THE CREEPING IRRELEVANCE OF U.S. FORCE PLANNING

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FOREWORD

The transition from the Cold War to the post-Cold War world has been one from strategic urgency to strategic uncertainty. The very term "post-Cold War world" testifies to an inability to characterize that world in terms other than what it is not.

U.S. force planning, for decades riveted on the prospect of massive conventional and even nuclear operations against a militarily-like adversary, now confronts a strategic environment heavily populated by sub-state threats whose suppression places a premium on preparation for so-called "military operations other than war" (MOOTW).

In this monograph, Jeffrey Record examines what he believes is a half-century-old and continuing recession of large-interstate warfare and, since the World War's demise, the unexpected and often violent disintegration of established states. He then addresses the Department of Defense's persistent planning focus on multiple conventional war scenarios, concluding that this focus on the familiar and comfortable is becoming increasingly irrelevant to a world of small wars and MOOTW.

The author's critical analysis leads him to propose significant and controversial changes in planning standards, force structure, and defense spending. His thought-provoking analyses, conclusions, and recommendations should fuel further discussion of how America's military can best tackle the strategic uncertainties of the post-Cold War world.

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For the Strategic Studies Institute's Ninth Annual Strategy Conference, I was asked to think about the future of national security. Well, I have given the subject considerable thought, and the one item that keeps nagging at me is what I have concluded is the creeping irrelevance of U.S. force planning. I have chosen to elaborate on this topic.

Specifically, I believe that the age of large-scale conventional interstate warfare opened by the French Revolution is drawing to a close, and with it the relevance of Clausewitz's postulation of total war among states. Most future conflict is likely to erupt across ethnic and cultural rather than state boundaries. It is further likely to be predominantly unconventional in character and waged on a far lesser scale than the major interstate wars of the past 2 centuries.

The Department of Defense, however, continues to prepare precisely for big conventional wars, and not for just one at a time but rather for two. Moreover, in its embrace of the Weinberger-Powell Doctrine, substantial military (and congressional) opinion has endorsed Clausewitz's conviction that significant use of military force must always and of necessity engage the entire nation and involve state interests of the first order. In fact, the Weinberger-Powell Doctrine has little relevance in a post-Soviet world in which a modern-day version of imperial policing is likely to consume much of U.S. military energy. The Pentagon, concludes Eliot Cohen, has yet to recognize "the reality of an America that now acts as a global empire, rather than as one of two rival superpowers, or a normal state."[1]

The challenge for the Pentagon is how to adjust doctrine and force structure to a new strategic environment dominated by small wars and military operations other

than war (MOOTW), while at the same time continuing to maintain the conventional military supremacy necessary to discourage major interstate aggression against U.S. security interests. The risk is that of carrying too much Clausewitzian baggage into a neo-Jominian world.

Recession of Large-Scale Interstate Warfare.

Many students of international politics have remarked upon the disappearance of great power warfare since 1945, but there is little agreement on either the causes or the durability of this stunning phenomenon. What is clear is that the scope and incidence of large-scale interstate warfare has sharply—and unexpectedly—declined over the past half-century, and that there are no impressive portents of its sustained re-eruption in the near future.

My own view is that big conventional wars have already become exceptional and will become even more so, though not vanish altogether, for reasons rooted in fundamental changes in the international political system. Indeed, large-scale interstate warfare is historically a relatively recent phenomenon. The nation-state we recognize today came of age only in the middle of the 17th century. It was not until the end of the 18th century that a fully mobilized "nation in arms" appeared, and the marriage of that nation to the technologies made available by the Industrial Revolution did not take place until the latter half of the 19th century. Only in the 20th century has the reality or threat of total war dominated the international political system.

But that threat vanished with the Cold War's demise, itself only one of several reasons to believe in big conventional warfare's growing exceptionality. Primary among those reasons has been the apparent disappearance of war within the community of advanced industrial states—the very states responsible for most of the world's war carnage from the 1870-71 Franco-Prussian War through the Japanese surrender in 1945. Growing international economic interdependence, war's deglorification,

the presence of nuclear weapons, and spreading democratization, all have been cited as explanations for the absence of war among industrial states since 1945.[2] Each appears to have merit. Certainly, the trans-Atlantic democracies, growing in number, do seem strongly averse to making war upon one another. This suggests that the spread of democratic political institutions, not just in Europe but also in East Asia and Latin America, will serve ultimately to suppress interstate war.

If the pacification of Europe and the rest of the world's industrial community has affected the incidence of large-scale interstate conventional warfare, so too has the West's demonstrated success in waging it. War may have abated within the Western world, but it has persisted within the non-Western world, and between Western and non-Western states. Yet attempts by non-Western states to defeat Western adversaries *on conventional military terms* have almost always failed because of the presence of non-Western cultural and other barriers to conventional military success.[3] Saddam Hussein may be one of the last non-Western autocrats to believe he could beat the West at its own military game. When contemplating war with the United States during the Gulf crisis on 1990-91, he clearly made the mistake (as did more than a few American defense analysts) of assuming that Iraq's relatively successful military performance against Iran had a significant bearing on how the Iraqi military would perform against the United States and its Coalition allies. In fact, the instructive referent experience was not the slaughter of Iranian teenagers in the swamps outside Basra, but rather the Arab-Israeli Wars, which demonstrated the futility of Arab attempts to best the Israelis in conventional combat.[4] Saddam was simply slower to learn than others; long before 1990, many Arab leaders had come to the conclusion—reaffirmed by the Gulf War—that pursuit of conventional military victory over Western adversaries was a hopeless and costly enterprise, and therefore that unconventional alternatives should be examined. These alternatives

include continued search for deliverable weapons of mass destruction. They also include adoption of cunning political strategy that isolates the United States from its original Gulf War coalition allies, while at the same time provoking indecisive U.S. military responses that in turn create Third World sympathy for Iraq while advertising American lack of resolve.

