

Strategic Underpinnings of a Future Force

Congressman Richard B. Cheney and Major (P) Thomas N. Harvey, US Army

This article, published in the October 1986 issue of Military Review, foreshadowed several changes that would be made in the US Department of Defense (DOD) over the next 10 years—many of them under Congressman Richard B. “Dick” Cheney after he became defense secretary on 21 March 1989. Some of these changes include: DOD’s increased emphasis on joint doctrine, the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) chairman’s increased power in acquisitions, the creation of the JCS vice chairman position, the founding of the Army Acquisition Corps, our success in Operation Desert Storm, the development of the force-projection Army and our current emphasis on information age warfare. The authors even seem to predict Secretary of Defense Les Aspin’s “bottom-up” review and our subsequent national military strategy of being prepared for two major regional contingencies. The article also foreshadows the House Armed Services Committee’s name change to House National Security Committee.

A GROWING RECOGNITION WITHIN the US Congress and Department of Defense of the sterility in our reactive approach to strategy formulation should create increasing demands for more creative military thought and greater flexibility in force building. However, it does not appear that the defense establishment has the institutional inclination, nor Congress the bureaucratic restraint, to allow the integration of interservice thinking to produce truly cohesive global and regional strategies—strategies that are realistically consistent with available resources.

US military thinking tends to become dominated by the logic used to win congressional support for the acquisition of weapon systems and force structure. This “acquisition” logic is usually built around commonly accepted threats. This logic often does not address military requirements that are more complex to express and defend but which, though likely to be needed, do not fit into conventional scenarios. Consequently, the military often develops a force proposal which is understandable and acceptable to a Congress more interested in resource efficiency and hometown economics than force adequacy. There are two principal themes around which this article is constructed:

- Combat developments have been too reactive and are not being linked to a realistic, forward-looking

future strategy—a strategy that reflects the intellectual potential of the defense establishment.

- Military force applications in the future are likely to be of significantly greater variety and complexity than presently being implicitly considered in our force structure.

It will be argued that the national military force developed to support strategies in the year 2000 must encompass two basic dimensions—strategic nuclear stabilization and flexible global response using technologically advanced conventional forces with chemical and tactical nuclear capability. New and more independently derived flexible response policies oriented to protecting access to critical resources and attracting Third and Fourth World countries into Western affiliations add needed dimensions to a strategic outlook which has been constrained by a reactionary relationship with the Soviet Union.

The United States’ ability to implement more imaginative and robust future strategies will be highly dependent upon uncovering and harnessing combat-multiplying technologies that will exponentially increase military force effectiveness. More than ever before, technology will be a prime determinant of superpower influence or lack of it in world affairs, assuming prerequisite national will, determination and geopolitical comprehension.

With the exception of World War II, nothing in our national experience will rival this decade and the next in terms of military capability requirements and the related demands on systems, doctrine and leadership to overcome the growing threat.

Accelerating military activity, such as the ponderous weapons systems acquisition mechanism, to realize extraordinarily ambitious but critically essential 1990 force capabilities is stressing peacetime military structures. The methods, organizational arrangements and systems that have matured within the services since the late 1950s will not be adequate to absorb the multiple surge rates of the 1980s and 1990s. Even now, force modernization impacts, strategic reorientations and the sudden availability of "get well" funding are exerting overload pressures on military systems.

While there has been progress, there is not a *consistent* mechanism permitting the candid exchange of concerns and ideas among the services, unconstrained by parochial budget strategies. This kind of intellectual merging is needed to bring about the maximum integration of modernization and related strategic planning. Despite the superb efforts of the chiefs of staff of the Army and the Air Force to improve *jointness*, a situation exists where only in a coincidence of desire do things go well.

There is an urgent need to assign responsibility for formalizing a unifying concept for various development processes, strategic and otherwise. This concept should:

- Consider all aspects of multiservice development—strategic concepts, technological development, sustainability and force design balance, ensuring that the program is realistic in terms of our nation's physical, technological and resource ability.
- Encourage synchronization to the degree that the military capability of our allies is enhanced as a collective deterrence.
- Realistically address the interservice integration of technology, concepts and doctrine.
- Integrate the development efforts and products of the services to maximize the ability of a system across the spectrum of the battlefield.
- Assist in the early identification of those nonsynchronous programs which do not provide realistic and affordable advantages.
- Be so understandable, so clear and so well-articulated that Congress, all military services and the nation will recognize the value and the need for the recommended programs.

