RETHINKING NATIONAL SECURITY AND THE ROLE OF THE MILITARY

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I. CONTEXT

When was the last time we *really* had to rethink our national security or the role of the military in service to our society—not just adjust our thinking to accommodate some new technical or political development, but to reexamine deeply the intellectual foundations of our security? It was precisely 50 years ago; and the people who confronted the changes and did the rethinking are now almost all gone from the world stage. We were the beneficiaries and the trustees of the changes they pioneered. Now, their legacy has run out, and their shoes await us.

A Sea Change

The catalysts for change 50 years ago were two world-shaking developments—one political and the other technical:

- The political development—not completely unforeseen—was the behavior of the Soviet Union as it advanced through Eastern Europe. Our ally by circumstance more than choice in World War II confirmed our worst fears about its ideological and hegemonic ambitions. Fascist totalitarianism was nearing defeat, only to be supplanted by communist totalitarianism. A safer world for freedom, let alone democracy, was slipping away from us after nearly four years of blood and treasure spent toward that very end. Churchill called it, appropriately enough, triumph and tragedy.[1]

- The technical development was the atomic bomb. Fifty years ago this month, Japan was struck with the first and only nuclear explosives to be used in war. Even after half a century, the echo of that stunning event polarizes us: What was to have been a commemorative display of the partial carcass of the Enola Gay[2] this year turned, instead, into a public food-fight between divisions that have grown in our society. But 50 years ago, our society, unified in a war against fascism, thought a new era had dawned. We even bravely, if naively, heralded it as the beginning of the atomic age.

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[1]Winston. S. Churchill, *The Second World War*, six volumes, Vol. 6: *Triumph & Tragedy*, Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston 1953.

[2]The name given to the B-29 bomber that dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima on August 6, 1945. For a detailed, if not unbiased, description of the controversy, see Philip Nobile, ed., *Judgment at the Smithsonian*, Marlowe, New York, 1995.

There were other contemporaneous changes, of course—such as the emergence of the United States from the war as the dominant producer and consumer on the planet, the rapid development of aircraft and electronic technologies—but the brutal behavior of the Soviet Union and the unleashing of the power of the atom were sufficient, all by themselves, to present a new and different world. They were at the center of disturbing changes.

Our ideas about the threats to our nation—and the roles of the military in protecting us against those threats—were about to go through what we now like to call a "sea change." Within a few years, George Kennan would sketch the outlines of his vision of containment; and Bernard Brodie would argue for a strategy of deterrence. The essence of Kennan's vision of containment was his concept of

> a long-term, patient but firm and vigilant containment of Russian expansive tendencies [until] either the break-up or the gradual mellowing of Soviet power.[3]

The essence of Brodie's strategy of deterrence is to be found in his concept of the future role of the military:

> Thus far the chief purpose of our military establishment has been to win wars. From now on its chief purpose must be to avert them. It can have no other useful purpose.[4]

Their vision and strategy would dominate our thinking about national security during the 40-year Cold War. Those ideas would be modified and elaborated, of course, with time and new developments, both political and technical: Containment would be embellished with massive retaliation, flexible response, and détente. Deterrence would be defined by the criteria of assured destruction, extended to cover allies, and then mocked as mad. Concepts for massive civil defense and missile defense programs would

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[3]George F. Kennan writing as "X" in "The Sources of Soviet Conduct," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 25, No. 4, July 1947, pp. 575, 582.

[4]Bernard Brodie, editor, *The Absolute Weapon*, Harcourt Brace, New York, 1946, p. 76, as repeated by its author in *War and Politics*, The Macmillan Company, New York, 1973, fn. 2, p. 377.

disturb, but could not displace, deterrence as the core of our strategy. Through four decades, containment would remain our cornerstone and deterrence our bedrock.

Resistance to Change

But those ideas did not come immediately or easy. It wasn't easy to accept that

- The United States was no longer protected from invasion or bombardment by several thousands of miles of oceans to the east and west,

- The very survival of our nation could soon be under the threat of atomic bombs, or

- Our wartime ally must now be our implacable foe.