Asian communists had opted for unconventionality in the first half of the 20th century. In China and Indochina they perfected highly effective protracted guerrilla warfare responses to Western or Western-backed indigenous conventional military superiority.[5] To be sure, revolutionary war as practiced by Mao in China and Giap in Indochina is not a viable option for those who wish to damage Western interests in the Middle East, but such alternatives as terrorism and weapons of mass destruction are credible. It is no coincidence that the attractiveness of both to Islamic states and groups hostile to the West has increased in the wake of each Arab conventional military defeat. Even before the lopsided Coalition victory over Iraq in 1991, Libya, Syria, Iran, and Iraq itself were investing heavily in state-sponsored terrorist enterprises and seeking to acquire nuclear, chemical, and bacteriological weapons, the appeal of which could only increase yet again in the wake of DESERT STORM.[6] The "world's fourth largest army" proved less effective against U.S. forces in the Gulf in 1991 than did Mohamed Faraah Aideed's relative few, poorly equipped, and doped-up "technicals" in Mogadishu just 3 years later.

Perversely, the West has become the victim of its own conventional military success. Unchallenged mastery of conventional war is driving the competition into asymmetric strategies at both the supra- and sub-conventional levels of warfare, thereby reducing prospects of further big conventional wars between the United States and its non-Western adversaries. This is true even of Russia, whose collapsed conventional military power has, among other things, driven Moscow to renounce its

traditional nuclear policy of no first use. Even China, often identified as the next likely military peer competitor of the United States, was reportedly stunned by DESERT STORM's display of U.S. conventional military supremacy, especially in precisely the kind of naval and aerospace technologies that China itself would have to master to mount a conventional invasion of Taiwan. Indeed, DESERT STORM's very success makes it highly unlikely that Beijing anytime soon would seek any solution to the Taiwan "problem" that would provoke a conventional military response by the United States.[7] (In the case of Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait, it is almost certain that a U.S. military response would have been both politically and militarily denied had Saddam limited his aggression to simply the oil-rich and unpopulated northern half of the country.[8])

Yet another source of big conventional war's growing exceptionality is the substantial global demilitarization (except in the Middle East and East Asia) that continues in the wake of the Cold War's demise. The disappearance of the Warsaw Pact, then the Soviet Union, and then even of a militarily threatening Russia[9] has permitted the United States and its NATO allies to cut national defense budgets and military forces by 30 to 50 percent. Indeed, NATO is still so shell-shocked by the Soviet Union's peaceful dissolution that it can think (if "think" is the proper word) of nothing better to do than *expand* its membership into Central Europe.[10]

Attending cuts in forces has been widespread abandonment of conscription and, alternatively, reduction in the duration of involuntary military service. Mass conscripted armies were the foundation of large-scale conventional warfare since the French Revolution initiated conscription on behalf of the state. They are now being jettisoned in the West because they have become both strategic and economic liabilities in an era of super-high-technology conventional warfare that can be performed effectively only by professional soldiers. Even the French, who for 2 centuries have associated conscription with the glory of France, have

announced plans to end the draft. Russian military leaders, impressed by the performance of the All-Voluntary Force against a mass conscripted Soviet-model Iraqi army, also have conceded the superiority of professional over conscripted armies. President Boris Yeltsin has committed himself to ending conscription by 2005, although creation of an effective professional Russian army seems unaffordable for the foreseeable future.[11]

To be sure, the disappearance of Cold War and Arab-Israeli conventional military confrontations has not been complete. By far the most worrisome remaining confrontation is in Korea, where a politically desperate communist regime continues to field a large and genuine conventional military threat to South Korea. The prospect of another Korean War is a legitimate "major theater war" contingency for U.S. military planners.

Another Cold War confrontation that has in fact intensified in recent years, and that in 1960 occasioned the largest display of U.S. naval force in East Asia since the Vietnam War, is the stand-off across the Taiwan Strait between communist and non-communist China. Yet the probable nature of a trans-Strait war and its potential demands on U.S. conventional military power are far from clear. For now, a successful amphibious invasion of Taiwan across the Strait is simply beyond China's military capacity. Even in the future such an invasion may in any event be deterrable, as it was in the 1950s, by a U.S. declaration of resolve attended by deployment of 7th Fleet units to the Strait.[12]

The only remaining Arab-Israeli conventional military confrontation of any consequence is the Syrian-Israeli stand-off. Syria, however, would be foolish to pick a conventional military fight with Israel. Since its Sinai victory of 1956, Israel has never had any genuinely competitive conventional peers in the Middle East, and the Soviet Union's disappearance has deprived Syria of superpower patronage. Moreover, Egypt and Jordan, allies

of Damascus in the October War of 1973, have removed themselves as potential co-belligerents in another war with Israel.

The residual U.S.-Iraqi confrontation in the Persian Gulf is real and tense. It is also the site, along with Korea, that forms the basis of current U.S. force planning's focus on preparation for waging two concurrent major theater wars. Yet, as we shall see, Saddam Hussein's conventional military options in the Gulf are extremely limited. Far more worrisome, as noted, are Iraq's continued pursuit of weapons of mass destruction, especially bacteriological weapons, and Saddam's success in stripping the United States of international support for military action to enforce the U.N. inspection regime in Iraq.

In sum, though conventional military power has hardly disappeared, the necessary ingredients for large-scale conventional warfare among states are receding. Among the community of industrial states, especially the market democracies, war is disappearing as a means of resolving political disputes. The West's demonstrated mastery of modern conventional warfare has eliminated non-Western willingness to challenge Western states on conventional military terms. Last but hardly least, the Soviet Union's disappearance has all but terminated (except on the Korean peninsula) the global East-West military confrontation that dominated the international political system during the Cold War's four decades.

The evidence to date points strongly to the end of a military era that began with the French Revolution, and to the beginning of an era characterized in part by a return to small wars and lesser military enterprises conducted by professional armies on behalf of discrete political objectives. This conclusion is tentative, and certainly should not be taken as a judgment that that there will never be another big conventional war. Another Indo-Pakistani War certainly cannot be ruled out. East Asia is arming, although the spectacular economic melt-down of several East Asian

states in 1997-98 has torpedoed their defense budgets. East Asia also lacks a dominant state or collective security organization to enforce or maintain peace among its often hostile major powers. And if there is one certainty in international politics, it is the persistence of miscalculation.