An obvious recipient for such a challenging responsibility is the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) in conjunction with those essential elements of the Office of the Secretary of Defense and the federal agencies with input to

the system. The head of such an integrating body must not have a single-service orientation but, in the tradition General John W. Vessey Jr. established, must be dedicated to synchronizing service and joint programs with national strategies.

Changes recommended by Congress and the president's Packard Commission to strengthen the role of the JCS chairman will enable him to act as a much-needed benevolent dictator, guiding the services in adherence to a stated and understood *national strategy*. To be truly effective, he must also have the ability to ensure that money is allocated for service cross-boundary purposes, and he must be able to move money from one service account to another to support required "joint" initiatives. While strengthening the chairman's role can be beneficial to the implementation of forward-looking military strategies, the realistic formulation of those strategies will depend on the *corporate* cooperation of all service representatives. Extraordinary attention must be given to this integrating mechanism to enable the Department of Defense to provide the highest return on the nation's defense investment.

Needed Strategic Mind-Set

More than 30 years ago, the Soviet Union embarked upon a campaign of observable military forcebuilding surpassing any historical peacetime precedent. At present, the Soviet Union possesses an impressive conventional force superiority. It has enormously greater stocks of military hardware than it needs to defend its frontiers, and it has the capability to launch an attack with overwhelming quantitative and considerable qualitative advantages against us and our allies. If the Soviet economy can endure, by the year 2000, the Soviets could have a quantitative edge of such magnitude that would permit expansionistic military enterprise in many regions while still maintaining dominant frontier forces.

The inherent nature of Western democratic political systems makes it improbable that future defense budgets will be large enough to substantially close the quantitative conventional force lead the Soviets have established. Without the stimulus of some significant crisis to galvanize public support, US conventional capabilities will continue to lag behind those of the Soviet Union. There is no indication that the US industrial base will possess a future surge capacity to respond to the demands of conventional military emergencies.

Simply stated, the United States will not be willing to match the Soviet Union with military resources, and there is no indication that our North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) allies are prepared to improve

their military posture to compensate for the imbalance. It follows, then, that future strategies must orient on achieving advantages and leverage opportunities in other ways. Technology and the ability to outthink and outmaneuver the Soviet Union over the long run will be pivotal aspects in achieving these advantages.

Until the United States regains the strategic leverage that assures national viability for itself and its allies, a new understanding of its role in the world must influence strategic thought. As Peter Rodman has pointed out: "No longer possessing a preponderance of military strength, the United States will have to find ways to wield its still considerable power with more finesse and courage."

In the less congenial global environment presently emerging, virtually all nations will eventually be caught up in the inevitable jousting for influence among the superpowers. In a world with bipolar superstructure and emerging multipolar pressures—OPEC (Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries), blocks of nonaligned nations, common markets and so on—there will be a special premium on ingenuity, maneuver, prioritization and decisive action.

Strategists and planners can no longer rely upon simplistic linear extensions and arithmetic solutions to forecast future environments and recommend national courses of action. The human desire to evade the sheer anguish of creative decision making will have to be suppressed in the conceptualization of future strategies. In the 1980s and 1990s, US leaders must understand that the pivotal aspects of successful strategies are not only just the mobilizations of power but are also the imaginative uses of it.

As a starting point, US leadership must arrive at a general consensus that our traditional strategic underpinnings cannot have indefinite application in strategy development. In fact, many of the foundational concepts derived from World War II and containment-era experiences have questionable future relevancy. Edward N. Luttwak highlights this point when he says: "... we need a fundamental reappraisal of our strategy since our plans, our fossilized alliance arrangements, and the very structure of our Armed Forces are all based on outdated premises—and notably the implicit assumption of superiorities that we will not soon regain. New strategic solutions must be found, and often they will only be suggested by new operational methods and new tactics—which only the active and persistent interest of our most senior officials can elicit."

One way to accomplish the reappraisal might be through an existing interaction between Congress and the Department of Defense. Instead of the congressio-

nal oversight committees' concentration on the military's ability to successfully micromanage resources, they need to be more involved in developing strategies in coordination with the executive branch. Congressional debate regarding strategy would be far more productive than the countless hearings which are devoted to ultradetailed budgetary reviews.

