A Resource Constrained Environment: A Primer to Thinking About Force Structure Change

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And I must tell you, when it comes to predicting the nature and location of our next military engagements, since Vietnam, our record has been perfect. We have never once gotten it right, from the Mayaguez to Grenada, Panama, Somalia, the Balkans, Haiti, Kuwait, Iraq, and more—we had no idea a year before any of these missions that we would be so engaged.

—Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, 25 February 2011

In the past, such as after the Vietnam War, our government applied cuts to defense across the board, resulting in a force that was undersized and underfunded relative to its missions and responsibilities. This process has historically led to outcomes that weaken rather than strengthen our national security—and which ultimately cost our Nation more when it must quickly rearm to confront new threats. I am determined not to repeat the mistakes of the past.

—Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta, 3 August 2011

THE FALL AND WINTER of 2011-2012 will bring dynamic change to the Army through two interrelated items: the results of the Comprehensive Strategy Review—directed by President Obama[1]—and the initial implementation of significant budgetary cuts to the Department of Defense.[2] Secretary Panetta stated that in the past "our government applied cuts to defense across the board resulting in a force that was undersized and underfunded relative to its missions. . . . I am determined not to repeat the mistakes of the past."[3] The secretary's statement can serve as a clarion call, or it can be seen as a harbinger of doom. Budget reductions will likely hit the Army harder than the other services given the anticipated reduction of Overseas Contingency Operations funding as well as base budget.

The obvious budgetary target within the Army is force structure. Force structure costs generate large budget obligations and, therefore, provide a quick way to reduce long-term costs. However, the anticipated reduction in end strength also provides the opportunity to transform the Army to accomplish mission requirements at best value. In short, the Army will need to make force structure decisions informed by cost versus benefit valuations. These

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PHOTO: A team mans a bazooka at the Battle of Osan. (U.S. Army)

valuations for future requirements will require assumptions, which can increase risk. As such, a continuous review of assumptions and risks must underpin the decisions made en route to a best-value force. Failure to do so increases the probability of developing a lean, but ultimately wrong, force for the security environment. A disciplined, fact-based, and objective approach—a logic framework—should inform the perpetual decisions affecting future Army force shaping and sizing options.

There are several considerations in thinking about force structure. Foremost are projections of the mission sets the forces must accomplish. Second are assumptions about the resources available across time to develop the force for the projected mission set. Third are the shaping aspects of force design and force mix. These aspects are not binary variables, but sliding scales, which in combination provide a descriptive framework of the optimal force structure for the expected missions within resource limitations. In reaching an optimal force structure, requisite trade-offs leave differences between the Army's assigned missions and its resources. Within these "deltas," planners identify risk and consider mitigations. Therefore, risk identification and associated mitigation strategies make up the fourth consideration for force structure. Finally, there are common assertions that may cloud development and critical assessment of proposed force structure solutions, and addressing those factors is important.

Force Structure Purpose

What is the force supposed to be able to do? This is the overriding question for force development and warrants a simple defense policy answer, but discerning current expectations is less clear. The president of the United States-directed comprehensive strategy review will likely add clarity once released. There are clear indications for a smaller Army as Iraq and Afghanistan draw down, but whether the expectations for the Army will change or if it will continue to do the same with less is uncertain.

While the results of the comprehensive strategy review are due by year's end, the government has not announced a date for the release of the results. However, congressional programming information requirements will likely force the Army to plan the future force in the absence of a clear, publicly stated, and politically accepted expectation of Army capacities and capabilities. With reelection considerations increasing as Fiscal Year 2012 progresses, the ambiguity may increase.

In the absence of clarity of purpose, the resources available will disproportionally drive decisions, thereby increasing an ends and means disconnect in the national security strategy. While currently unclear, definitive budget parameters will likely emerge ahead of Department of Defense (DOD) clarification of Army mission expectations. Given this situation, force structure discussions will anchor on the means portion of the equation guided by an interpretation of the DOD and national projected or assumed ends. Former Secretary of the Navy Sean O'Keefe reiterates this point. "If there is no strategic framework . . . [t]he process takes over. . . . [I]t is going to be the programmers and bean counters driving the train to meet a number."[4] In essence, a transition from a "resource informed" strategy to a "resource determined" strategy.

