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by

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Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe, in order to assure the survival and the success of liberty.

—John F. Kennedy
Inaugural Address, 20 January 1961

An observer of today's international scene, reflecting on the current status of "liberty" in much of the world around him, finds it difficult to realize that only 18 years have elapsed since a newly elected President of the United States made the above statement with the acceptance, and even enthusiastic approval, of a large proportion of his audience. Within that relatively short period of time much has happened to alter the perspectives of the US citizenry and their government. The tragedy of Vietnam dealt a shattering blow to those with supreme confidence in the invincibility of the United States and the superiority of the democratic system, and even presumably shook those among us who were ultimately responsible for our untimely withdrawal. The willingness and increasing capacity of the Soviet Union to project power globally, flagrantly, and with impunity, interfering in the internal affairs of emerging nations, has further aggravated the situation. Coming in short order, the oil embargo and energy crisis added another shock and demonstrated all too clearly our vulnerability to resource-related coercion by otherwise internationally insignificant nations. Domestic racial and economic problems have contributed to social fragmentation and led to erosion of confidence in previously unassailable institutions. Our continuing dependence on foreign energy resources and our seeming inability to agree on any national policy or program to reduce this dependence further weaken our international position and contribute to frustration and disillusionment at home. The effect of all of this on the United States' world outlook and strategic posture is made clear by a comparison of President Kennedy's 1961 statement with the following quotation of President Jimmy Carter in 1978:

> However wealthy and powerful the United States may be—however capable of leadership—this power is increasingly relative, the leadership increasingly is in need of being shared.[1]

There is an obvious dichotomy in the picture of a world superpower, inextricably—and even aggressively—involved economically and politically in international affairs, and yet reluctant to support its own interests or those of its allies with more than moral suasion. In the aftermath of Vietnam, the national will and resolve of the United States have been questioned, at least by implication, on a number of occasions.

Lloyd Matthews refers indirectly to a US lack of perseverance, when discussing Vietnam:

> As President Truman said of the fighting in

> Korea, 'Freedom still costs blood.' Let us hope that regardless of where their national interests and means dictate the stand be made—in Asia, in the Hemisphere, or wherever—Americans this time prove willing to stay the course.[2]

Robert Thompson said it much more forcefully in a *New York Times* article at the time of the final North Vietnamese offensive into the south:

> The American retreat before Moscow, like that of Napoleon, is beginning to litter the route with corpses . . . . The Administration can no longer conduct a credible American foreign policy. But, do not worry, a new foreign policy line has already been laid down by Congress: If you surrender, the killing will stop. It is a clear message, to the world, of the abject surrender of the United States.[3]

In considering such charges, it must be admitted that the United States has in recent years promised considerably more to friends and allied nations than it has delivered. In earlier times, the alacrity with which this country forged alliances, projected nuclear umbrellas, and demonstrated a worldwide military presence on the basis of treaty arrangements led to the United States being reprovingly accused of the role of world policeman. As Vietnam so poignantly demonstrated, however, the contemporary American character and the inertia and at times capricious nature of the democratic process have combined to severely limit the support actually forthcoming from the United States "to assure the survival and the success of liberty."

The Hungarian uprising of 1956 provided an almost unnoticed harbinger of this new development in US foreign affairs. After explicit encouragement (unofficially, via the "Voice of America") to the insurgents to rise up and throw off the yoke of oppression, this nation, the cradle of freedom, stood back and watched helplessly as those with the courage to heed our advice were attacked, deceived, and slaughtered by their oppressors. Had they survived the Soviet perfidy, Imry Nagy and Pal Maleter could tell us more.

INTERNATIONAL MISUNDERSTANDING

On the other hand, in our own defense we must point out that the age-old difficulty of attempting to perceive and understand the workings of alien governments contributes to mutual misunderstandings at least as much as any lack of courage or resolve on the part of the United States. For many nations unfamiliar with our system of politics and government, our national policies seem to vacillate, subject to unpredictable fluctuations; even to those more familiar with the democratic process, our colors sometimes appear to be "nailed firmly to the weathervane."

