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THE INEVITABILITY OF U.S. MILITARY FORCE

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THE INEVITABILITY OF U.S. MILITARY FORCE

. . . Americans will awake not to utopia, but to an unruly world in which the United States has assumed vast burdens not easily shed. In all likelihood, we will have persuaded ourselves – perhaps we have already – that the imperial role signified by those responsibilities and the military power maintained to execute them have become integral not only to our well-being but also to our identity. Denying adamantly that it was ever our intention, America will have become Rome.

Andrew Bacevich, The National Interest

At the beginning of the 21st Century, the United States is the world's only remaining superpower, a position gained in the course of the last 50 years through international engagement, economic tenacity, and the efforts and lives of American soldiers. Our arsenal of strategic tools – political, economic, military – skillfully (or fortuitously) forged a successful conclusion of the Cold War, a period where military force was generally considered the instrument of last resort. However, in the last decade, military forces have been used earlier and earlier in American interventions not considered major theater war, often to the chagrin of the defense establishment. It can be argued that this outcome is a logical one for a nation that has funded the defense tool at roughly fifteen times more than its other instruments of statecraft.¹ Moreover, after a decade of uncertainty and vacillation, the U.S. now has a strategic organizing principle – the war on terrorism – that promises to require significant new funds for defense for the foreseeable future. The FY 2002 Department of Defense (DoD) *supplemental* of \$14 billion for the war on terrorism alone is nearly equal to the Department of State's entire FY 2002 request for foreign operations.²

This point is not raised to argue that DoD gets too much of the federal dollar, or that State does not get enough. It is simply to recognize that if one instrument of statecraft is overwhelmingly resourced over other instruments – and therefore is highly proficient – the

strategist is more likely to use it *whether or not it is the right tool for the job* because the alternatives are liable to be less capable or expedient. This choice in turn feeds a cycle of requirements to replace, rebuild, and recreate our military forces which not only raises the price of that tool, but also distracts the military from its primary mission of major theater war.

Unfortunately, greater reliance on the military tool occurs right at the time when it can be argued that other instruments of national power – political, economic, informational, cultural -- might in fact be more effective against the threats that confront U.S. national security in the new century. This focus also threatens to alter the perception of what America stands for, from being respected for its values to being feared for its military prowess.

The DoD FY 2002 budget of \$343 billion is 51 percent of discretionary funding in the U.S. budget.³ With the \$14 billion supplemental appropriation, the total amount surpasses the Cold War average of \$344.1 billion, despite a force structure that is one third smaller than it was a decade ago.⁴ The current FY 2003 defense request is equal to the defense budgets of the next 25 countries combined.⁵ In stark contrast, the FY 2002 international affairs budget is \$24 billion, representing only 3.6 percent of the discretionary budget. While there are additional programs that could be counted in both the defense and international affairs budgets (e.g., DOE's nuclear weapons functions of the Department of Energy and international programs in several government agencies), the magnitude of the disparity remains significant. When experienced officers, such as General Charles Boyd, say that waste in the American military ranges from 20 to 30 percent⁶ -- or in FY2002 numbers, \$71 billion to \$107 billion -- the discrepancy becomes even more painful since this "wastage" equates to three to five times the average foreign affairs budget. The disproportionate amount that goes to defense has a direct impact on the availability and quality of the non-military tools of statecraft which the strategist can use in confronting a

national security threat or issue – particularly if the situation is time-sensitive. There are no other government organizations that have the mobilization capability, equipment, and commitment to execute successfully like the Department of Defense. There are no other international organizations to call upon that have the breadth and depth of capability. If policy is what a country says and does, the likelihood that U.S. policy will involve military forces increases because doing anything significant is likely to require DoD capabilities.