The transition to the new era was uncertain and saw many contending arguments. Containment and deterrence were not the only or obvious solutions. There were those who argued that we should wage preventive or preemptive war against the Soviet Union before it acquired or used atomic bombs. Others argued that atomic bombs were simply more powerful bombs, to be used like other bombs, with no need for changes in strategy or the roles of the military. Still others worried that the Soviet Union could not be contained or deterred; war was inevitable, and we needed concepts for waging and winning wars in the atomic age.

Our difficulties in adapting to change were most evident in the behavior of our armed forces: At first, the Army Air Forces assumed that fleets of bombers would still be needed to carry conventional bombs; atomic bombs would simply be too expensive to use or risk except for special targets or situations.[5] The Army and Navy, too, saw their roles unchanged from what

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[5]The "Spaatz Board," convened shortly after the war, concluded first, that the "atomic bomb does not . . . warrant a material change in our present conception of the employment, size, organization, and composition of the postwar Air Force" and second, that it "has not altered our basic concept of the strategic air offensive but has given us an additional

they were in the recent war, even as they hurriedly looked for ways to incorporate atomic weapons into their repertoires of land and sea warfare. These new atomic bombs were not an unalloyed boon to the victorious American military, even while we briefly enjoyed a monopoly on them; they were disturbing some cherished notions of who the military services were and what they were about. It was the diplomats and scientists who spoke openly of the dilemmas and recognized that the world would never be the same again. It was they who began to rethink the meaning of national security, while the military services slipped into internecine fights over diminishing resources and their organizational structures.

The Air Force won its independence from the Army, but couldn't commandeer all military air power; and all the services lost some of their independence to a new Department of Defense. The Air Force got its new bombers, but atomic bombs reduced their numbers from thousands to hundreds. The future need for armies and navies was boldly challenged by the Air Force, which, to its chagrin, soon learned that political constraints on the use of military power—as predicted by Brodie—would undermine its presumption of the dominance of air power with atomic bombs in all future wars. The Army and Navy would eventually find their own niches in the atomic age, embrace atomic weapons, and adapt to the Cold War with its bizarre calculus.

But on the larger stage, Kennan's vision of containment turned out to be prophesy—communism did mellow and collapse from its own contradictions— and Brodie's strategy of deterrence would be adopted by several nations, not just the superpowers, when it came to the use of nuclear weapons. To a degree, we *still* want to contain hegemonic power—whether it be Russian, Chinese, or Islamic fundamentalism—and we *still* want to deter the use of nuclear weapons by anyone. But those concepts of containment and deterrence no longer seem central to the security problems that face us in the

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weapon." See Carl H. Builder, *The Icarus Syndrome*, Transaction Publishers, New Brunswick, 1994, pp. 135-138.

21st century. Indeed, we now recognize that those who may come to possess weapons of mass destruction may not be deterrable, and that those who may most threaten our security are not necessarily nations.

The problem we face is not one of finding new substitutes or equivalents for containment and deterrence that can be plugged back into the national security equation. It is much more difficult than that—it is rethinking what we mean by national security.

II. CHALLENGE

As we look back 50 years from the present, we ought to recognize some common features on the ground upon which our predecessors stood and upon which we now stand:

- **A sea change:** Dramatic political and technical changes, variously described as heralding a revolution, a new order, or a new age. Then it was communism ascendant and atomic bombs. Now it is the collapse of communism and the information revolution that are transforming societies everywhere.

- **No going back:** The recognition of an irrevocable loss of security that must somehow be accommodated rather than recovered. Then it was the loss of our ocean ramparts and the almost unimaginable destructiveness of atomic bombs. Now it is the loss of sovereignty over our borders, currency, markets, trade, and information and the global proliferation of weapons technology.

- **Disorientation:** Prevailing concepts that seem no longer to apply, but without any obvious replacements in sight. Then it was the loss of the ability to defend our nation at any price—the leakage of even a few atomic bombs would be a national catastrophe. Now we face the prospects of adversaries who are no longer geographically defined or deterred by our most powerful weapons because they have little or nothing to lose.

- **A bleak outlook:** The prospect of continued reductions in military forces and budgets. Then it was the post-war demobilization as the nation turned its attention to raising families, buying homes and cars, getting an education—all deferred by years of all-out war. Now it is a reordering of national priorities after 40 years of putting national security first against a rising tide of social demands.