One factor which frequently contributes to international misunderstanding is the unfortunate circumstance wherein some of our political leaders, both candidates and incumbents, do not seem to realize that their political utterances are heard not only by the voters to whom they are directed, but also by friends, enemies, potential friends, and potential enemies throughout the world. Many of these listeners are truly unenlightened. Never having been exposed to a democratic form of government, they do not understand that statements made during a political campaign are not necessarily true; that failure to honor a campaign promise is not necessarily a lie; and that a presidential proclamation made with all the pomp and ceremony of a royal decree still requires the concurrence of Joe Citizen from Albuquerque, or his representative, to become US policy and to be acted upon. A disturbing example of this situation occurred during the 1976 US Presidential campaign. In the newspapers of that time, we were faced with the peculiar and unflattering spectacle of a widely respected spokesman for the US Government attempting to persuade the head of the Soviet Communist Party that "everything that was said [during the campaign] was of no importance."[4]

In an earlier and more devastating example of international misunderstanding, Tran Kim

Phuong, Saigon's Ambassador to the United States, with somewhat limited knowledge of the democratic process, naively accepted at face value the clear and unmistakable pledge of our national leaders to supply South Vietnam with the weapons necessary to defend itself. How could he realize that, after Saigon's acceptance of the inequitable Paris Agreement negotiated by the United States, this pledge would somehow "fall through the cracks" during the very democratic contest between the executive and legislative branches of the US Government over who had the power to determine the appropriate manner of US disengagement from the conflict?

US GLOBAL RETRENCHMENT

Even allowing for the problems imposed by international misunderstanding, there is clear evidence of a pervasive trend toward global retrenchment, both psychological and physical, in US foreign policy. Whatever the causes of this phenomenon—the trauma of Vietnam, an increasing sense of urgency to solve pressing domestic problems, or other unidentified isolationist tendencies—current national attitudes and policies reflect a corporate mood of introspection and a consummate desire to withdraw from international commitments. It is apparent that the United States is making a deliberate effort to reject the role of "global policeman" thrust upon it by the chaotic state of world affairs following World War II.

Advocates for a policy of retrenchment include such personages as George F. Kennan, former Ambassador to the Soviet Union and to Yugoslavia and former head of the US State Department Policy Planning Staff. Kennan has proposed a global concept of American policy which would include:

> . . . the reduction of external commitments to the indispensable minimum . . . the preservation of the political independence and military security of Western Europe, of Japan, and—with the single reservation that it should not involve the dispatch and commitment of American armed forces—of Israel.[5]

To accomplish this reduction, Kennan's plan would involve "the abandonment of several obsolescent and nonessential positions: notably those at Panama, in the Philippines, and in Korea." In Southern Africa he would "take cognizance . . . of the inability of ourselves or any other outside party to suggest . . . happy solutions to those problems," and in the rest of the Third World he recommends that we should "take account, again, of our general helplessness in the face of its problems."[6] Retrogressive as such recommendations may seem to some readers, they still do not equal those of one representative of the Institute for World Order, who has suggested that the United States could safely reduce its defense expenditures by as much as 5 to 10 percent per year for as long as a decade, even if the Soviets did not reciprocate![7]

More rational voices are also to be heard in the ongoing discussions of retrenchment and where the United States should "draw the line" of foreign involvement. Columnist Max Lerner has cautioned:

> Granted that America cannot be everywhere and do everything, that it must be warier about its promises and cannier about its commitments than in the past . . . . But there must be clear thinking, however, not only about what America won't do but what

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it will do in making and meeting commitments.[8]

In a discussion of contemporary defense planning, Richard Lunsford, admitting that the image of the United States as a "world policeman" has passed from vogue, still emphasizes the importance of US naval and amphibious forces afloat off other coasts as protectors of US citizens overseas and as a cost-effective means of encouraging commerce in otherwise high-risk areas.[9]

THE NIXON DOCTRINE AND RETRENCHMENT

The Nixon Doctrine, first enunciated in 1969, was the first formal announcement of a new US approach to security planning which changed the allocation of responsibilities among non-Communist nations and placed a new emphasis on shared strength. The three key elements of the new defense strategy were:

> *First*, the United States will keep all of its treaty commitments.
>
> *Second*, we shall provide a shield if a nuclear power threatens the freedom of a nation allied with us or of a nation whose survival we consider vital to our security.
>
> *Third*, in cases involving other types of aggression we shall furnish military and economic assistance when requested and as appropriate. But we shall look to the nation directly threatened to assume the primary responsibility of providing the manpower for its defense.[10]

While this doctrine, as stated, appeared to be a reasonable plan for realistic apportionment of available US resources and those of friendly nations to the preservation of peace and security, attempts at practical application turned out to be somewhat less than satisfactory. Thomas Etzold, Professor of Strategy at the US Naval War College, has described, somewhat cuttingly, the application of the principle as follows:

