

U.S. NATIONAL SECURITY

1983 AND BEYOND

THE FIRST QUESTION

DO WE HAVE
AN ORGANIZED THINKING PROCESS
FOR ENSURING THAT WE CAN PREVAIL
IN THE
GLOBAL CONFLICT ENVIRONMENT?

7/20/83

THE CENTRAL QUESTIONS

1. There is the technical question of whether the current U.S. defense program will in fact result in the "rearming of America" as intended.

- Are we budgeting effectively enough?
- Are we making a wise choice of weapons systems, i.e., systems that will work in combat?
- Will the mood of the Congress support the program in view of its uncertainties over the weapons system mix and the budget related thereto?
- Does our planning and budgeting inspire the kind of confidence that will sustain continued popular support?

2. There is the strategic question of whether the current U.S. defense program, even if achieved, will result in a case of rearming America for the wrong kind of war.

- Are we unconsciously preparing ourselves for a classical World War I and II type of nuclear or conventional war of attrition when other approaches may be more applicable?

- Rather than a war with a major power, is the probability higher that we may be faced with an unending series of guerrilla type conflagrations for which we are ill-prepared?

3. There is the historical question of whether an increase in U.S. defense forces by itself will be the decisive factor in the outcome of the current global conflict.

- Are we generating the moral and mental resources that are a necessary prelude to the effective use of physical resources?
- In perspective, can we say we have been successful in applying our military component of physical resources to the problems we have faced in the global environment?
- Have we demonstrated our ability as a nation to meet the challenges posed by the global conflict environment in a way that increases the probability of attaining our goals or are we operating under illusions that detract from that ability?
- Why have we conditioned ourselves to respond to global incidents with the use of our own

armed forces without developing an organized process for engaging others to be more responsive and successful in meeting their own as well as our challenges?

EXPOSITION

A long-term and in-depth examination of the way the United States prepares its armed forces to prevail under combat conditions has progressed to the point where members of Congress in increasing numbers are beginning to understand some of its salient features and are taking actions accordingly.

This particular examination is almost unbelievably broad in scope, ranging as it does from conceptions of how individuals behave under combat conditions to what kind of weapons are best suited under these conditions to how the combination of men and weapons should be employed under combat conditions to how the Congressional budgetary process and the Pentagon interact to provide the nation with these armed forces and lastly what kind of national military strategy is best suited in the current and foreseeable world environment and how such a strategy should be designed.

This examination is an exceptionally complex affair and because it is so broad in scope and involves many subtle facets, few have the time and inclination to probe its depths. Most executive branch officials and those officials appointed by them observe only small parts of the analysis at any one time. They tend to draw inaccurate conclusions about these parts because they do not appreciate the whole to which the parts relate. These officials have not been exposed either by their own choice or

through oversight to the details and relationships associated with determining the validity of the alternatives offered by the new examination.

The problem of official perceptions is compounded because the broad outlines of any particular defense program become fixed as a result of interactions between defense advisors of any incoming administration, the Pentagon hierarchy, and key members of Congress well in advance of the same officials taking office. Inertia impells events in a direction that becomes increasingly difficult to change as time progresses. No one has the incentive to seriously examine the consequences of the agreed upon direction, for the political repercussions of an reexamination, if handled badly, can be significant to the extent of adversely affecting the outcome of the next election. The path in a different direction, while perhaps more advantageous from a national security and political standpoint, is strewn with land mines and only a fearless few will tread it.

The difference of opinion over the broad outlines of the current defense program as periodically reflected in the public press and in the Congress is in reality a manifestation of a heritage. That heritage is the memory of the Korean stalemate, the Vietnam disaster, and other obvious failures of American military operations. It involves a very subtle question of

whether, in the light of this past performance, America has been prepared institutionally and conditioned mentally to lose and if so, what changes must be made for America to win the next round. This particular question is addressed in public only in an oblique way. The substance is closer to the questions of whether the nation is in fact being armed and prepared for success in war and whether it will be rearmed properly to meet the future demands of conflict without anyone knowing exactly what the future holds.