This shift of attention might also reduce some of the immense burden on the military leadership of developing and presenting endless testimony to support the funding of each piece of equipment needed to implement a strategy—a strategy that Congress is often unaware of or had little part in developing. Congressional involvement in strategy development could have other desirable results:

- Congressional approval of the strategy would facilitate approval of the force needed to implement it.
- The interested constituency would become more informed regarding the rationale of the defense budget.
- The military and Congress would devote more time to strategic thought and change the composition of their staffs from a predominance of specialists and micromanagers to one of broad-gauged, national security-minded visionaries.

Winning congressional support for defense budgets is difficult enough based on "time-honored" traditional strategies. Gaining congressional support for robust proactive strategies that the committees had little or no involvement in developing would be virtually impossible. Important also is assuring a general understanding of the objectives and potential of proactive military strategies versus traditional reactive strategies. The public must understand that proactive military strategies are designed to create future national security conditions advantageous to the country and which usually disadvantage the opponent by forcing him to react in a way unplanned or undesired or both. Reactive strategies cannot shape a desirable future for the United States, only proactive strategies can.

Proactive Strategy and the Future Force

By the year 2000, the nation will need two types of ground combat forces—a "stabilizing" heavy force in Western Europe linked to the deterrent strategy and optimized for NATO combat and a highly flexible force that can be more creatively employed to deal with contingencies anywhere in the world. The evolution of these conventional forces derives from a recognition that the Army forces of the 1990s and the supporting POMCUS (pre-positioning of materiel configured to unit sets) forces will be required in the

NATO structure well into the first decade of the 21st century. However, this logistically heavy, European-oriented, modernized Army force is unsuitable for the flexibility demands of the 21st-century missions in other scenarios.

This emphasizes the need for a radically different kind of force to support a wide range of nontraditional future strategies—a force that is unconstrained by nostalgia in concept development and free of the kind of design predictability that prematurely dismisses military surprise options. The future requires a set of flexible forces with design links to an array of scenarios.

The proactive strategy discussed here is designed to achieve regional stabilization by rapidly developing a significant US force presence anywhere in the world outside the NATO region. It is designed to protect vital areas and maintain access to critical resources, preserve stability in pro-American governments in the Southern Hemisphere and counter overseas terrorism and dissidence directed against the United States. The strategy is focused on securing vital US interests in areas with little or no US force presence which are or could be threatened by a significant military power with modern weapons and advanced logistics.

The execution of this strategy involves the generation of superior and more flexible combat power in remote regions so rapidly that the opponent abandons his attack plans. Or, having already attacked, he loses the initiative by being forced to change his plan in reaction to US maneuvers. The overall objective is to project sufficient military force to blunt an attack or cause the enemy to abort his attack and then to create a residual environment conducive to peaceful diplomatic negotiation to resolve the conflict.

Given the anticipated absence of logistical infrastructure in most of the likely power projection areas, the force must be highly self-sufficient and must develop a logistical doctrine that is dramatically different from the traditional European-based doctrine. Also, the tremendous distances over which these forces will have to operate and fight will make the battle far more difficult to execute than in the NATO setting. The conventional forces in the power-projection strategy must have an optimum mix of strategic deployability, lethality and tactical mobility.

The political portion of this strategy is to establish US influence or conditions favorable to the United States in areas of the world (predominantly in the Southern Hemisphere) where future vital interests could be in jeopardy. Aggressive military assistance programs characterized by large, in-country US training programs in conjunction with economic and technological support will be the key operative ingredients.

The military goal is to establish the kind of defense affiliation that permits US force presence for peacetime “combined” training with host nation armed forces and the development of combined war plans to protect vital areas of the country and to combat aggression or insurgency. These combined war plans would call for the in-country stationing or regional pre-positioning of a vanguard element of US troops, command, control and communications systems and certain key logistical items as required to facilitate the deployment and employment of larger forces in the event of an emergency.

One dimension of this strategy is focused on developing a military capability to generate dominating force in remote regions faster than the adversary and to achieve controlling technological superiority in crisis situations. The Army will play a significant role in this strategy, given the remote inland location of the many areas of vital national interest and the requirement for speedy strategic deployability which can only be accomplished by aerial delivery.