Effect of Resources Available

Given less room to hedge against a greater range of potential futures, a resource determined strategy drives a tighter reliance on accurate predictions of the future. However, as former Secretary of Defense Gates stated in his February 2011 speech at the U.S. Military Academy, "When it comes to predicting the nature and location of our next military engagements, since Vietnam, our record has been perfect. We have never once gotten it right[.]"[5] Therefore, adaptability, the ability to contend with differences from the anticipated future, becomes a hedging strategy within the future force structure. Ideally, a tighter budget would push decisions toward an adaptable force. However, perhaps counterintuitively, the force may become more specialized to achieve a specific and limited mission set more efficiently.

An adaptable force requires a measure of liquidity. Units within an extremely lean force will reflect a more specialized approach, by design or *de facto,* thereby reducing possible hedging strategies for alternate futures and increasing potentially adverse affects if wrong. In other words, tighter budgets may drive an "all-in" force structure bet on a predicted future, unless hedging mechanisms are built in. Finding an acceptable balance between adaptability and specificity must underpin force structure decisions.

Force Structure Aspects

Determining force structure is analogous to trying to build an aircraft in flight. There are physical aspects of flight to account for to ensure actual flight: lift, thrust, gravity, and drag. Gravity is the constant constraint while one manipulates the other three aspects to overcome it. Based on the manipulation of these aspects, an aircraft design emerges to meet the builder's needs.

The challenge with force structure is that continual decisions are required to meet current demands and shifting resources, while the force evolves over time. Evolving the force is a response to continuous reassessment and adjustment of assumptions about the future. Known and new missions, as well as shifting resource availability, affect change. In response, manipulation over time affects the evolution of force structure in four key aspects:

- Geographic alignment.
- Density.
- Design.
- The supporting force readiness model.

Each aspect is a sliding scale. *Geographic alignment* refers to the balance between global and regional alignment. *Density* refers to the balance between organic and pooled forces. *Design* refers to the balance between specialized and general purpose forces. The *force readiness model* is a balance between tiered and cyclic readiness. These aspects provide adjustment points to create an optimal Army force structure.

Geographic Alignment: Global and Regional Balance

The balance between globally available and regionally focused or assigned forces reflects force adaptability for hedging and the force specificity for anticipated contingencies.

Globally employable forces provide flexibility to respond globally at the expense of regional expertise. Global forces prepare to conduct missions in any environment and anticipate being incorporated into multiple regional contingency plans. As such, they lack expertise for missions in a particular region's cultural or geographic environment. However, they do provide a hedge against the uncertainty of future mission locations.

Regionally aligning forces enables units to focus on the cultural and geographic challenges within an area. These forces train and focus on contingency plans within the region. Regionally aligned forces are more likely to develop relationships with partner nations based on repeated engagements supporting a combatant commander's theater campaign plan. While regionally aligned forces provide a level of expertise for a region, they lack preparedness for extra-regional missions. A mix of global and regional forces can mitigate some of the identified weaknesses in each.

Density: Organic and Pooled Balance

The balance between organic and pooled forces reflects the optimum level of unit autonomy—the lowest level of independent operation. For instance, the Army in 2003 made the decision to provide unit autonomy to brigade combat teams (BCTs) rather than divisions. This decision made some division enablers organic to the BCT and pooled the remainder for more efficient employment across the Army through task organization. The balance between organic and pooled moved from division to brigade.

The expected mission set drives the optimal balance. An analogy similar to one attributed to General Peter Schoomaker, former Army Chief of Staff, illustrates this point. Picture organic divisions as $100 bills, modular BCTs as $20 bills, and the pooled forces represent denominations from one penny to a $10 bill. With the appropriate balance between organic and pooled forces, the Army can resource a combatant command's bill with close to exact change. With the organic division structure, all amounts owed were paid from $100 bills and the left over change was difficult to use. With the modular BCT, the spare change problem remains, but there is less spare change to waste. The table provides a historical look at the Army's shift in density over time to meet its expected mission set.