But the conclusion does suggest a growing improbability of further large-scale conventional wars for the United States, notwithstanding the possible emergence of a military peer competitor by the middle of the 21st century. Unfortunately, the term "peer" remains ill-defined in most of the literature on the subject.[13] If it means a power capable, as was the Soviet Union only in the last decade-and-a-half of the Cold War, of challenging U.S. security interests on a global basis across both the nuclear and conventional spectrums of warfare, then the United States has nothing to worry about for any meaningful length of force planning time. The same judgment applies to a military peer competitor defined as a power competitive in the revolution in military affairs (RMA) technologies. The depth and breadth of the U.S. lead in these technologies is, and for the foreseeable future likely to remain, insurmountable.[14] If the term means an ability to challenge U.S. interests at the regional level, then it confusingly equates North Korea and Iraq, among other states, with the United States. And if it means simply an ability to harm the United States and its interests, then it encompasses any homegrown or foreign terrorist.

The claim that China will emerge as America's next military peer competitor (and accordingly that we should begin "containing" Beijing now) is monumentally premature, and its very advancement risks becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy.[15] It assumes on China's part, three or four decades hence, a degree of hostility and measure of imperial ambition that is simply not predictable. It also assumes, in China, continued autocracy, peaceful political succession, national unity, and economic growth rates on the order of those sustained in the present decade. It ignores the great asymmetry of Chinese and U.S. military power in

Asia as well as long-standing U.S. strategic aversion, reinforced by the Vietnam War, to participating in a large war on the Asian mainland. Any Chinese military attempt to overthrow U.S. interests in East Asia would require mastery of modern air and naval power—the two items in which the Chinese military is most deficient.[16] A final observation on China also applies to the prospect of a militarily resurgent Russia: the emergence of either as a hostile state capable of challenging the U.S. strategic position in East Asia and Europe, respectively, would require a decade or more of visible effort, thus affording the United States ample warning time to respond.[17]

The New World Mess.

The post-Cold War era is almost a decade old, and evidence mounts that the U.S. military's professional agenda for the foreseeable future will be dominated by small wars and military operations other than war (MOOTW). It is not just that sources of big conventional wars for the United States are drying up; the demand for small wars and MOOTW is growing. The defining international political characteristics of the post-Cold War era are the disappearance of all but one great power, and the accelerated and often violent disintegration of multi-national/ethnic/tribal states (including the Soviet Union)[18] which has prompted an unprecedented level of U.S. and other intervention in what amount to foreign civil conflicts. As Philippe Delmas has astutely noted, the primary source of conflict is no longer the *strength* of states and their aggression from the right (fascism) or the left (communism). Rather, it is the *weakness* of failed states, such as Lebanon, Liberia, Ethiopia, Cambodia, Yugoslavia, Rwanda, and Burundi.[19] MOOTW, especially "peace" operations—not war proper—have consumed significant U.S. military energy since the Gulf War, and there is every reason to believe they will do so for the foreseeable future. Intrastate and predominantly unconventional conflict is displacing large-scale interstate warfare.

Moreover, neither post-Vietnam nor even post-Cold War presidents have exhibited much allegiance to the Weinberger-Powell Doctrine. On the contrary, with the exception of Jimmy Carter, they have displayed a greater propensity to intervene in foreign civil wars than did their pre-Vietnam predecessors. Reagan sent U.S. forces into Lebanon and Grenada. Bush intervened in Panama, the Philippines, and Somalia. And Clinton has intervened in Haiti and Bosnia. In none of these instances were fundamental U.S. security interests at stake or was a White House full-court press mounted to mobilize congressional and public opinion on behalf of intervention.

To complicate the picture even further, propensity for intervention seems to be accompanied by an unwillingness—courtesy of Weinberger-Powell—to address the causes, as opposed to the symptoms, of the crises prompting military intervention. This is particularly true with respect to intervention in failed states. "What these societies need is internal peace followed by the construction of institutions in which the rule of law rather than the rule of the gun prevails," observes Michael Ignatieff. But "this is work that is totally ill-suited to the post-Cold War style of instant intervention and quick exit."[20] Preoccupation with departure deadlines, exit strategies, and mission minimization has served to vitiate the potential long-term political impact of U.S. military intervention. Even in the case of the Gulf War, the United States, still victimized by the Vietnam "syndrome," pulled its punches when it came to addressing the source of the problem (the Saddam Hussein regime in Iraq) as opposed to one of its symptoms (Iraq's invasion of Kuwait).[21] Repetition of politically sterile military interventions not only suggests that such interventions are motivated more by desire to be *seen* to be doing something rather than concern that that "something" actually makes a lasting difference. Repeated failure to follow through politically (e.g., in Iraq, Somalia, Haiti, and so far in Bosnia) also invites return engagements in the same places. (The Gulf War never really ended; since 1991,

the United States has twice struck targets in Iraq, and in February 1998 came close to launching a several-day intensive air campaign against suspected weapons of mass destruction sites and Republican Guard units.)

MOOTW, of course, are hardly new to the U.S. military,[22] but the post-Cold War explosion of U.S. participation in overseas peace-enforcement operations is unprecedented. Participation in such operations was probably an inevitable companion to the emergence of the United States as the sole remaining great power. Indeed, today's peace-enforcement operations have precedence in the dedication of British military and local surrogate forces primarily to imperial policing operations during the 19th century, when Britain faced no major continental or maritime adversary.

Existing and potential new demands on U.S. military power encompass not only peace-enforcement operations, which have a high political content and call for exceptionally restrained use of force. They also include punitive and preventive attacks, nation-building, interdiction, humanitarian and rescue operations, counter-proliferation operations, and homeland defense against and recovery from terrorist or hostile state employment of weapons of mass destruction. Most of these missions require either little in the way of conventional military power or the employment of substantial conventional force in non-traditional (and non-heroic) ways. Many elevate the value of combat support and combat service support above combat itself, which in turn elevates the relative importance of the Reserve *vis-à-vis* Active Components. All are conducted on behalf of finite political objectives and accordingly do not mandate full mobilization of state resources or of public opinion. As such, these operations are far more intellectually comprehensible through Jominian rather than Clausewitzian lenses.