Several factors predispose the defense budget to increase even further. Most prominent is the growing consensus about defense shortfalls centered on the pace of weapons procurement. Then-JCS Chairman John Shalikashvili, in a 1995 review of long-term budget plans, maintained that procurement should grow from the then-current figure of \$45 billion to \$60 billion in the FY2000 budget.⁷ However, debate focused not on whether \$60 billion is sufficient, but how much more than \$60 billion is required.⁸ The Center for Strategic and International Studies calculates that \$111 to \$164 billion per year over the next decade will be needed to replace current weapons as they reach the end of service lives.⁹ The Clinton Administration had projected \$75 billion by FY 2005; the Congressional Budget Office estimates a “steady state” budget over the next 15 years would have to average about \$340 billion a year, including \$90 billion for procurement.¹⁰ The FY 2003 budget request includes \$69 billion for procurement, a 12 percent increase over last year,¹¹ comporting with the calls for acquisition growth. While the Bush II Administration has not finished its review of major weapons issues, it is hard to ignore the implication that there will be substantial and sustained increases in the defense budget, exacerbating funding disparities with other areas, for several years.

Then there is the predominance of technology as the driver of costs where, as Marine Corps General Paul Van Riper describes, “The focus, unfortunately, is on the technical solution to the challenges we face, rather than on thinking through what our strategic goals and methods should be.”¹² There is no doubt that advances in technology help protect the lives of American soldiers, as well as the lives of noncombatants. However, Richard Haass, national security specialist at the Brookings Institution, warns that new technology is no panacea since new systems are no better than the intelligence fed into them, that accuracy is no virtue if the target is misidentified.¹³ In addition, as the budget swells to fund the next iteration of technological improvements, the capabilities gap with other allied militaries widens, rendering the support of coalition forces less useful -- even as we claim close collaboration with our friends and allies is a significant element of our military strategy.

There is also the danger that having the technology will promote its use, even if unnecessary. Michael Sherry, author of The Rise of American Air Power, argues that the use of the B-29 bomber against Japan in World War II had more to do with the fact that the program was the second costliest program of the war, than the need to deploy them in order to win the war -- a phenomenon he calls “technological determinism.” He maintains,

If leaders were prisoners of a technological determinism, it was one they themselves set into motion. They reasoned in a curiously self-fulfilling fashion when, having first created certain forces with certain capabilities, they then complained that they had no choice but to use them in unfortunate ways. . . [O]perational requirements often translated into organizational convenience, that is, the need to keep a bomber force in action in order to justify its existence.¹⁴

The momentum generated by the nexus of the defense industry, politics, and the military services feeds the propensity for “technological determinism” to occur, propelling the defense budget upwards. In the words of Admiral Eugene Carroll, Deputy Director for the Center for

Defense Information, “For 45 years of the Cold War we were in an arms race with the Soviet Union. Now it appears we’re in an arms race with ourselves.”¹⁵ The cultural infrastructure of the “military-industrial complex” is as political as it is profitable, making it a formidable obstacle to change. As General Boyd argues, “We are a rich country. We would rather get 65 cents on the dollar in investment in the way of capability than go to the huge effort and political cost of changing those things that make our defense more expensive.”¹⁶ Each year Congress funds hundreds of military programs not included in the Administration's request for the Pentagon; the Center for Defense Information estimates nearly \$6 billion in unrequested items were added to FY 2002 appropriations.¹⁷ Moreover, the prospects for breaking out of the “culture” are as dim as they are insidious. As Admiral William Owens describes, “The culture encourages us to focus on the budget for these elements of power, and the budget becomes policy in a strange sort of way.”¹⁸

Author Craig Andrews, in the monograph Foreign Policy and New American Military, argues that these forces make the military establishment inherently expansive and that the strength of the military has been purchased at the expense of other foreign policy institutions, concluding, “. . . the forces which might in other circumstances restrain the further growth of military influence have been dangerously weakened. . . [and] the impact of modern technology on foreign affairs has been to decrease the time frame within which decisions must be made.”¹⁹ The salience of this observation is that it was promulgated in 1974, lending credence to the viewpoint that other instruments of statecraft have little chance of surviving the zero-sum budget game. The resulting disparity is particularly worrisome in four areas.