Design: Specialized and General Purpose Balance

In general, the more mission specific a force design, the less adaptable the formation becomes. Specialized forces are designed for specific mission sets. They accomplish these tasks efficiently and effectively. For purposes other than these, specialized unit efficiency and effectiveness significantly decreases the more the new purpose differs from

Chronology	FS	History	Considerations
1776 to 1917	Regiment Based	From 1776 to 1917; the largest fixed units in the regular U.S. Army were regiments	With the exceptions of large wars like the Civil War, the primary purpose was securing the westward expansion of the United States as well as its territories and protectorates. Geographic Departments characterized "peace time" command structures above regiments. Distributed small-scale operations were the norm. Divisions, Corps, and Armies characterized "war time" operational level command structures—large-scale war was considered the exception.
Civil War		States raised militia/volunteer regiments and the national governments provided ad hoc HQs over them.	
Spanish-American War		Major wars were viewed as exceptions and not the norm.	
Post WWI	Division Based	As a world power, the U.S. organized for major wars as the primary normative function.	Primary Purpose: Preventing another world war and, if unsuccessful, preparing to fight a global scale war. Assumed that by preparing for large-scale war, forces could easily address lesser contingencies. Maintaining the "band of excellence" in Europe and Korea required a considerable personnel investment at all times and a robust TTHS (trainees, transients, holdees, and students) account for permanent change of station. Many theater and RC units were in the lowest readiness tiers for both personnel and equipment and were not ready without considerable time and resources. Fixed divisions had difficulty controlling and/or supporting additional maneuver units without augmentation, especially if they were not of similar capabilities (e.g., Light Infantry Division augmented with a Heavy Brigade). Fixed divisions were permanently organized to meet the need for large-scale combat operations (e.g., organic provision of direct-support artillery, chemical defense, etc.). Fixed divisions were still dependent on many non-organic assets found only at corps or higher (MEDEVAC, CH-47s, Patriot Missiles, EOD, etc.). Division Support Commands (DISCOMs) optimized only to support specific division, Corps Support Groups (CSGs)/Corps Support Commands (COSCOMs) optimized for corps support, Area Support Groups (ASGs)/Theater Support Commands (TSCs) optimized only for theater support. Echelons above Division (EAD) support structures begin modularizing in the 1990s. Seventeen different maneuver brigade types across the Army (e.g., Light ACR, ESB, etc.) not counting the Ranger Regiment. Most Army requirements, especially post-Vietnam, were brigade-like, but were resourced from divisions, including unit rotations for Bosnia and Kosovo.
1917-2004		Army was division-based from 1917 to 2004.	
WWII		Over 55 Regimental Combat Teams were used in WWII.	
Korea		4 Regimental Combat Teams were used during Korea.	
Vietnam		Seven separate brigades were flexibly employed in Vietnam, and in 1968 three were combined in theater to form the Americal Division.	
Grenada		Operations in Grenada, Panama, and even Desert Storm showed limitations to fixed divisions and the advantages of brigades.	
Panama			
Desert Storm			
Late Cold War		By the end of the Cold War, between 1990 and 2003, most Western armies and even Russia completely converted from fixed-division structures to brigade-based structures.	
1991-1995		Faced with deep end strength reductions, GEN Sullivan chose to keep ten RA divisions at the expense of all separate brigades by creating seven divisions of only two co-located brigades and one physically "separated brigade" without its complete slice of division troops.	
2004-Current	Modular Brigade Based	Implemented Task Force Modularity recommendations beginning in 2004 to increase flexibility, agility, and a fungible structure to Operational Army. Grow the Army initiative and ARFORGEN applied during the same timeframe.	Primary purpose: provide constant supply of ready forces for long duration operations with a unit rotation policy. Modularity and cyclic readiness eliminates tiered readiness—haves and have-nots to haves and will-haves. Cyclic readiness and unit rotations reduced TTHS requirements. Modular sustainment structure supports any echelon providing more tailored sustainment. Brigade-sized units are tailored to specific operational situations. (Achieve strategic objectives at reduced personnel commitment.) Brigade theater slice (approximately 10,000) is smaller than previous divisional slice (approximately 45,000 with three maneuver brigades.) The composition of a combat force can task organize heavy, light, and Stryker brigades under any divisional or corps headquarters. All units of the Army (AC and RC) enjoy high priority at some time during a rotation cycle.

The Army's shift in density over time to meet its expected missions.