To be sure, "friction," as Clausewitz brilliantly characterized it, is likely to plague military operations as

long as war remains a human endeavor. (Confidence that unfolding RMA technologies will evaporate the "fog of war" is dangerously misplaced.[23]) And Clausewitz's postulation of war as necessarily enaging the full resources of the state, army, and people is certainly descriptive of the titanic Napoleonic Wars in which he participated. But it has diminished relevance to lesser, limited conflicts, and little relevance at all to MOOTW. The supreme irony is that the U.S. military virtually ignored Clausewitz until the last decade or so of the Cold War, and started studying *On War* seriously only as the Clausewitzian era of warfare was drawing to a close. It has finally come to digest Clausewitz at the very moment it needs to be rereading Jomini—and Machiavelli—on the art of war.

Fighting Past Wars.

The course of post-Cold War U.S. force planning, though broadly predictable, is becoming ever more troubling. From the Rainbow 5 War Plan of the late 1930s through the end of the Cold War, American force planners sought to create and maintain forces capable of fighting two separate regional wars simultaneously or a global war in two of more theaters of operations. Such scenarios, admittedly worst case, were not altogether far-fetched. Rainbow 5 correctly anticipated the nightmare of having to wage war simultaneously against Japan in the Pacific and Germany in Europe. The post-World War II emergence of the Soviet Union as America's chief strategic rival and subsequent communization of China raised the prospect of having yet again to wage separate European and Asian wars, a prospect highlighted by Chinese intervention in the Korean War at a time when U.S. forces in Europe offered no credible defense against a Soviet invasion. Later on, as the Soviet Union began to develop genuinely global military capabilities (e.g., a large blue-water navy and long-range air power), U.S. planners could contemplate having to deal with the same enemy in Europe, Asia, and elsewhere. Even China's recruitment as a strategic second against the Soviet Union

did not eliminate the possibility of a Soviet invasion of Europe accompanied by a "half-war" somewhere else. The Vietnam War qualified as such a conflict, and was conducted during its entirety against the backdrop of a Soviet-threatened Europe.

It is becoming increasingly difficult, however, to justify such a multi-war preoccupation in the wake of the Soviet Union's disappearance. The post-Cold War specter of "two nearly simultaneous major regional contingencies" (or "major theater wars" as they are now called) was postulated by both the Bottom-Up Review of 1993 and the Quadrennial Defense Review of March 1997, and defended by Secretary of Defense William Cohen in response to the expressed skepticism of the National Defense Panel Report of December 1997.[24] It is an apparition, however, that hinders sound thought about, and ultimately U.S. military effectiveness in, the post-Cold War strategic environment. To be sure, one can conjure up all sorts of wars in all sorts of places,[25] and it would be foolish to ignore completely the possibility of getting stuck in two of them at the same time. And to be sure, since the end of the Cold War the United States has simultaneously performed two or more MOOTW.

Yet I believe the scenario of the post-Cold War U.S. military being called upon to wage simultaneously two *big conventional* wars, on the order of the Gulf War and a new Korean War, speaks much more to the internal interests of the armed forces than it does to the external strategic environment.[26] I endorse the National Defense Panel's judgment of the two-war construct as a "force-sizing function" and "means of justifying current forces."[27] More specifically, I believe that the two-war scenario: (1) is historically most improbable; (2) ignores the declining incidence and scope of large-scale interstate warfare in general, and the deterioration of the Iraqi and Korean conventional military threats in particular; (3) calls for forces that are unaffordable within current defense budget projections; (4) reflects a preference for the familiar and comfortable at the expense of hard thinking about the

unconventional and unpleasant; (5) encourages adversaries to develop asymmetric threats to U.S. unconventionality; and, (6) pays insufficient attention to MOOTW.

Like the Base Force Concept of 1990, the Bottom-Up Review and Quadrennial Defense Review have come down heavily on the side of preserving as much existing U.S. conventional force structure as possible in the post-Cold War era, and it is much easier to do that with a postulated two-war requirement than with a less demanding scenario. But the two-war threat is simply no longer an intellectually viable construct *within the realm of reasonably acceptable strategic risk*. At no time during the 12 war years of Korea (1950-53), Vietnam (1965-73), and the Gulf crisis (1990-91) did any other adversary with whom the America was not at war choose to stick it to the United States militarily. States almost always go to war for reasons specific in time and place, and not because an adversary already happens to be at war with another state.

Moreover, prospects for U.S. involvement in protracted conventional war against either North Korea or Iraq are considerably more remote than they were in 1950 and 1990, respectively. The North Korean military, though large and capable of inflicting immense damage on Seoul, has little sustainability because of North Korea's economic ruin and because the Pyongyang regime no longer enjoys Russian or Chinese military support. Moreover, South Korea today has, as it did not in 1950, a declared and credible U.S. defense commitment backed by a standing U.S. military presence south of the 38th Parallel. And there is no comparison between the pathetically equipped and trained South Korean paramilitary forces of 1950 and today's large and powerful South Korean conventional forces.

To recognize that North Korea now operates in a markedly more unfavorable strategic and operational environment than it did on the eve of its 1950 invasion of South Korea is not to dismiss the potentially extensive and difficult demands another Korean War could impose on U.S.

conventional military power. I believe those demands could be substantially mitigated, however, by a declared strategy of responding to any future North Korean invasion with prompt nuclear retaliation sufficient to destroy the country and its regime. During the Cold War, the United States had a declaratory nuclear first-use policy both in Europe and Korea; the Cold War remains intact on the Korean peninsula; and if there is any place left in the world today where it still makes very good sense to employ nuclear fire to offset an enemy's numerical superiority on the ground, that place is Korea. Such a nuclear strategy might also strengthen deterrence. Its implementation surely would save American and South Korean lives.

As for Iraq, it is sufficient to note that it, too, faces a far less favorable strategic and operational environment than it did in the past. The Gulf War crippled Iraq militarily, transformed Kuwait into an American military protectorate, and prompted establishment of an aerial occupation regime that effectively guarantees to the United States virtually instant air supremacy in the event of another war. Indeed, it is not Iraq's gutted conventional military power that is the problem, but rather the combination of Saddam's unexpected political survival and mounting evidence of his access to weapons of mass destruction that either the Coalition missed during the Gulf War or whose postwar production has escaped U.N. detection. Further U.S. conventional military action against Iraq is likely to remain episodic and confined to air and missile strikes—hardly a major theater war. (The Gulf War was waged by over 500,000 U.S. military personnel; in contrast, only 30,000 were dispatched to the Gulf in February 1998 to compel Iraqi agreement to resumption of U.N. inspection of suspected weapons of mass destruction sites.)