- **Hanging on:** Our military institutions desperately trying to make their existing forces and concepts adaptable to the future. Then it was the services trying to retain the character and structure, if not the size, of the forces that had brought them to a stunning victory over the fascists—even though the advent of atomic bombs left those aims in question. Now it is the services trying to retain the character and structure *and* size of the forces that have brought them to an unexpected winning of the Cold War and a stunning victory in the Persian Gulf—even though a spate of ethnic and separatist conflicts has left the relevance of those forces in question.

When summarized, as in Figure 1, it is apparent that the challenges that confront us today are only different in form, but not in kind, from those that we faced 50 years ago. In a few aspects, they are even similar in kind:

Some Common Landscape Features Then and Now		
Feature	**1945**	**1995**
A Sea Change	Communism ascendant Atomic bombs proven	Communism imploded Information revolution
No Going Back	Loss of oceans as barriers Cities utterly vulnerable	Loss of sovereignty over borders, trade, currency
Disorientation	No ability to defend our society at any price	Enemies neither geo-fixed nor deterrable
A Bleak Outlook	Demobilization for war-deferred personal agendas	Reordering of priorities for deferred social agendas
Hanging On	Services trying to retain their force structures	Services trying to retain their force structure

Figure 1.

All of these strange and unwelcomed features present 50 years ago have come back to confront us again; but they have come in a form or way that we seem somehow not to recognize. We have been there before; we have faced these challenges before. Our ideas about the threats to our nation and the roles of the military in protecting us against those threats are again about to go through a "sea change." But our diplomatic and military establishments are preoccupied by trying to hang on, to adapt with the least possible change,

rather than thinking afresh about the basic ideas that should guide us. We are embellishing old ideas or conceptions—trying to convert containment into engagement, deterrence into war-winning, alliances into partnerships—rather than rethinking what national security really means. Old wine in new bottles.

Ties that Bind

We are paralyzed in our thinking by many threads to the past: Even though the prospects for the massive use of nuclear weapons or the complete destruction of our nation at the hands of an implacable foe have receded, nuclear weapons have not gone away; and so, neither, has much of the political and military bureaucratic apparatus of the Cold War. Even though the prospects for large conventional wars have receded and we face more numerous ethnic and separatist conflicts, the possibility of conventional war has not been eliminated; and so our security planning remains centered there—arguably on the past more than the future. But the strongest threads to the past are not in the apparatus or forces; they are in our *thinking processes*—forged, honed, and enshrined during 40 years of successful intellectual wars to win national security resources.

Most of our efforts to wrestle with the sea change in our national security circumstances would seem to suffer from a common malaise that has been described elsewhere as "Cold War vestigial thinking." That pejorative term does not mean trying to re-fight the Cold War; it means Cold War thinking processes have become locked in as the norm rather than as an aberrance. The contemporary formalisms of defense planning and analysis are artifacts of the Cold War—yet we treat them as engraved, enduring truths—and we seem not yet ready to let go of them to think afresh about our nation's security or how to analyze it. To be sure, we were forced, almost at the point of ridicule,[6] to let go of the Cold War threats and scenarios. But the

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[6]Even as the Soviet Union was imploding, our military leadership (e.g., Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney) continued to warn that the communist-built war machine remained huge, modernizing, and dangerous. Those warnings ceased only when it became apparent that they were undermining the credibility of the defense establishment with the public.

thinking processes—the defense planning and analysis catechism, as recited in Figure 2—are unchanged. The vestiges of the Cold War are found in our structured way of thinking about national security and the contributions of military forces.

Cold War Planning Catechism*

- **These are the agreed-upon national objectives;**

- **Those are threats to these objectives;**

- **To secure these objectives in the face of those threats, that is the adopted strategy;**

- **This is the set of military capabilities needed to underwrite that strategy;**

- **And, thus, the following military forces are required to provide this set of capabilities [and are acquired through cost-effective programs].**

*Builder, *The Masks of War*, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1989, p. 5

Figure 2.