> . . . American strategists devised a defense doctrine and posture called flexible response which was so complicated and convoluted that midway through a costly war they became confused, said the hell with it and went home, and then invented a Nixon Doctrine which explained why it was after all wise and right to keep American troops home in the next few years. It is small wonder that adversaries in foreign affairs—and even friends—considered the United States defense policy unpredictable and sometimes bewildering.[11]

In a more serious and comprehensive treatment of the Nixon Doctrine, R. C. Rainville found in 1971 that:

> . . . [the] broad generalities and imprecise commitments . . . create strong uncertainties as to the reliability and credibility of our involvement and invite tests of our resolve by our enemies and caution on the part of our friends.[12]

But hindsight reveals the most ringing indictment of all concerning this initial move toward US global retrenchment. In Richard Nixon's own words, "Cambodia is the Nixon Doctrine in its purest form. . . ."[13]

In any case, recent history in Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Angola, and the Middle East would support Rainville's contention and indicates that either the doctrine itself or attempts to apply it in the real world have been unrealistic. Our unilateral abrogation of the US-Taiwan Mutual Defense Treaty, announced in December 1978, evidences a further retrenchment, to the point where even the tenets of the Nixon Doctrine are incompatible with our efforts to shed power and responsibility in the world environment.

FACT AND FANCY

It must be admitted that, in theory, the measures of retrenchment consistent with the Nixon Doctrine and subsequent policy initiatives constitute a reasonable adjustment to the realities of US power and interests in the post-Vietnam era. The adjustment was

intended to take place without significant change in the distribution of power and relationships among the major nations. The United States is assumed to retain the dominant role in opposing Soviet expansionism, but at a lower level of effort and with an increased role for other friendly and allied nations.

Less obviously, but in fact, this retrenchment reflects a desire to withdraw from international commitments, exemplified not only by overt physical acts such as planned and actual reductions in overseas force structure (e.g., Korea) and refusal to provide military aid to counter Communist expansionism (e.g., Angola), but also in more subtle psychological and philosophical nuances. Questions as to the utility of the use of military force, acceptance of an increasing dependence on foreign suppliers of critical materials (retrenchment from self-sufficiency?), and even the current emphasis on human rights to justify withholding military aid, could all conceivably be related to this global retrenchment and increased attention to domestic affairs.

The principal difference between the current national mood of the United States and true isolationism is the fact that our present policy calls for military retrenchment without political disengagement. This, in itself, can be expected to greatly complicate the task of the armed forces in protecting global US political and economic interests.

MILITARY RETRENCHMENT

From 1948 to 1964, there was a steady increase in the number of US military bases overseas. In the late 1950's and early 1960's, the number of US military personnel overseas (excluding Vietnam) reached a peak of somewhat over one million, located in 30 different countries. Since 1965, the trend in numbers of troops and bases (again excluding Vietnam) has been steadily downward. From a total of approximately 700 US bases and installations of all sizes in 1957-58, that number had dropped about 43 percent to 400 in the late 1960's, and was down a total of 53 percent to 328 overseas bases in 1976. By the end of 1976, the number of military personnel overseas had also been reduced more than 50 percent, to about 500,000 stationed in 24 countries. The trend continues, with current plans to withdraw 33,000 American ground combat troops from South Korea by 1982.[14]

Many of the overseas base closings and related personnel reductions during the past two decades have been the result of modernization and improvement of operations brought about by technological advances. These have often permitted a consolidation of functions between units, or between the various services, with improved efficiency. The advent of communications satellites, for example, allowed a significant reduction in communications and surveillance installations and units. Such reductions are beneficial and would be expected to have no adverse effect on our military posture or preparedness.

There have been, on the other hand, troop redeployments and basing changes for political or economic reasons, which should be of concern to those responsible for our military preparedness. President De Gaulle's decree, for example, that all NATO bases should be removed from France caused the reduction and consolidation of many US installations. The lingering effects of this political decision are revealed in a General Accounting Office report of February 1978, which states:

> Since the US Forces' relocation from France in 1967, the Army has been trying to get a stable wartime supply line to support its troops in Central Europe. Despite concerted efforts there is still no reasonable assurance that adequate resupply stocks arriving from the United States could be delivered to US combat troops in a crisis.[15]

The politically and economically motivated decision to withdraw US ground combat forces from South Korea has generated substantial controversy and is another case whose ultimate effect on US military influence and effectiveness will bear close

appraisal. New estimates of the strength of North Korea's army will undoubtedly stimulate further discussion and possible modification of this plan.[16]