(U.S. Army)

MG Michael Kuehr, deputy commander for 8th United States Army, addresses attendees on behalf of GEN Walter Sharp, commanding general for United States Forces Korea, United Nations Command, Combined Forces Command, during the 58th Task Force Smith Commemoration on 10 July 2008.

the designed purpose. For instance, a civil affairs battalion, or even a water purification team, would struggle to accomplish missions outside of what its structure was designed to do. Some units are more specialized than others. The more specialized or unique the unit's design, the less fungible its mission set becomes.

General-purpose forces are designed to provide an acceptable solution to unforeseen circumstances. These forces are expected to more readily adapt through mission development on the ground or through training if given enough lead time. They provide an adaptable force that can hedge against uncertainty. Additionally, with appropriate training and support, the general-purpose forces can provide an added capacity not present in specialized units. A less specialized, more general-purpose formation like a field artillery battalion can adapt quickly to new mission sets, such as providing convoy security in Iraq. General-purpose force effectiveness in new specified missions reflects time allowed to train before, and the time it spends executing, the new mission.

The Supporting Force Readiness Model: Tiered and Cyclic Balance

Force readiness models provide resourcing methodologies to address risk management. The balance between tiered and cyclic models must inform force structure to enable best value within acceptable risk. Tiered readiness refers to the designation of a hierarchy of priorities—certain units have resources to maintain the highest level of readiness while others receive resources according to their assigned tier of readiness. The top tier units deploy more often and with shorter time to prepare. If the contingency requires more than the top tier units, resourcing of lower tiered units increases to provide a steady flow of forces to reinforce the top tier units and meet the needs of the combatant commander.

In the past, the Reserve Component acted mainly as a strategic reserve residing in the lower tiers of readiness. The tiered approach is the most efficient force readiness method in situations where requirements rarely exceed the top tier's capability and capacity. However, the capability for significant unplanned mobilization is fundamental to increasing readiness in the lower tier units (when demand exceeds the supply of higher tiered formations). Rapid mobilization requires peacetime investment in systems for rapid accessions of personnel, training facility capacities, and industrial surge capacities.

The cost-benefit analysis of a readiness system based on the assumed ability for significant mobilization must include the costs of maintaining the infrastructure to achieve the requisite timelines. At a minimum, the analysis should recognize the risk, in terms of likelihood and potential consequences, of not making and maintaining mobilization investments.

Cyclic readiness refers to building the highest readiness across all of the force, separated into temporal states of readiness. The next unit designated to deploy or respond to a contingency has the resource priority. Once a unit designated time or deployment ends, the unit returns to the lowest level of readiness and resourcing. Over time, the unit readiness and resources progressively increase in anticipation of the next designated time or deployment. The Reserve Component can also work on a more extended, but complimentary, readiness cycle. The higher the force requirement, the faster the units rotate through the cycle.

The cyclic approach is the most effective in producing a steady supply of forces for indefinite periods to contingencies in which policy dictates unit rotation (rather than individual rotation). However, this approach becomes an inefficient use of resources if high-readiness forces remain unemployed at peak readiness. When viewed from a cost-benefit perspective, the benefit must consider the committed mission as well as the "prevent and deter" mission.

Total Force Considerations

When discussing force structure, many leaders focus on the operational force in the Active Component. In projected fiscal and operational environments, considering the whole Army as a single entity is necessary. Consideration of the total force includes not only the Active and Reserve Components of the Army, but also thinking holistically about the generating and operational forces as a single entity across a continuum of mission sets. A smaller, resource-constrained Army will need to leverage all means to meet mission requirements with reduced resources. All efforts will increasingly require closer synchronization with solutions unencumbered by traditional perception of roles. When rethinking the total force, decision makers will need to account for the following realities:

- Statutory and treaty requirements for forces including theater assigned forces.
- Army support to other services and other joint, interagency, intergovernmental, and multinational (JIIM) requirements (e.g., providing protection and sustainment, as well as setting the theater for potential JIIM operations in the future).
- Force mix between the Reserve and Active Components.
- Political aspects of force structure changes in the Reserve Component.
- Force liquidity requirements, e.g., long-term, ad hoc joint and multinational headquarters; trainee, transient, holdees, and students (TTHS) account requirements; nondeployable soldiers; and individual boots on ground to dwell time ratios).