At a superficial level, the national objectives and strategy have changed, but not the reverence we pay them: We still treat them as urgent imperatives—as if the nation's survival depended upon them—even though they have become little more than political platitudes. The military threats and scenarios have changed, but not the idea of a dominant, worst-case scenario that should size our forces. The Cold War threats and scenarios challenged the nation's very survival and were made quite credible by the early and outrageous behavior of the communist bloc; but today's threats and scenarios challenge only what are vaguely defined as national interests. We seem not to recognize that the national consensus on security had begun to fracture long before the Cold War was declared over. Capabilities and forces have changed in size more than type, but not how we regard the sanctity of our requirements for them. Programs and systems have changed the least,

and they are still justified mostly in terms of cost-effectiveness—even though other considerations clearly dominate in their public disposition.

Frozen Thinking Processes

The post-Cold War defense planning process—as evidenced in the justifications for the base and the bottom up review forces—is little changed from the Cold War defense planning process instituted by Robert McNamara in the 1960s. We are still coloring inside the same lines. Despite numerous changes since the end of the Cold War—reduced threats, new scenarios, smaller forces, etc.—the intellectual processes—how we should accommodate and evaluate these changes—and the premises—what national security is about and why we have military forces—remain firmly rooted in the manner of thinking that was born of the Cold War.

It can be argued that the intellectual processes for defense planning and analysis in the Cold War were eminently logical and should, therefore, apply just as well to the post-Cold War environment. But, as illustrated in Figure 3, logic does not exist apart from its context. In other domains—such as physics and aerodynamics—we recognize that different logical frameworks may apply, depending upon the dominant consideration. All are logical, but only one may be pertinent to the problem at hand. In defense planning, too, the dominant consideration may change and, with it, the logical framework. During the Cold War—where a protracted threat to the survival of the nation meant keeping the public purse open wide to the military—cost-effectiveness was properly a dominant consideration in defense planning. But in World War II, cost-effectiveness was seldom a consideration;[7] and in peacetime, the rapid expansion of the military has generally been the dominant consideration.

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[7] For example, at the beginning of World War II, the United States put into production every type of aircraft then being produced, even though some were clearly inferior to others. Expediency argued for quantity before quality or cost-effectiveness.

Logical Frameworks

• **Mechanics or physics**	
– Newtonian	**momentum**
– Relativistic	**velocity**
– Quantum	**energy**
• **Aerodynamics or fluid flow**	
– Navier-Stokes	**friction**
– Compressible	**turbulence**
– Incompressible	**shockwaves**
• **Defense planning**	
– Cold War (1948—1990)	**cost-effectiveness**
– Hot War (1941—1945)	**expediency**
– Peacetime (1920—1938)	**expansion**

Figure 3.

The logic of the Cold War defense planning and analysis process was compelling *precisely* because of the unique nature of the Cold War: We faced a threat so vital, immediate, and obvious to the nation's very survival that its demands on the nation's resources were open-ended. We needed a logic to cap those open-ended demands and to insure that the public paid for the most cost-effective solution to the problem of the nation's survival. But capping demands against an unlimited threat and insuring the most cost-effective use of the public's blank check are no longer the challenges of national security.

Our thinking must be more than logical, it must also be relevant. When the nation's very existence has been threatened,[8] the needs of our military have become imperatives. But when the nation's survival is no longer at stake, we can't pretend that military needs come first, before all other fiscal demands. Yet that is what we persist in doing in the wake of the Cold War: We still tell the American people what we *must* have (forces for two nearly

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[8]The nation's very existence was clearly threatened only twice—in the American Civil War and the Cold War. World War II posed an indirect threat in the form of the spread of fascist totalitarianism.

simultaneous MRCs) and how much it will cost them, regardless of how much they may be borrowing or how many other places they could spend that money.[9] It is we who have decided both the principal and the premium for the nation's insurance policy. That is Cold War thinking.

A credible threat to the nation's survival and the public consensus on national security have both evaporated; but we continue to act as if the national security objectives and strategy were inviolable, as if the threats and the scenarios were vital and accepted, as if the price for the necessary forces must be paid so long as they are cost-effective. But if the reality is otherwise, we should very much doubt that those Cold War thinking processes are relevant to national security, regardless of their logic in a time now vanished.