First, there is growing concern the U.S. is headed for a “militarized” foreign policy because disproportionate funding of the military makes it more difficult for other tools in the national

security toolbox to successfully “compete” for relevance in the formation of policy. For example, the *Washington Post* in 2000 chronicled how regional CINCs have become de facto “proconsuls” of foreign policy, stepping in with funds and activities to fill engagement vacuums created by the paucity of State Department resources. As Admiral Owens explains, “They have more money than the State Department, which is one of the issues. They have double the amount of money since the end of the Cold War relative to the State Department.”²⁰ And the trend seems to be gaining momentum. *Washington Post* reporter Bradley Graham reports the Pentagon is seeking broad authority for its own foreign military aid, starting with \$130 million in FY 2002, for military assistance to foreign countries currently administered by DoS, “. . .[to] in effect, establish a parallel foreign security assistance program. . . [which] would not be subject to existing limits on the State Department’s foreign assistance programs, including provisions relating to violations of human rights, sponsorship of terrorism, and nonpayment of debt.”²¹

It is hard to decide whether this development is more startling because of the incursion into State authorities, or the casualness about the funding under consideration. As Senator Patrick J. Leahy (D-Vt.) stated, “The concerns this raises are less about the sums requested than about the troubling precedent it would set, and that makes this a controversial proposal.”²² The issue of bureaucratic turf aside, the fact that \$130 million is considered modest is telling; the *entire* discretionary budget for foreign military assistance in FY 2001 was little more than this amount. Nevertheless, the Pentagon’s proposal for its own funding is understandable since State’s foreign operations funds leave little for unforeseen emergencies and are largely earmarked by Congress anyway. Successful implementation of DoD’s missions are frustrated by State’s inability to pay for assisting foreign forces engaged in Operation Enduring Freedom.

Second, as formidable as our military force is, the “transformation” discussion which has preoccupied military strategists over the past few years has led to angst about how effective military force will be in tackling new challenges such as the war on terrorism. For example, Oxford professor Michael Howard argues that the war on terrorism is different from other wars because it is fundamentally a “battle for hearts and minds.” He explains,

Without hearts and minds one cannot obtain intelligence, and without intelligence terrorists can never be defeated. . . Terrorists can be successfully destroyed only if public opinion, both at home and abroad, supports the authorities in regarding them as criminals rather than heroes. . . [T]he terrorists have already won an important battle if they can provoke authorities into using overt armed force against them. They will then be in a win-win situation: either they will escape to fight another day, or they will be defeated and celebrated as martyrs.²³

The need for military force notwithstanding, interventions in places such as Kosovo, Somalia, and Iraq have shown how difficult it is to affect a country’s internal policy with military instruments. Somewhat paradoxically, there are equally significant dilemmas about not using the military tool as well. The situations in Rwanda and East Timor are good examples of how withholding our best-resourced tool can be devastating and how few other alternatives are available, particularly at the stage when military intervention is necessary.

Third, a particularly disconcerting aspect of the disproportionate funding for defense is the rancor it causes in the interagency process. Certainly every organization has its culture and turf, but the fact that one agency holds fifteen times the resources of any other in the national security process is a breeding ground for resentment and frustration. From Secretary of State Madeline Albright’s famous complaint questioning the value of our military if it couldn’t be used, to the Pentagon’s complaints about having to pay for “State’s foreign policy,” the ramifications of the funding disparity pit agencies against each other in ways that are as regrettable as they are hard to overcome.

Nowhere is this more evident than when a foreign disaster requires U.S. military assistance. Because State does not have funds for such unforeseen contingencies, U.S. assistance for significant disasters such as Hurricane Mitch, devastating floods in Mozambique or ethnic conflicts in Sierra Leone must be obtained through Section 506 of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961. Entitled “Special Authority,” this legislative provision allows the President to draw down defense articles, services, and training from *existing* DoD stocks, up to \$100 million per fiscal year, when he deems it to be in the interest of the United States.²⁴ As this comes out of the blue as well as from hide for DoD, it is an unwelcomed action for the Pentagon which understandably resents the requisition of its inventories – which due to “just in time” procurement policies are minimal anyway. Another area of unhelpful conflict lies in the area of force protection. State’s military assistance funds are used to pay U.S. forces to train foreign units, but since the USS Cole incident, force protection costs have increased several-fold, raising the funding requirement for such activities. For example, in Operation Focus Relief in Sierra Leone, the costs for U.S. force protection were twice the amount of foreign military assistance granted to the participating African units.²⁵ Using scarce foreign assistance for U.S. troop support, given DoD’s funding levels, seems unreasonable to State while military officers are offended by State’s need to conduct such activities “on the cheap” with apparent disregard for their safety. Invariably, the National Security Council and Office of Management and Budget are called in to mediate. Such battles can poison cooperative spirit and, over time, damage effective working relationships between the national security agencies.