Risk

Force structure decisions must address the delta between the force structure and mission expectations in clear risk statements. Identifying, assessing, and mitigating risk are fundamental force structure outcomes. In the end, an articulation of the accepted risk should inform policy makers about the capability and capacity limitations of the revised force structure. An articulation of risk will shape advocacy in policy discussions and help determine the point at which it becomes unacceptable—a service threshold or red line for a particular mission. The taxonomy for the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff's risk assessment framework provides a common approach to characterize risk in terms of a range of operational, future challenge, force management, and institutional factors. It further characterizes risks by their likelihood and potential effect. Placing the Army's risk for force structure options within the chairman's framework offers a

method familiar to Defense policy makers, and it will help shape expectations and set the groundwork for the service contribution to the chairman's assessment once the force structure is chosen.

Common Assertions

We must now address three common assertions:

- Force structure determines training efficiency and leader mentorship.
- Additional special operations forces (SOF) can mitigate the disadvantages of having a smaller conventional force.
- Mobilization will always be rapid.

Force structure effects on mentorship and training. Within Army culture, many leaders see force structure as a way to address leadership and training issues. However, force design and force mix changes do not readily solve leader mentorship or training challenges. For instance, the current recognized challenges of leader mentorship and training may have more to do with operational tempo and base realignment than the lack of a division commander whose organizational structure includes organic brigades. In truth, even in the past division-centric force structure, over two-thirds of the Army was nondivisional and merely task organized within garrison. The nondivisional force moved toward more modular designs in the 1990s. Arguably, mentorship and training challenges are greater for current echelons-above-brigade forces because they routinely deploy at the team, detachment, and company level away from their home station task organization.

Leader mentorship is not solely a function of an organic command relationship. Leader development is an inherent responsibility at all command and leadership levels whether assigned, attached, or task organized. Effective mentorship results from the mentor and protégé seeking out and fostering an open, two-way, and enduring relationship. Mentorship frequently develops out of a leader development relationship. In fact, having a mentor outside the chain of command to allow free-flowing discussion can enhance mentorship. Regardless, neither force structure nor design provides the dominant variable for leader development or mentorship. The varying operational tempo most likely strains these informal relationships just as it does familial relationships. As the operational tempo slows, the garrison task organizations will regain many organic attributes, both beneficial and detrimental.

There is little difference in training between organic divisions and forces task organized within garrison as operational tempo decreases. The longer the task organization is in place, the more it reflects organic attributes. One could argue, however, the constant rotation of units improves access to training facilities and materiel at a particular location. If all units deployed together from a single installation, the simultaneous training demands could overwhelm local facilities.

More special operations forces. The notion of increasing the number of SOF troops and units to mitigate a smaller conventional force is viable, to a point. For this assertion to be true, it must link to an appropriate strategy and must consider the method for developing SOF. Special operations forces primarily assess and select their members from experienced conventional forces. Drawing candidates from a comparatively large population pool enables a focus on quality. As the ratio between conventional forces and SOF decreases, the quality of personnel could decrease. The recent expansion of Army Special Forces, a subset within the SOF community, ushered in a method to expand the force pool by recruiting directly from the civilian populace. While this description is simplistic, the program produces Special Forces noncommissioned officers without any experience in the conventional force outside of initial entry training. Traditionally accessed candidates from the conventional force

NARA

The first U.S. ground troops to arrive in Korea debark from trains somewhere in South Korea, June 1950.

currently offset this method. Increased reliance on the direct accession approach could shape Special Forces in undesirable ways. One of the greatest lessons from the current conflicts is the realization in both communities of the complementary nature of conventional and special operations. Without a basic understanding of conventional forces, Special Forces limit their ability to work effectively with conventional forces and develop conventional forces in foreign militaries. Operations in Iraq and Afghanistan attest to the increase in effectiveness of special operations forces by judicious incorporation of conventional forces. A large enough conventional force pool enables the SOF maxim of "quality over quantity."

Rapid mobilization. A common assumption in most force structure reduction approaches includes the ability to rapidly mobilize and expand the force structure in time of war. There is a cost associated with this assumption that is not usually included—the cost of developing and maintaining the mobilization infrastructure.