We must entertain the possibility of long-cherished ideas becoming victims in this sea change: Fifty years ago, atomic bombs made our nation vulnerable to sudden destruction for the first time; and they would soon foreclose the very military option that had just brought us victory—our resort to total war as means for defeating our enemies. The information revolution contributed to the collapse of communism by confronting closed societies with the choice of openness or impoverishment; but it also corroded the traditional sovereign powers of advanced nation-states, most notably our own.[10]

Our challenge is not to find plug-compatible replacements for containment or deterrence, nor is it to find security policies that will satisfy or please our diplomatic and military establishments. The concepts of containment and deterrence were not welcomed by these communities when first proposed. Kennan and Brodie were not searching for ideas that would please their clients in the State Department or Pentagon. They were trying to understand a new world that was emerging and to discern that which we must attend and accept in order to adapt and survive.

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[9]For the development of this argument, see Carl H. Builder, *Military Planning Today: Calculus or Charade?* RAND, MR-293-AF, 1993.
[10]For some of these dimensions, see Walter B. Wriston, *The Twilight of Sovereignty*, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1992.

If we are to rethink national security, we must begin by rethinking what we mean by both terms—our nation and its security. What does *national* mean when consensus is one of the victims of the sea change—when we celebrate the diversity of our society more than its unity? What does *security* mean when the greatest risk to our lives and property is not war but violence from the street? It is here, on these tough nuts, that our questions and our path to understanding must begin.

III. CONCEPTS

That path need not be mysterious or a series of irreproducible, inspirational leaps. We can walk step-by-step through logical questions and plausible answers toward new approaches to national security and the role of the military. We may not all agree on the particular path taken here and, hence, on the destination reached; but like good pathfinders, we can mark the forks on the trail and encourage others to explore alternative branches. What follows is the mapping of one path, not to preempt or discount the alternatives, but to demonstrate the existence of a path and destinations that are pertinent to redefining national security and the role of the military for our times.

In what direction should we set forth? Shall we head in the direction of the most salient problems before us—like the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction—or toward preferred solutions—like missile defense—or something else? The direction adopted here is modest, but specific: It is toward arriving at the wisdom of Kennan's vision and Brodie's strategy, but for our times.[11] What might Kennan and Brodie say if, like Rip van Winkle, they awoke from a 50-year sleep and stood in our shoes? We could do worse than strive to arrive where they did with their simple statements—a few phrases or sentences—that captured so much about how we should secure our future and use our military.

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[11] The idea of adapting to contemporary problems the historical approaches of historical figures to historic problems is nicely captured by George McKenna in "On Abortion: A Lincoln Position," *The Atlantic Monthly*, September 1995, pp. 51-68.

If we would re-formulate Kennan's and Brodie's statements so they are appropriate to our future, the chosen path is through the forest of institutional concepts. The mileposts on that path are four powerful orienting concepts:

1. A **theory**, a model of how the world works and why we should care that it works that way.

2. A **mission**, the task to which we dedicate ourselves.

3. A **vision,** a shared sense of identity and purpose toward an outcome.

4. A **strategy**, a concept for relating means and ends.

As described in *The Icarus Syndrome*, these four ideas align themselves in a natural hierarchy:

> Of these four concepts, theory would seem to be the most fundamental; it supposes how things will or should work—if this, then that—and why we should care. Given a theory of how things might work, it is a much shorter intellectual step to suggest tasks that should be taken up (a mission), to conceive what can and ought to be (a vision), and to plan the relationships among means and ends (a strategy).
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> Yet these four concepts are markedly different intellectual tools: Theory is an explanation. Mission is a purpose. Vision is a dream. Strategy is a scheme. . . .[12]

Although one can begin anywhere along this path through concepts—with vision or strategy—it is easier to start with theory and work down to strategy. Theory sets the stage for the remaining concepts; if the theory is clear, then the rest follows much more quickly. So, we shall take extra care with this first important step.

Theory

A theory orients us on the path of rethinking national security by explaining how the most pertinent parts of the world affecting national security will work—and why should we care that they work that way. A brief

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[12] Builder, *The Icarus Syndrome*, pp. 206, 207.

example from a different subject—atomic energy—may help to clarify that concept:

> Among other things, Einstein's Theory of Relativity says that energy and mass obey the formula, $E = m\,c^2$. That is how a central aspect of nuclear physics is supposed to work. Because c, the speed of light, is a very large number, the theory says a very small amount of mass can be traded for a very large amount of energy. And why should we care? Because it suggests a way of making atomic bombs.