In an evaluation of the Army's future role in the Pacific, given our planned withdrawal from Korea, Ward LeHardy has proposed steps to be taken "to shore up our sagging credibility in the eyes of our allies," and to improve the US Army's posture in the Pacific. These include the reestablishment of US Army Pacific Command (USARPAC) and the designation of certain divisions as "Pacific-oriented," with realistic contingency plans and exercises to demonstrate our ability and intent to support our allies in time of need.[17]

EFFECT ON INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Considerable discussion has centered on the likely effect of current US strategy on the outlook and policies of our major allies in Western Europe and Japan. It has been suggested that America's concession of strategic parity to the Soviet Union, combined with US military retrenchment—at a time when the Soviet global military presence and political influence are expanding rapidly—will tend to undermine allied confidence in the dependability of the United States as an ally and protector. Robert Osgood discusses this situation as follows:

> If the United States nonetheless presses its military, economic, and diplomatic policies upon the allies, as one must expect the leader of the alliance to do, and at the same time tries to induce them to increase their share of the common defense burden, as the long-run stabilization of America's leadership requires, allied governments may decide that the benefits of alliance are not worth the costs. They may then, collectively or individually, decide to rely upon their own accommodations with the adversaries, whether or not they try to back their diplomatic independence with military self-reliance.[18]

The consensus seems to be, however, that political obstacles to the development of independent military forces in Western Europe and Japan will tend to sustain the present structure of relationships between the United States and its major allies. In the absence of either a significant change in perception of the severity of the Soviet threat or an apparent abandonment by the United States of its role in countering that threat, the present relationship will survive.

IMPLICATIONS FOR US MILITARY PLANNERS

The most striking impact of a continuation of a global military retrenchment policy by the United States will be on military planning, especially in the field of strategic mobility. Clearly, if US troops are withdrawn from strategically important areas, adequate air- or sealift—or both—must be provided to return them in time if subsequent events require it.

The ability to project military power throughout the world against serious opposition is difficult to achieve and costly to maintain. Even to move and effectively employ a relatively small force requires an extremely sophisticated military system, encompassing a worldwide communications system; a complicated logistical and administrative support system; and highly trained air, naval, and land forces that are accustomed to operating on a global scale. Planning and coordination before the fact is essential to ensure that these capabilities will be available if needed, especially when contemplating any significant reduction of US forces or bases overseas.

As military retrenchment continues, appropriate US limited war strategies will depend increasingly on a responsive strategic reserve, thus an increasing demand for strategic mobility. Strategic mobility encompasses a number of factors—ready reaction forces, pre-positioned materiel, host country support—but depends primarily on the capacities and capabilities of available means of transportation. For the immediate reaction necessary in modern warfare, strategic airlift is the key.

Rainville noted that the 1973 strategic

airlift projection called for 4 squadrons of C5As and 14 squadrons of C141s, each squadron equipped with 16 operational aircraft. He further observed that the 70 C5As to be provided as unit equipment represented a reduction from the original objective of 120, which would have equipped 6 squadrons with a total of 96 operational aircraft by the end of fiscal year 1972, and that:

> There are indications that the reduced procurement decision was not based on a determination that seventy C5A's will be adequate to meet revised projections of mobility requirements, but was constrained by the budgetary considerations.[19]

The *United States Military Posture for FY 1979,* by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), listed 70 C5s (and 13 squadrons of C141s) in the active strategic airlift force. The sufficiency of this force is questionable in that both the "MOVECAP 70-74" analysis by the JCS and a 1970 report of The Subcommittee on Military Airlift of the House Committee on Armed Services recorded a shortfall of at least two C5 squadrons in our strategic airlift capability.[20]

On the C5 aircraft alone, the above data suggest that a careful analysis of our overall strategic mobility posture should precede any further retrenchment of US overseas military capability.

An Association of the United States Army (AUSA) Defense Report released in 1976 called strategic mobility the "Achilles' Heel" of the defense establishment. Two years later a similar report noted that little had been done to improve our capability to project combat power beyond our continental boundaries. An AUSA position paper analyzing the fiscal year 1979 defense budget reported no additional capability planned for sealift forces, and modest improvements, but no augmentation, planned for airlift capabilities.[21]

A reduction in US overseas bases will also result in increased requirements for command, control, communications, and intelligence facilities and capabilities within the military establishment. The *Department of Defense Annual Report, Fiscal Year 1979* provides some encouraging remarks to indicate that this problem is recognized and is being acted upon:

