1947 and 1986. Fortunately for the United States, congressional leaders of those times had the foresight to recognize the need for change.

A civilian-led regional headquarters will facilitate the elusive *whole of government* approach Combatant Commanders seek today. It innately will include the key competencies for successful conflict termination: early and continuous interagency planning, development of achievable objectives and end states, and unity of effort.⁷⁴ A regional interagency headquarters will provide the structure necessary to develop feasible, acceptable, and suitable solutions to the nation's foreign policy problems. Moreover, it provides a framework for the integration and synchronization of all elements of national power that will increase effectiveness and efficiency in United States foreign policy implementation through the fog generated by the character of modern war. The world is a much different place than it was just 60 years ago. The notion that today's strategic environment is significantly more complex than that of the past stems from a lack of appreciation for the character of twenty-first century warfare,

underscored by awkward attempts to pursue national interests through a national security organization that was established more than six decades ago. As Winston Churchill observed, “To improve is to change; to be perfect is to change often.”⁷⁵ The character of war has changed. It is time for the United States government to change accordingly.

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