The Army forces should be organized into self-sufficient brigade “packages” optimized for a general deployment target area and an array of related ground missions. Each brigade would have the highest technology weapon systems and equipment and would act collectively as high- and super-technology testbeds and concept developers for the rest of the Army. The technology and concepts validated by these brigades would be selectively exported to the NATO modernized Army force as considered appropriate.

These brigades would operate within a new tactical framework deriving from new mission area analyses:

- Sublimated conflict.
- Remote area stability operations.
- Counterterrorism.
- Vital resource security operations.
- Anti-infrastructure operations.

These brigades would be highly compatible with the US Air Force and Navy and would be organized into combat and support modules that are standardized in all brigades targeted on the same region. This modular force structuring concept would allow maximum prepackaging and standardized containerization to facilitate rapid strategic deployment and the echeloning of the force into the target area.

Conventionally, the brigades with their dedicated air support would be capable of successfully attacking or defending against a numerically superior Third or Fourth World military force without significant reinforcement. In a more unconventional sense, this force would also be able to implement the kind of new techno-tactics that can disrupt not only the

military cohesion but also the political control and societal infrastructure of the target country. These highly flexible forces, with state-of-the-art technological capabilities, will be the primary instruments of future Southern Hemisphere strategies—strategies which must be executed successfully to assure US access to critical resources and to preserve adequate US hemispheric influence.

This article has described a conceptual future that suggests the Department of Defense become less traditional in combat developments, more independent and coherent in strategy development, highly sensitive to technology in force-structuring concepts and better prepared for multi-scenario future force requirements. Selected initiatives to facilitate these proactive ideas are:

- Spearhead a defense effort to involve Congress more in the strategy development process and less in the micromanagement of resources. This effort has already taken on momentum with the innovative initiative by Senator John W. Warner in the Senate and similar action in the House of Representatives to develop the means for a clear and comprehensive national strategy. It is hoped that this initiative will cause key members of the Senate Armed Services Committee and the House Armed Services Committee, their counterparts on the Foreign Relations Committees and their staffs to get more actively involved in strategic issues and less fixated on “line item” authorizations. In turn, congressional consensus on strategies and priorities could ease the traditionally tendentious appropriations process.

- Develop and link networks of geopolitical, strategic and technological planners within the JCS and individual service structures to make the strategic product more enlightened, cohesive and more sensitive to technological opportunity. These linked networks should integrate strategy development and create the technology-policy interface which is currently inadequate.

- Develop doctrine and tactics that are realistically consistent with the missions, environment and equipment of required force projections and the forces involved in future low-level conflicts—for example, resource security, anti-infrastructure, remote area stability operations. Tactics for these forces should include “core” technology targeting which could be a significant combat multiplier in all future crisis situations, given the anticipated proliferation of high-technology weapons and equipment worldwide.

- Incorporate more technical and scientific courses in the professional development education of officers and enlisted personnel. These courses would orient on the basic scientific concepts of key military technologies and would be structured to meet the needs of various levels of responsibility. In addition, officers should develop a more substantive background in geopolitics, art of war, military history, Soviet studies and so on which is needed to provide the framework for their professional development.

- Begin a large-scale effort to increase expertise in Soviet affairs, for, unless we thoroughly understand the Soviet policies, programs and “grand strategy,” the rest is meaningless. The military must also improve its understanding and skills in the area of Latin-American and African affairs. Future trends indicate that African and Hispanic language and area skills may be required in a significantly greater portion of the military.

- Aggressively continue the development and evolution of the Army’s high-technology light division and light infantry divisions to provide a highly lethal, mobile, deployable and self-sufficient force that can bring overwhelming military power to bear in remote regions of the world.

While these initiatives are not all-inclusive, they represent the potential for redirecting the nation’s efforts toward a military strategy which looks to the future. Only such a proactive strategy will enable us to meet our responsibility of “providing for the common defense”—preserving the freedoms we all enjoy. **MR**

Richard B. Cheney is chairman of the board, president and chief executive officer for the Halliburton Company in Dallas, Texas. He served as the nation’s 17th secretary of defense from 21 March 1989 to 20 January 1992.

Thomas N. Harvey is the president of GlobeQuest, Ltd.; chairman of the board for Global Initiatives Inc.; and chief executive officer and chairman of the board of the Global Environment & Technology Foundation, Annandale, Virginia. He retired from the Army in 1991 after an Army career of more than 20 years.