This said, the matter moves into the realm of the nation's grand strategic plan for its global behavior in the face of hostile forces. It becomes a matter of U.S. global strategy, both short and long term. The reason is that the general condition of America's armed forces is a major factor in the overall strategic equation. If there is doubt about this readiness, then provisions must be made elsewhere to compensate for it. Perhaps it is time to consider other provisions regardless of the state of America's armed forces.

While not directly related to the main purpose of this paper, it may be worthwhile to consider at this point that as a compensating alternative, there is a conception of a U.S. global strategy that has as its central theme the avoidance of any pre-conditioned mental commitment to the use of American armed forces in the global conflict environment except as a last resort and

in extremis only. This conception has as its basis, a sort of philosophical outlook related to the conservation of America's physical resources. Simply stated, its purpose would be to redirect American efforts toward preparing others to function more effectively in the global conflict environment as a way to avoid direct American involvement.

This conception also has its roots in the memory of the Korean stalemate and the Vietnam disaster, for in the last analysis America became involved in these two wars because in each case the side we supported was not appropriately helped by us to become equipped, either morally, mentally, or physically, to cope with the hostile forces with which they became engaged. As a result, America chose to engage its own forces as a direct means, to prevent hostile forces from prevailing. In stark reality, such an engagement of American armed forces was an admission of our failure to accomplish our stated goal. Recent events in El Salvador tend to reflect this same flavor of failure at an early stage.

America, of course, would be in a much better condition to prevail in the world if it managed to improve both its ability to project an attractive theme to the world and to improve the ability of its allies, friends and other targets of hostility to cope with conflict without the direct engagement of American armed forces, while concurrently bringing its own forces to a state of peak performance.

BACKGROUND

What most Executive branch officials now perceive as almost a completely unwarranted "defense critique" directed at them, was in reality initiated many years ago by an informal group of former Department of Defense officials and retired military officers who had become concerned over our Vietnam disaster and the implications it had on the future performance of America's armed forces under combat conditions.

These patriotic Americans had become tired of America's losing; not only in Vietnam but in other incidents around the world since then. Their goal was to improve America's ability to cope with conflict and to win at least once in a while.

The advent of the Reagan Administration and its announced goal of rearming America gave this group renewed hope that the problems they perceived would soon be corrected and they accelerated their efforts in early 1981 to complete their analysis. They soon began to realize that the Pentagon hierarchy remained unchanged in its attitudes of "business-as-usual" which meant to this group "losing as usual."

A severe morale problem developed when this "defense critique" was virtually ignored by Defense officials. A feeling of genuine frustration set in because of the lack of what they

considered to be a fair hearing for their views. This is the origin of their decision to "go public" as their only available alternative.

The basic nature of this affair is one that might be characterized as an internal conflict between those who share a conservative outlook, where those that consider themselves ignored have managed through persistence and the persuasiveness of their case to enlist a large number of media representatives of all persuasions.

It would seem to be in the national interest to convene a "peace conference" between these contending factions. This could take the form of a quiet and informal exploration of the differing concepts and alternative actions that are involved, bearing in mind that underlying this internal conflict is a differing conception of what a sound and proper U.S. military strategy should be for the foreseeable future. This "peace conference" approach should involve the person or persons best qualified to explain the strategy/resource/program interface of the current defense program.

The creative spirit that has guided the long-term and in-depth examination of the way the United States prepares its armed forces to prevail under combat conditions has done so with a unique frame of reference. It includes conceptions only partly

reflected in the now "best selling" book In Search of Excellence. This unparalleled effort has been accomplished in an entrepreneurial spirit, the nature of which is reflected in Tracy G. Herrick's recent article "The Coming Decline of Social Democracy." In that article, he reminds us that entrepreneurs are normally aggressive people not often regarded as being important by officials who tend to dislike them because they are often disrespectful of established authority and yet "governments now need entrepreneurs for their survival."

