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—Billions for Defense—

R. James Woolsey

A New Kind Of Reformer

The nature of the national defense issue has now changed. For the last number of years, our post-Vietnam grumpiness about defense spending, a massive Soviet buildup and the Carter administration's policy of unreal growth have made it necessary to demonstrate the need for adequate defense budgets—to improve readiness, manpower quality and stockpiles of existing weapons. The awakening has now occurred. For the time being, on to the next set of problems.

Are we in for geometric increases in defense spending in the years to come? Do we have to keep buying large tanks, nuclear aircraft carriers and the rest until we can overwhelm the Soviets with firepower? Is there enough money, enough commitment, in American society for us to defend ourselves this way over the long run?

Since the bipartisan consensus about the need for a strong defense came apart in the mid-'60s, the debate has largely been conducted between the rather stylized liberal ("You probably don't need it, but if you have to build it make it cheap") and the conservative ("The generals and admirals tell me that we need it and you can't go wrong with them") views. Now, something different is stirring—a new interest in military reform—and it is attracting friendly attention from a surprisingly broad range of thoughtful people who have probably never agreed on much of anything before.

The godfathers of the reform movement are John Boyd, a retired Air Force pilot; Bill Lind, on Sen. Gary Hart's staff; consultant Steven Canby; and one or two others. Their ideas are difficult to summarize, but the key elements are two.

Generalizing from his experiences in dogfighting, Boyd stresses the importance of agility—of being able to modify your own movements faster than an enemy can react to them. Second, the reformers apply this notion to the full range of thinking—strategy, force planning, tactics.

For example, the reformers strongly criticize the Army's current doctrine that emphasizes the role of heavy firepower and the attrition of enemy forces. Far better, they say, to emphasize rapid maneuver and small independent units that can penetrate and disrupt an enemy's forces—much as Guderian did with his *blitzkrieg* against the numerically superior French and British in 1940. To this end, they also stress the importance of experienced and cohesive military units—to exploit opportunities on the battlefield.

For the Navy, the reformers tend to emphasize the importance of being able to modernize a ship's weapons quickly. Thus they often stress the importance of

naval aviation (because you can change a carrier's role rather rapidly by changing the aircraft you put on it); but they want that flexibility for most ships, not just a few big aircraft carriers. Hence they push for the spreading of aircraft to a large number of combatants and for the development of modular weapons and sensors to speed up ship modernization. The Marines are probably the reformers' favorite service right now, for their willingness to experiment with Vertical/Short Take-Off and Landing (V/STOL) aircraft, small maneuverable tanks and innovative tactics.

The reformers' views spring from sources very different from those of most of today's systems analysts, who have provided the intellectual underpinnings of many liberals' thinking on military matters since the McNamara years. (Some early analysts had fire in their bellies, like the reformers, but the fires have mostly been banked.) The reformers emphasize strategy, not mathematical models; bold innovation, not marginal changes; military history, not management. Many systems analysts and liberals are uncomfortable with the reformers' bright-eyed thirst for finding ways actually to win battles and wars. The latter don't talk of "cost-effectiveness" and "mutual deterrence," but—like the ancient Chinese strategist Sun Tzu—of destroying an enemy's strategy, of shattering the mind of the enemy commander.

Nor do the reformers sound like military traditionalists. They are impatient with the slow pace of change in our military and civilian bureaucracies, frustrated by the mechanical handing-on of doctrine from one military generation to the next and scornful of trying to achieve military breakthroughs merely by adding more large, expensive weapons tied to cumbersome logistics.

The reformers certainly do not all agree, and they may well be wrong on some specific issues. But they are beginning to provide an overall approach that is a useful antithesis to the status quo. The synthesis produced by the clash may be better than either the military structure we have today or the specifics of what the reformers propose. They have already won some friendly attention from a surprisingly wide range of observers. Recently, both The New Republic and National Review have published rather favorable articles. The Heritage Foundation has published some of the reformers' materials. Former Carter speech writer Jim Fallows, now of the Atlantic, has written positively about them there and is working on a book on the same subject. Sen. Gary Hart has been an advocate for some time. Also intrigued and strongly supportive are Paul Weyrich, founding father of the new right, and Newt Gingrich, the very bright conservative Republican congressman from Georgia. And Sen. Edward Kennedy has expressed a strong interest in the reformers' views.

Clearly the people across this broad spectrum are not going to agree on everything. But as a result of their efforts, there is at least a chance that John Boyd and his friends have started something—a realization that defense is too important to continue to be a shuttlecock in a private game between the systems analysts and the members of the Army-Navy Club, that it is time to call a halt to our Hatfield-McCoy defense policy feuds of the last 15 years and get busy, together, to find a better way.

The writer, formerly undersecretary of the Navy, practices law in Washington.

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Free To Be Informed?

By Bill Green

An honest and deeply felt disagreement between newsmen covering the Pentagon draws aim on the Freedom of Information Act, which has opened some otherwise closed government files.

Under the FOIA, anyone can request copies of unreleased government documents. While the release process is cumbersome, and reluctant government agencies can engage in tedious delay, the act, on balance, has provided public access to significant information.

Ombudsman

The newsmen's argument started when, in the course of producing a series of articles on the military, Jack Taylor of The Daily Oklahoman discovered that the Army records what it calls after-action reports on reporters' interviews. Public affairs officers prepare these reports, and they contain information on places the reporter visits, officials interviewed, issues raised and, sometimes, comments on reporters.

After Mr. Taylor learned of the reports, he was asked by Investigative Reporters and Editors Inc. to lead a panel discussion on how the Pentagon handles the press.

Once after-action reports are produced, they become government documents and therefore are fair game for requests under the FOIA. So Mr. Taylor requested copies of a number of the reports, all of them on other reporters' interviews.

Reaction from competing reporters has been predictably anguished. John Fialka, who covers the Pentagon for The Washington Star, has become the point man for those who oppose the reports' release.

Mr. Fialka makes some very strong points. If an investigative reporter's interviews are made

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