Once the active Army began to expand incrementally after 11 September 2001, it took almost 10 years to grow by 80,000—including an increase in accession waivers and large retention bonuses. Growing an all-volunteer force takes time—even with an involuntary Individual Ready Reserve recall. Reserve Component units are already a part of the force structure and possess a small infrastructure for already trained forces. The Reserve unit mobilization processes are further honed through years of cyclic mobilization. Mobilization of a civilian populace is different.

The expansion assumed in most force reduction approaches is the ability to quickly mobilize from the civilian populace as well as ramp up industry for increased equipment requirements. The infrastructure for such a mobilization is functionally nonexistent. It would include systems for rapid accession, training capacity for the rapid accession, and industrial plans for equipping the rapid increase in forces. This mobilization infrastructure is costly with a low likelihood of use. Therefore, it is a frequent and easy budget target. Any force structure reduction that assumes rapid expansion should also include within its cost-benefit analysis the proposed size and speed of the expansion, the time and cost to implement it, and its associated risks. The smaller the standing force, the more likely the mobilization infrastructure will be needed and the greater the risk if it is not up to the task.

Conclusion

The comprehensive strategy review will present the elements of a resource-driven strategy with new force structure analysis based on specified resources. The magnitude of the directives to reduce the budget will affect the intensity of the resulting force structure debate. In such an environment, working from an objective and logical framework provides an anchor to guide the discussions as they inform decisions. To avoid the mistakes of the past, the Army will need to make educated decisions about its force structure. Informed by continuous review of assumptions and risk, it must work to provide a best-value force. ***MR***

NOTES

1. From President Obama's speech on 13 April 2011: "Over the last two years, Secretary Bob Gates has courageously taken on wasteful spending, saving $400 billion in current and future spending. I believe we can do that again. We need to not only eliminate waste and improve efficiency and effectiveness, but we're going to have to conduct a fundamental review of America's missions, capabilities, and our role in a changing world. I intend to work with Secretary Gates and the Joint Chiefs on this review, and I will make specific decisions about spending after it's complete." Excerpt from "Remarks by the President on Fiscal Policy," White House Office of the Press Secretary, 13 April 2011, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/04/13/remarks-president-fiscal-policy> (accessed 22 August 2011).

2. Within the debt deal, initial cuts to the Department of Defense are $350 billion in 10 years, which are likely close to the planning assumptions for the Comprehensive Strategy Review based on the presidential statement of 13 April 2011. The follow-on bipartisan committee must identify an additional $1.5 trillion by 23 November 2011 with Congressional approval by 23 December 2011. Failure to vote the cuts into law by 23 December 2011 will invoke automatic cuts split 50-50 between national security and domestic spending. The Defense Department portion is estimated at $500 billion. With the automatic cuts, the Defense Budget would need to cut $850 billion over 10 years. "Military Frets Over Debt Deal's Potential Cuts," CBSNews.com, 5 August 2011, <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2011/08/05/politics/main20088546.shtml> (accessed 22 August 2011). "Fact Sheet: Bipartisan Debt Deal: A Win for the Economy and Budget Discipline," The White House, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/fact-sheet-victory-bipartisan-compromise-economy-american-people> (accessed 22 August 2011).

3. The quotation is from a written note to the Department of Defense after the "debt deal" passed. Leon Panetta, "Meeting Our Fiscal and National Security Responsibilities," U.S. Department of Defense, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Public Affairs), 3 August 2011, <http://www.defense.gov/Speeches/Speech.aspx?SpeechID=1597> (accessed August 22, 2011).

4. Sean O'Keefe is quoted in response to Deputy Secretary of Defense Lynn's statements at the Center for Strategic and International Studies on the strategic roles and missions review. Sandra Erwin, National Defense Weblog, "Advice to the Pentagon: Stop Fiddling, Come to Grips With Impending Fiscal Doom," 10 June 2011, <http://www.nationaldefensemagazine.org/blog/Lists/Posts/Post.aspx?ID=441> (accessed 22 August 2011).

5. Robert Gates, United States Military Academy (West Point, NY), U.S. Department of Defense, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Public Affairs), 25 February 2011, <http://www.defense.gov/Speeches/Speech.aspx?SpeechID=1539> (accessed 22 August 2011).