> The primary purpose of Command, Control, Communications, and Intelligence (C^3I) systems is to assess military and related situations around the world, and manage materiel and manpower in order to achieve national objectives. This task continues to increase in magnitude and complexity because of the complexity and instability of international politics, and the improving technological capability of our potential adversaries.
>
> A changing international political climate imposes increasing restrictions on and costs for the use of foreign territories for military purposes. In addition, crises may occur in remote areas where we do not have existing facilities. These factors require us to seek new alternatives, such as space systems and deployable facilities, which relieve us from dependence on foreign territory for C^3 operations and intelligence collection.
>
> A capability to deploy command and control assets rapidly anywhere in the world is essential. A program is underway to develop a modular set of deployable facilities to provide for remote operations, communications to national, theater and force commanders, and command center support. The facilities can be tailored for a wide variety of operations, from joint task forces to disaster relief.[22]

Periodic reports of Soviet satellite intercept tests increase the complexity of this problem and point out the need for increased US research and development in this area, both to match and exceed the Soviet capability and to "harden" US communications satellites against this type of attack.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE ARMY

If the US military retrenchment policy

continues, Western Europe may soon be the only area in which US ground forces are stationed overseas. In other parts of the world, deterrence and defense of allies, as well as continued access to scarce strategic resources, may depend entirely on a credible US capability to move sufficient forces quickly and effectively to any area of confrontation. Both conventional wisdom and analytical studies of military operations in support of American diplomacy indicate that forces located abroad can support US policies more effectively than forces of equal capability kept at home, even when provisions are made to move the latter force quickly when needed.[23] It is patently obvious that, if provisions are not made to move the home-based force quickly when needed, the utility of that force approaches zero.

This places our military leadership in a difficult position. With increasing competition on all sides for budgetary resources, and with mounting pressures to reduce military spending and thus further limit the means available, they are still expected to field a force capable of meeting all contingencies. A continuing high state of readiness, and greater emphasis on training for rapid deployment, are obvious requirements for all Army units. Since budgetary considerations will probably result in reduced manpower strength, in the absence of increased international tension, increased emphasis on Reserve component readiness will be essential. Even if the purely Army problems are adequately solved, the strategic lift capabilities of the Air Force and the Navy may well be the determining factor on the Army's ability to perform its mission.

There is abundant evidence that the influence of Army leadership on national policy, even in strategic and military matters, will deteriorate during this period of military retrenchment. Recent political decisions indicate a lack of military input into the decisionmaking process, and academics further bemoan "the dangers inherent in the soldier-statesman concept of military roles and responsibilities." As Jerome Slater, of the State University of New York, proposes:

> The most important institutional step that can now be taken to reestablish a proper balance between military and nonmilitary considerations in foreign policy would be to substantially reduce the role of military men in the policy formulation process.[24]

All this will further complicate the Army's task of ensuring adequate readiness to meet possible commitments, for example in influencing decisions related to budgeting for strategic airlift capability.

Overall, indications are that the United States Army of 2000 will face greatly increased competition for limited resources of funds and qualified manpower. At the same time, pressures will continue for the reduction of US military presence and involvement overseas. Thus, the importance of a capability to project small, highly effective forces on short notice to any likely area of the world will increase. If political/economic factors prevail, and US global retrenchment continues through the next decades, there is a danger that the buildup of our strategic mobility forces may fall behind that necessary to offset the reduction of US overseas military strength.

CONCLUSION

Indications are that US foreign involvements will continue to decline and will become primarily economically oriented. With continually increasing competition for a share of a limited national budget, continuing pressures for troop reductions and overseas base closings can be anticipated. If the international situation remains reasonably stable and the threat of war appears to diminish over the next decades, pressures will also mount in the Congress for reductions in our overall military force structure.

Before political decisions are made to effect such changes in our military posture, however, careful consideration should be given to possible negative secondary effects which could more than outweigh the purely financial or short-range political benefits.

In addition to the obvious needs for increased strategic mobility and combat readiness to return to overseas locations if circumstances require it, other more subtle

effects also require close scrutiny. Among these are reactions of allied and friendly nations in terms of US credibility and determination to honor previous commitments; possible interpretation by potential enemies of US military reticence as a sign of weakness and invitation to adventurism; potentially negative effects on US troop morale and attainment of recruiting goals; and in some cases, increased risk of interruption of supplies of strategic materials from overseas sources.

In terms of national security, adequate contingency planning is needed in all of these areas to offset possible negative ramifications of otherwise positive national policies.

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