The scope of thinking involved is reflected in a number of books and documents which few have read. Lost too is an understanding of their relationships or what they all mean when taken together. A brief sketch of these works follows, together with a summary of the central theme which unifies them. This brief sketch is entitled "A Look at U.S. National Security Within the Sun Tzu Format" because of all the strategic thinkers through the run of history, Sun Tzu seems to have best withstood the test of time.

A LOOK AT U.S. NATIONAL SECURITY
WITHIN THE SUN TZU FORMAT

I. KNOW YOURSELF:

NATIONAL DEFENSE, by James Fallows -- Explains why we do not produce effective fighting forces that could win a war.

U.S. DEFENSE PLANNING: A CRITIQUE, by John M. Collins -- Explains the weaknesses of U.S. defense planning over a span of thirty years.

PLANS/REALITY MISMATCH, by Franklin C. Spinney -- Shows that we don't know ourselves well enough to budget for and produce effective fighting forces. ("effective" defined here the same way as the Defense Department would)

MORE BUCKS, LESS BANG: HOW THE PENTAGON BUYS INEFFECTIVE WEAPONS, edited by Dina Rasor -- Demonstrates the results of spending for defense without a sound intellectual framework with which to direct it.

II. KNOW YOUR ENEMY:

THE THREAT: INSIDE THE SOVIET MILITARY MACHINE, by Andrew Cockburn -- Raises the suspicion that we do not really know the enemy. What we think we know is some exaggerated vision of a "Super Soviet."

WEAPONS AND TACTICS OF THE SOVIET ARMY, by David C. Isby -- A well rounded presentation of the Soviet Army which stands in stark contrast to the officially accepted publication, Soviet Military Power.

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III. SOME OTHER RELATED DOCUMENTS TO SUPPORT THE VIEW THAT WE DON'T KNOW OURSELVES OR OUR ENEMY THAT WELL:

- PATTERNS OF CONFLICT
- ORGANIC DESIGN FOR COMMAND AND CONTROL (C³)
- AFFORDABLE ACQUISITION APPROACH (A³)
- VISTA 1999

IV. EXPLANATION:

What is at the base of the prevailing pathology in our way of thinking that creates the problems these authors have uncovered? Basically, we currently do not fully understand what the building blocks of combat power are -- which means we can't create it for ourselves or see it in others. It also means that we have a "substitute" hierarchy; in other words, a faulty system of priorities. Our "substitute" hierarchy consists of the following in order of importance:

EQUIPMENT -- It tends to be designed with an inappropriate understanding of the actual conditions of combat and more for the abstract environment of the laboratory. It seems to be the central focus of our activity, training, and planning.

IDEAS -- Combat is conceived in a mechanistic way and "optimized" to exploit the engineering excellence of what we think is our most important element, hardware. The zenith of thought here is attrition warfare.

PEOPLE -- These tend to be relegated almost to an afterthought. They "man equipment" and as just another part in a large machine, they are treated as so many spare as well as replaceable parts.

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These authors have found this "substitute" hierarchy in both our own country and the Soviet Union. And they have shown from the standpoint of success in combat the undesirable effects of these ideas. But what is their alternative way of looking at the problem: In their view a proper hierarchy consists of the following in order of importance:

PEOPLE -- because people fight wars. Human strengths and weaknesses -- character, mind, spirit, stamina, ingenuity, and skill -- form the basis for any sound military evaluation. And perhaps the most important element is the cohesion created by mutual trust and confidence between and among leaders and followers. These all important bonds are based on truth.

IDEAS -- about combat that are directly related to conflict between people and organizations of human beings.

EQUIPMENT -- its design driven by an appreciation of the needs of people involved in conflict, armed or otherwise, to prevail in actual combat.