The most popular criticism of the two-war scenario is that it is resource deficient. This criticism is well-deserved. Not since World War II has the United States maintained standing and readily mobilizable military power adequate to wage two major wars concurrently and successfully.[28]

Retired U.S. Army Colonel Harry Summers, Jr., has correctly observed that the "two-wars nonsense is a continuation of the two-and-a-half and one-and-a-half fandangos of the Cold War," and he believes that by "claiming to be able to do what in fact it is unable to do, the United States is not only bluffing—a most dangerous thing to do—but even worse, is kidding itself into a false sense of security."[29] But the Pentagon insists upon upholding the standard because it constitutes a standing argument for more defense spending; because it fears that formal adoption of a lesser standard would become the starting point for renewed assaults on the defense budget; and because it believes the standard may have some deterrent value.

For the Pentagon, the strongest attraction of the two-big-conventional-wars scenario is its familiarity. These are not MOOTW, but rather "real" wars of the size and kind the Pentagon can and has fought best. They entail not only robust opportunities for traditional heroism but also much greater operational freedom of action than do small wars and MOOTW. Alvin Bernstein has observed that MOOTW "don't resemble the old textbook, cross-border wars our military has always preferred to prepare for," and that they have "the added disadvantage, from the military's point of view, of increasing the role of civilian leaders in shaping military operations."[30] Big conventional wars also entail a measure of conclusiveness than commonly eludes MOOTW. Over 30 years ago, George Kennan commented on the military's understandable love of politically clean and operationally decisive wars. The "precedents of our Civil War . . . and of our participation in the two world wars of this century created not only in the minds of our soldiers and sailors but in the minds of many of our people an unspoken assumption that the normal objective of warfare was the total destruction of the enemy's ability and will to resist and his unconditional surrender," wrote America's most distinguished professional diplomat of the 20th century. "The rest, it was always assumed, was easy. This sort of

victory placed you in a position to command total obedience on the part of the defeated adversary; it thus opened the way to unhindered realization of your political objectives, whatever they might be."[31]

Continued preparation for major conventional warfare is especially important to the U.S. Army, the most Cold War-dependent of all the services in terms of size. Continued significant investment in naval and amphibious power can be justified by virtue of the trans-oceanic separation of the United States from many of its vital interests, and because the world's littorals contain the great majority of potential targets of U.S. military action. Continued significant investment in aerospace power can be justified because of its vitality to both MOOTW as well as big conventional wars, and because it can offer, as it did during the Gulf War, an alternative to incurring excessive casualties on the ground—the political Achilles' Heel of American use of force, especially in MOOTW.

But the only historical justification for a *large* American army has been the prospect of U.S. involvement in a European great-power war. (If anything, U.S. strategic aversion to large ground wars on the Asian mainland actually encourages compensatory investment in naval, air, and amphibious power, an investment which, of course, provided the foundation of imperial Japan's defeat in 1945.) Absent such a prospect, and assuming the very experience of the Vietnam War will bar its repetition, an army sized and structured for big conventional wars will be increasingly difficult to justify as a war-fighting instrument. The disappearance of great-power war in Europe and even the threat of war between the United States and the Soviet Union argues for proportionately greater cuts in army strength than in the other services, an argument strengthened by the historical fact that the army, by virtue of its mission and always larger-than-Marine Corps size, has been the primary source of American combat casualties.

U.S. force planning's continued focus on large-scale conventional war also, as noted, encourages adversaries to develop asymmetric threats to American military conventionality. Simply put, the Pentagon has become so good at the kind of warfare it likes to wage that it has scared most of the potential competition into pursuit of unconventional alternatives. "Future adversaries will have learned from the Gulf War," concludes the National Defense Panel Report,

> and will seek to disable the underlying structures that enable our military operations. Foreign bases and forward-deployed forces will likely be challenged and coalition partners coerced. Critical nodes that enable communications, transportation, deployment, and other means of power projection will be vulnerable. Transnational threats may increase.[32]

These judgments do not constitute an argument for abandoning investment in the maintenance of conventional military supremacy; to do so would encourage the reappearance of conventional military threats on the part of countries now scared off. But these judgments do mandate recognition of the limits of conventional military power in dealing with unconventional military threats—a lesson the United States had to learn in Vietnam and yet again in Beirut and Mogadishu. Big conventional warfare forces are not optimized to perform MOOTW, and preoccupation with major theater wars discourages attention to MOOTW as well as an understanding that, however much the professional U.S. military establishment may be averse to "wasting" time and resources on MOOTW, post-Cold War presidents have displayed no such distaste for them. Significant MOOTW appear to be here to stay for the next decade or two, notwithstanding Harry Summers' happy, pre-Bosnian intervention judgment in 1995 that the "trend toward 'operations other than war' has now begun to fade, and the military has returned to its traditional warfighting focus."[33] (It can in fact be argued U.S. forces in Korea have been performing a MOOTW—enforcing the 1953 armistice—for the past 45 years. The U.S. Army's sole

remaining division on the peninsula has become a Korean contingency-specific division that is unavailable for combat elsewhere.)

Maximizing U.S. Military Effectiveness.

The persistence of U.S. military conventionality in a world of increasingly unconventional military threats does not serve the national interest. There appear to be at least four requirements for elevating American military effectiveness in an era of receding large-scale interstate warfare and expanding small wars and MOOTW. The first is maintenance of U.S. conventional military supremacy over all potential comers. Conventional military threats to U.S. interests are evaporating in part precisely because of that manifest supremacy, and it would be foolish to assume that loss of that supremacy would go unnoticed by potential adversaries. There is, too, the fact that big conventional warfare's recession is no guarantee that another such war will never again cross America's path. Before June 25, 1950, the notion of a 3-year American conventional fight on the Korean peninsula appeared fantastic, as did, before August 2, 1990, the notion of a war with Iraq entailing the dispatch of over half-a-million U.S. troops to the Persian Gulf.