Finally, there is the concern that the U.S. increasingly will be viewed by the rest of the world through the lens of its unsurpassed military might, and not its moral, cultural, and democratic values -- the true hallmarks of America. While military power is a fundamental

element of our national power, U.S. influence is based on more than just military force. Joseph Nye argues that, “In an era in which soft power increasingly influences international affairs, [military] threats and the image of arrogance and belligerence that tend to go with them undercut an image of reason, democracy, and open dialogue.”²⁶ When asked whether the national interest would be better served if the State Department had more money than the Defense Department, General William Nash responded:

In the spirit of your question, yes. I am deeply concerned that the United States is seen as being represented by a military force rather than by its identity as a democratic, free-market, rule-of-law nation. A fundamental error, both past and continuing, is that we have been slow to redefine the nature of national security in the 21st century. I argue it is far more political, economic, and social in nature, and the security aspects are more non-military than ever before.²⁷

As stated earlier, the focus of this paper is not to argue that the State Department should get more and the Defense Department should get less but to highlight that the “fundamental error of not defining the nature of national security” will allow gross resource disparities to remain unchecked. Clausewitz’s dictum that “war is policy by other means” could become “war as the only policy means” unless there is a concerted effort to confront the formidable trends that push us in this direction. The issue is not only about what we say, but what we do. And it is an incontrovertible fact that we say our values of freedom, democracy, and diversity drive our policy while we spend half of our money on military force.

This inconsistency is not lost on the rest of the world. A growing number of international voices doubt U.S. motives for its military might. For example, Mao Yuxi, from the *China Daily*, argues the U.S. justifies military actions by advancing the idea of human rights over sovereignty, but insists, “[B]ig powers. . . never bother to intervene in areas of humanitarian protection unless there is potential for political or economic benefit.”²⁸ *Turkish Daily* reporter, Erol Manisali,

believes the U.S. penchant for “use of excessive force” lies in the need to show its might in the new era, writing, “It looks like the only and inescapable route for the United States is for the most powerful to continuously use force to maintain the America-centered world order. It is now the only way the United States can maintain its present superpower status.”²⁹ If this accusation is true, the U.S. will be unable to retain this status indefinitely because it is not how we earned this position in the first place. For, in the words of President Dwight D. Eisenhower, “No matter how much we spend for arms, there is no safety in arms alone. Our security is the total product of our economic, intellectual, moral and military strengths.”³⁰

There are as many viewpoints as there are people, but Naomi Klein’s analysis in the *Guardian Weekly* article “America is Not a Hamburger” strikes a chord. Klein takes issue with the approach that Madison Avenue’s Charlotte Beers should be dealing with America’s image as little more than a communications problem. She argues:

Despite President George Bush’s insistence that America’s enemies resent its liberties, most critics of the US don’t actually object to its stated values. America’s problem is not with its brand – which could scarcely be stronger – but with its product.³¹

The U.S. needs to work on its product, but it is important that we do not let the dominance of military funding skew the nature of the product. Nor should we be driven, however inadvertently, to compromise our moral foundation. The norms of *jus ad bellum* call for war as a last resort where, “War can be morally legitimate only when a state has made every effort short of war (e.g., diplomacy, multilateral negotiations, and sanctions) to seek to redress the evil.”³²

Unless there is sufficient funding for other economic, political, social, and informational instruments, the values and the honor which historically have characterized the United States will be lost in the dust of endless military operations. We will become Rome.

ENDNOTES

¹ I am comparing DoD's budget with the State Department's budget, acknowledging that other federal agencies have international programs that are not reflected. However, the amount of funding for these programs does not change the magnitude of the disparity.