Maintenance of conventional supremacy does not dictate buying large quantities of each and every new high-tech weapons system that comes along; strategic urgency vanished with the Soviet Union, and the United States can be more selective in the choice and timing of large military hardware production commitments. But it does require maintenance of significant conventional military forces as well as robust and unstinting investment in research, development, testing, and integration of RMA and post-RMA technologies.

The second requirement is abandonment of the two-major-theater-war standard and adoption of a one-war-plus standard, the "plus" being a significant and sustained MOOTW on the order of the current Bosnian peace-

enforcement operations. A one-plus standard would bring planning within range of actual capabilities; acknowledge the post-Cold War prominence of MOOTW; and move the defense debate off the sterile starting point of bemoaning the persistent inadequacy of current and planned force structure to fulfill the demands of an increasingly fantastic scenario. All three major theater wars the United States has waged since 1945 depleted U.S. conventional military resources elsewhere to the point of denying the Pentagon an ability to fight, much less win, a simultaneous war of similar proportions. Adoption of a one-plus planning standard should not invite further defense budget cuts because existing and planned forces would still be hard put to do a Korea and Bosnia simultaneously.

The third requirement is for dedicated MOOTW forces. MOOTW are as different from "real" war as are special operations, for which the United States retains dedicated forces under a separate command. To be sure, existing U.S. conventional forces already bring much to the MOOTW table. Among the items they can and have provided MOOTW are logistics support, transport, communications, and surveillance. And in the case of such things as evacuation operations and enforcing "no-fly" zones, only conventional forces can do the job. But conventional ground forces and operational/tactical doctrines are not suitable for peace operations, especially of the enforcement variety. The starting point of rules of engagement for such operations is the imperative of utmost restraint and discrimination in applying force. Firepower is an instrument of last rather than first resort. There is no big enemy to close with and destroy, but rather the presence of threatened civilian populations that must be protected in a way that minimizes collateral damage. Conventional ground force preparation for peace operations accordingly requires major doctrinal and training deprogramming of conventional military habits and reprogramming with the alien tactics, doctrines, and heavy political oversight of peace operations. Needless to say, forces so reprogrammed—commonly manpower

intensive and relatively low-firepower—will not be optimized for big, high-tech conventional conflicts. Nor will they be easily recruited forces. MOOTW involve the performance of mostly non-heroic missions often under conditions of prolonged and severe stress on people and equipment. In the case of peace operations, the satisfaction of a job well done hinges on dramatic events—such as resumption of hostilities—that *don't* happen, that *don't* make the headlines.

Creation of dedicated MOOTW forces will not be easy. Recruiting and retention difficulties may be surmountable only with pay scales and benefits packages greater than those of the "regular" forces. Additionally, because MOOTW draw so heavily upon combat support and combat service support, creation of active duty forces dedicated exclusively to their performance may require the transfer of substantial Reserve Components into permanent active service. The primary intent of Total Force Policy adopted in the early 1970s was to prevent any future president from committing the Pentagon to a major interstate overseas war without having to clear the challenging domestic political hurdle of a substantial reserve mobilization. This objective was satisfied by transferring to the Reserve Components support functions essential to the wartime performance of the active forces, and when the Gulf crisis exploded in August 1990, President Bush did indeed have to mobilize over 200,000 reservists and make the huge associated political investment in mobilizing public and congressional support for DESERT STORM. In contrast, the Total Force Policy has had no discernible impact on restraining presidential commitments to MOOTW, probably because most MOOTW to date have been popular or cheap (in terms of American lives lost) or too small. The transfer of selected MOOTW-critical Reserve Components (e.g., civil affairs and psychological operations units) to permanent active service would probably enhance active force MOOTW effectiveness while at the same time leave behind in the Reserve Components more than sufficient support forces to keep

future presidents sufficiently tethered to the big-war mobilization requirement.

Richard K. Betts objects that dedicated MOOTW forces are impractical because Congress would not likely tolerate creation of significant forces that would not be available for standard conventional military missions but would require increases in defense expenditure. Yet Betts concedes that the only alternatives would be to minimize U.S. commitments to peace operations or accept the higher risk that other missions may come up short.[34] For better or for worse, however, post-Vietnam War and especially post-Cold War presidents have displayed no disposition to minimize peace operations commitments, and it is self-evident that U.S. forces performing peace operations in Bosnia or Somalia or Haiti are not readily available for traditional military operations elsewhere. (U.S. entry into World War I in 1917 compelled President Woodrow Wilson to suspend U.S. Army operations in Mexico against Pancho Villa.)

Which brings me to the fourth requirement for improving U.S. military effectiveness in the post-Cold War world: reversing the continuing slide in defense spending. The need for MOOTW-dedicated forces is but one of a steadily accumulating number of reasons to halt a defense budgetary trend that began in 1985. Greater than planned defense expenditure is required: to fund dangerously deferred conventional force modernization; to thwart an impending manpower recruiting crisis and reverse an extant and worsening manpower retention crisis; to offset the hidden costs (such as wear and tear on aircraft) of ongoing and new MOOTW (U.S. military aircraft have flown more sorties over Iraqi territory below the "no-fly" zones than they did during the Gulf War); to accelerate pursuit of RMA technologies; and to compensate for congressional cowardice in refusing to relieve the Pentagon of excessive and costly infrastructure.[35]

America's burgeoning economy can easily bear the burden of a larger defense budget. Defense spending as a

percentage of gross domestic product has dipped to its lowest point since before the Second World War, and moving from the present level of about 3.5 percent to, say, 4.5 percent of GDP would still leave defense expenditure well below that of the Reagan peak of 6.5 percent (1985) and much below that of average 9-10 percent of the fiscally conservative Eisenhower years. A 4.5-percent investment in defense certainly would pale in comparison to the 14 percent of GDP consumed by the bloated, overpriced, and inefficient health care industry.