² The FY 2002 request for foreign operations, which provides funding for international programs (and does not include State Department Operations), was \$15 billion. The FY 2003 DoD request is \$379 billion, compared to the \$25 billion FY 2003 request for the Department of State. The DoD request is \$31 billion more than its FY 2002 level (about a 9% increase), while the DoS request is \$1.4 billion more than the FY 2002 level (roughly a 6% increase). Center for Defense Information website at www.cdi.org/issues/budget/FY03Highlights-pr.cfm.

³ Center for Defense Information, *2001-2002 Military Almanac*, 37. Can be accessed at www.cdi.org/products/almanac0102.pdf.

⁴ Ibid, p. 35 and the Center for Defense Information website at www.cdi.org/issues/budget/FY03Highlights-pr.cfm. Interesting factoid: the Almanac estimates that the cost of the Cold War, from 1946-1991, in FY 2000 constant dollars, was about \$15,830 billion.

⁵ Center for Defense Information website at <http://www.cdi.org/issues/wme/spendersFY03.html>.

⁶ Moises Naim, ed., "Reinventing War," *Foreign Policy*, (November-December 2001): 40. General Boyd was Deputy Commander-in-Chief of EUCOM from 1992-1995, and the Executive Director of the Hart-Rudman Commission.

⁷ Stephen Daggett, *Defense Budget for FY2002: An Overview of Bush Administration Plans and Key Issues for Congress*, (Washington D.C.: Congressional Research Service, May 22, 2001), 11.

⁸ Ibid, 12.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Center for Defense Information website, www.cdi.org/issues/budget/FY03Highlights-pr.cfm.

¹² Naim, 37. General Paul Van Riper served more than 41 years in the Marine Corps, and from 1995-1997 was the commanding general of the Marine Corps Combat Development Command.

¹³ Richard Haass, "The Use and Abuse of Military Force," Policy Brief #54, November 1999, 3.

¹⁴ Michael S. Sherry, *The Rise of American Air Power: The Creation of Armageddon*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 175.

¹⁵ Center for Defense Information website at www.cdi.org/issues/wme/spendersFY03.html.

¹⁶ Naim, 40.

¹⁷ Center for Defense Information website at www.cdi.org/issues/budget/FY03Highlights-pr.cfm.

¹⁸ Naim, 39. Admiral William Owens served as Vice CJCS from 1994–1996 and commanded the 6th Fleet during the Persian Gulf War.

¹⁹ Craig Neal Andrews, *Foreign Policy and the New American Military*, (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1974), 27.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 43.

²¹ Bradley Graham, “Pentagon Seeks Own Foreign Aid Power,” *Washington Post*, 8 April 2002, 1.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Michael Howard, “What’s in a Name? How to Fight Terrorism,” *Foreign Affairs*, 1 Jan 2002, 3.

²⁴ Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, P.L. 87-195, Section 506. This legislation may be found at http://disam.osd.mil/images/PDF/FAA_AECA_FOROPS.pdf.

²⁵ 19 April 2002 interview with policy officer in the Political-Military Bureau, Department of State.

²⁶ Joseph S. Nye, Jr. and William A. Owens, “America’s Information Edge,” *Foreign Affairs* 75 (March/April 1996): 21.

²⁷ Naim, 43. General William Nash was commanding general of the Army’s 1st Armored Division from 1995 – 1996, and in 2000 was appointed regional administrator for the United Nations in northern Kosovo.

²⁸ Mao Yuxi, “Human Intervention Dubious,” *China Daily*, 25 February 2002.

²⁹ Erol Manisali, “War and Intervention: The United States’ Policy of ‘Sustainable Superiority’,” *Turkish Daily News*, 20 September 2001.

³⁰ Dean Rudoy, *Armed and Alone*, (Canada: George Brazillier, 1972), Forward.

³¹ Naomi Klein, “America is Not a Hamburger,” *The Guardian Weekly*, 21 March 2002.

³² Mark R. Amstutz, *International Ethics: Concepts, Theories, and Cases in Global Politics*, (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999), 101.