The oft-cited fact that the United States today spends more money on defense than do most of its potential adversaries combined is meaningless. None of those adversaries bears anything remotely approaching the global military obligations of the United States. Nor can they hope to enjoy the broad—and costly—measure of conventional military supremacy that has established the United States as the sole remaining superpower.

Maximizing U.S. military effectiveness in the performance of military operations other than war, especially peace enforcement operations, while at the same time keeping America's conventional military powder dry, is a daunting challenge requiring significant force structural and defense budgetary change. Yet the challenge must be mastered because the international political landscape as Americans knew it from their entry into World War I through the end of the Cold War has disappeared. The world now seems to be entering a strategic environment in which the predominant forms of conflict will more closely resemble the European limited wars of the 18th century and British imperial policing operations of the 19th rather than the 20th century's titanic clashes of fully mobilized nation-states.

ENDNOTES

1. Eliot Cohen, "Calling Mr. X," *New Republic,* January 19, 1998, p. 17.

2. Dr. Grant Hammond, a colleague at the Air War College, persuasively adds that until World War I, war was a paying proposition at least for one side.

> You gained sufficient gold, glory, geography, or vindicated your God—and it was worth it. Large-scale interstate warfare in the 20th century is no longer worth it—even for the victors. It simply costs too much. The United States was the exception in both world wars. But the dislocations (economic, political, social, and psychological if you don't win) of Korea, Vietnam, and the unfinished Gulf War have cost more than we bargained for, and we are reluctant to do it again.

The disappearance of war in Europe—the communal strife in Bosnia being the exception that proves the rule—is especially stunning. Since 1500, Europe has enjoyed only 1 century of relative peace (1815-1914). From 1500 to 1800, there was a war going on somewhere in Europe for 270 of those 300 years, and, of course, during the first half of the 20th century, Europe hosted the two most destructive wars in world history.

3. Japan is the major exception. It successfully adopted Western military organizational models and technologies, and turned in impressive conventional military performances in the Russo-Japanese War, and against the Western powers during the first 2 years of World War II.

4. The Algerian War (1954-62) remains the only modern example of a successful Arab war over a Western state, and it is more than coincidental that the National Liberation Front achieved victory via unconventional warfare. The Palestinian *intifada* against Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip also has revealed the limits of Western conventional military power in the Islamic world.

5. Only cultural and professional military arrogance can explain the U.S. political and military leadership's dismissal of France's experience in the First Indochina War (1946-54) as relevant to prospects for American military success there in the Second Indochina War (1964-75). France was defeated in Indochina even though the French enjoyed two major advantages there that the Americans subsequently did not. The French had an intimate knowledge of the country, its people, its culture, and its history; they also fought the war exclusively with superb professional troops. See Chapter 2, "Stakes, Stamina, and Fighting Power," in my *The Wrong War, Why We Lost in Vietnam,* Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1998.

6. Pre-revolutionary Iran's impressive conventional forces were permanently crippled by the revolution's political purging of the officer corps and severance of military ties with the United States. Post-revolutionary Iran has emphasized unconventional responses to U.S. power and influence in Southwest Asia.

7. Some potential indirect military solutions were previewed or threatened during the Taiwan Strait crisis of 1996. They include interference with Taiwanese shipping, threatening military demonstrations just beyond Taiwan's territorial waters, shelling or seizure of Taiwanese islands off China's coast, and sea-borne commando raids against high-value targets inside Taiwan.

8. See my "Defeating DESERT STORM (and Why Saddam Didn't)," *Comparative Strategy*, Vol. 12, 1993, pp. 125-140.

9. The disastrous Russian military performance in Chechnya underscores the disintegration of Russian conventional military effectiveness. As Senator Sam Nunn remarked to me at the time, "The Russians can't even invade their own country, much less anyone else's." See Anatol Lieven, "Disarmed and Dangerous, The Crumbling, Scary Russian Army," *New Republic*, December 22, 1997, pp. 21-23.

10. I believe NATO expansion into former communist Europe is as mindless—and potentially disastrous—an idea as the conviction in 1964-65 that fundamental U.S. security interests were imperiled by the communist insurgency in South Vietnam. NATO should stand pat on its existing membership and treat the Partnership for Peace as a stand-alone vehicle for military cooperation with non-NATO states rather than a waiting room for NATO membership. See "NATO Expansion: The Perils of Strategic Slumming in Europe," in Robert Kennedy and Jeffrey Record, *NATO Enlargement: Two Views*, Atlanta: Center for International Strategy, Technology and Policy, Georgia Institute of Technology, 1997. Also see Howard Baker Jr., Sam Nunn, Brent Scowcroft, and Alton Fry, "NATO: A Debate Recast," *New York Times*, February 4, 1998.

11. Even though the Soviet Union may have devoted to defense as much as 35 percent of its annual gross domestic product during the Cold War, the Soviet military could not indefinitely maintain traditional Russian military gigantism and expect to remain competitive with the United States in the technologies of the so-called "Revolution in Military Affairs." Yet the argument for continued investment in mass prevailed until the emergence of Mikhail Gorbachev, who succeeded in eliminating many of the costly imperial demands on Soviet military power but who failed to thwart the subsequent collapse of the

Soviet/Russian defense budget. The Russians now have the worst of worlds: a nominally conscripted army that they cannot pay or properly equip.

12. Communist China's experience in modern conventional warfare, of which amphibious assault is perhaps its most challenging component, has been entirely vicarious. Moreover, as long as Taiwan maintains potent naval and air defenses, China cannot hope to satisfy amphibious assault's two essential prerequisites: naval and air supremacy in the landing area. China's military options therefore, as noted, seem limited to threatening displays of force aimed at politically intimidating the Taipei government—as was the case in 1996. For the most incisive examination of the 1996 Taiwan Strait crisis, including Beijing's motivations and intentions, see John W. Garver, *Face Off, China, the United States, and Taiwan's Democratization,* Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997.

13. The best definition I have encountered was provided by the London *Economist*, which defined the ingredients of a competitive military peer as long-range military power, efficient foreign policy machinery, public support for a vigorous foreign policy, and material interests abroad. Among potential competitors, China scores highest via this definition. See "The Next Balance of Power," *Economist*, January 3, 1998, pp. 17-19.

14. This judgment is conditioned by two assumptions: first, that sufficient defense budgetary resources will remain available for broad pursuit of RMA technologies, and second, that while future adversaries may achieve competitiveness in selected RMA technologies, they are unlikely to achieve across-the-board competitiveness or match the United States in the ability to integrate RMA technologies.

15. See Robert Kagan, "What China Knows That We Don't, The Case for a New Strategy of Containment," *Weekly Standard*, January 20, 1997, pp. 22-27; and Richard Bernstein and Ross Munro, *The Coming Conflict With China,* New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997.

16. U.S. strategic aversion to involvement in an Asian mainland ground war rests on the assumption that no hostile power could truly dominate East Asia absent control of offshore Japan, Taiwan, the Philippines, Malaysia, and Indonesia.

17. China's growing power and recent aggressiveness in the South China Sea and Taiwan Strait have already provoked closer U.S.-Japanese security ties, a U.S. naval display in the Taiwan Strait, and ASEAN extension of membership to Vietnam. Any future Chinese

attempts to dominate East Asia almost certainly will provoke further efforts to balance Chinese power, not excluding the possibility of a U.S.-Vietnamese alliance. One of the supreme ironies of the Vietnam War is that U.S. intervention in Indochina in the 1960s, though justified widely as a means of containing Chinese communist expansion, actually worked against that objective by keeping Vietnam divided and at war with itself. U.S. strategic interests in Asia in the 1960s would have been better served by promotion of a unified Vietnam *even under communist auspices*. Recognition that national antagonisms within the communist bloc were more powerful than allegiance to a common ideology propelled the Truman administration to provide military assistance to communist Yugoslavia in the late 1940s and the Nixon administration to enlist communist China as a strategic partner against the Soviet Union in the early 1970s. Such recognition—or at least the political courage to act upon it—was lost on the Kennedy and Johnson administrations.

18. The three major states of North America themselves face significant and growing internal challenges to the maintenance of national political and cultural cohesion. It is an even bet that Quebec will eventually leave Canada, an event that could spark the departure of British Columbia. Mammoth political corruption, frightening income disparities, and growing Indian/peasant unrest in the countryside threaten Mexico's too-long-taken-for-granted political stability. In the United States, the (1) disappearance of civil political discourse, (2) erosion of public trust in the integrity and competence of the national government, (3) pollution of public education systems by multi-culturalist agendas, (4) celebration of victimization, and (5) rapid growth of "minority" populations all portend a measure of national disunity that could cripple America's ability to act effectively on the international stage.

19. "Wars today are caused not by the strength of states but by their weakness. The primary problem of security today is not the desire for power or expansion, but rather the breakdown of States." Philippe Delmas, *The Rosy Future of War,* New York: The Free Press, 1995, p. 7.

20. Michael Ignatieff, *The Warrior's Dilemma, Ethnic War and the Modern Conscience,* New York: Metropolitan Books, 1997, p. 105.

21. The haste with which the Bush administration *unilaterally* called off the Gulf War and washed its hands of any further business in Iraq, including promotion of that country's political and economic reconstruction, stripped the Gulf War of any enduring strategic decisiveness. It also led some observers to conclude that "if the United States was determined to fight a terribly destructive war that would generate obligations that the nation either could not or would not fulfill,

then, short of pressing necessity, it ought not have gone to war at all." Robert W. Tucker and David C. Hendrickson, *The Imperial Temptation, The New World Order and America's Purpose,* New York: Council on Foreign Relations Press, 1992, p. 151. Also see my *Hollow Victory, A Contrary View of the Gulf War,* Washington, DC: Brassey's, 1993, especially pp. 155-160.

22. Before World War II, the U.S. military performed many operations other than war, including territorial exploration, canal and road construction, governance of defeated Confederate states, labor unrest suppression, policement of Indian reservations, and operation of the Civilian Conservation Corps.

23. For a superb examination of this topic, see Barry D. Watts, *Clausewitzian Friction and Future War*, McNair Paper 52, Washington, DC: Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University, 1996.

24. See "Cohen's Draft Response to NDP Reasserts Merits of Two-War Approach," *Inside the Pentagon*, December 4, 1997, p. 1.

25. In 1984 I was berated by a noted defense intellectual for dismissing the Bering Strait as a likely avenue of a Soviet invasion of the continental United States. More recently, I learned from a colleague that a hostile India will emerge as America's next strategic rival.

26. Grant Hammond points out that in the three big wars the United States has waged since 1945 (the Korean, Vietnam, and Gulf wars), though radically disparate in time, place, and strategic circumstances, the United States made essentially the same commitment of forces: 500,000-plus men, 6 carrier battlegroups, and 15 fighter wings. Why? Because it is the highest level of mobilization the United States can deploy and sustain without moving to a full and complete World War II-style mobilization.

27. *Transforming Defense, National Security in the 21st Century*, Report of the National Defense Panel, December 1997, pp. ii, 23.

28. For a review of the post-1945 disparities between declared U.S. force planning objectives and available forces, see my *Revising U.S. Military Strategy, Tailoring Means to Ends,* Washington, DC: Brassey's, 1984.

29. Harry Summers, Jr., *The New World Strategy, A Military Policy for America's Future,* New York: Touchstone Books, 1995, pp. 220, 153.

30. Alvin H. Bernstein, "The Truth About Peacekeeping," *Weekly Standard*, September 22, 1997, p. 25.

31. George F. Kennan, *Memoirs 1925-1950,* New York: Pantheon Books, 1967, p. 309.

32. *Transforming Defense*, p. i.

33. Summers, p. 203.

34. Richard K. Betts, *Military Readiness, Concepts, Choices, Consequences*, Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1995, pp. 202-204.

35. I do not mean to suggest that all dollars in the current defense budget are sacrosanct. In addition to wasting money on excessive infrastructure, some analysts wonder if many other dollars are also being squandered on a bloated general officer corps, which remains at Cold War levels notwithstanding U.S. conventional force cuts of 30-40 percent since the Cold War. Additionally, it is far from clear that the perpetuation of no-fly zones in Iraq and the former Yugoslavia is worth their cost in money and pilot and aircraft stress. What would happen if the United States terminated both of them?

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