For a theory of how the world of national security works and why we should care, we can go in several directions—to theories about the nature of nations and their wars,[13] about the more fundamental nature of humans and conflict,[14] more narrowly about the economic imperatives of nations,[15] or about the cultural imperatives of civilizations, ideologies, and religions.[16] Here, we shall take the path of a theory about technology as a disturber of human order,[17] but we should mark that important choice as a fork for those who might want to explore alternatives.

The theory here says that technology has historically been a disturber of the prevailing social order: The development of gunpowder disturbed the order of feudalism by breaching the walls of castles and diffusing destructive power beyond the noble elites. The development of the printing press—in what could be characterized as an earlier information revolution—disturbed

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[13] Many might go back to Clausewitz for theory here. See Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, edited and translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1976.

[14] As in John Keegan, *A History of Warfare*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1993.

[15] As in Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000*, Random House, New York, 1987.

[16] As with Samuel P. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?" *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 72, No. 3, Summer 1993, pp. 22-49.

[17] This is not the same as the theory of technological determinism, where the human fate is assumed to be decided by technological evolution (See, for example, Merritt Roe Smith and Leo Marx, ed., *Does Technology Drive History? The Dilemma of Technological Determinism*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, 1994). The theory advanced here—of technology as a disturber of prevailing order—suggests something different: that technological development is episodic and that complex social systems adapt to the disturbances with new and different forms.

the order provided by the Western Catholic Church by diffusing power to all kinds of secular enterprises.[18] The industrial revolution in Europe disturbed, among many other things, the order imposed by monarchies by creating great wealth outside the royal families. And the development of the atomic bomb disturbed the prior order imposed by nation-states through their demonstrated willingness to wage all-out war against one another.

When technology has disturbed the prevailing order, the re-establishment of a new order has usually taken time: New orders have not been created so much by deliberate human design as they have emerged slowly from the complex interactions of the disturbed social systems. Elements of the old order give ground slowly; the old vested interests must contend with each other and with new interests. The new orders that followed the disturbances of gunpowder and the printing press took 100 or more years to emerge in recognizable form. Fifty years ago, when atomic bombs first disturbed the prevailing order of nations, it took about ten years for the new orders of the Cold War and nuclear deterrence to emerge in the forms we recognize today. Kennan and Brodie *discerned* the future order more than they *designed* it; and it took time before others discovered their truths.

The great disturber of our time is the electronic information revolution which is changing the world from one of relative poverty to abundance in access to information—with highly corrosive effects on all kinds of hierarchies that have been historically erected and maintained through the control of limited information.[19] Information is becoming all but uncontrollable and is delivering enormous power into the hands of any individual, anywhere on the globe, with the wits and interest to use it. Gladys Ganley has succinctly captured the egalitarian effect of the mass distribution of inexpensive

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[18] The Islamic world banned the printing press for several hundred years and, thereby, avoided many of the disturbances of the Renaissance; but it also may have lost ground against the secular organization of Western science and technology. On this latter point, see William Pfaff, "Islam and the West," in *The New Yorker*, January 28, 1991, pp. 83-88.

[19] For a more complete discussion of the information revolution as a disturber of our times, see Carl H. Builder, "Is It a Transition or a Revolution?" in *FUTURES: The Journal of Forecasting, Planning and Policy*, Vol. 25, No. 2, March 1993, pp. 155-168.

electronic media—such as networked personal computers, facsimile machines, video cameras and recorders, and cellular telephones:

> They have brought geographically distant groups with like interests together for common activities and have allowed people around the globe to exert power against their governments, societies, and institutions. For the first time in history, these media have furnished the means for distributing individually crafted ideas and information on a massive scale, instantaneously, cheaply, and globally.[20]

At the same time, the information revolution has greatly facilitated global markets and commerce, creating new power centers and elites quite apart from the nation-states that have imposed order on the world for the past several hundred years. In his perceptive, *Jihad Vs. McWorld*, Benjamin Barber observes:

> In Europe, Asia, Africa, and South Pacific, and the Americas. . . markets are eroding national sovereignty and giving rise to entities—international banks, trade associations, transnational lobbies like OPEC and Greenpeace, world news services like CNN and the BBC, and multinational corporations that increasingly lack a meaningful national identity—that neither reflect nor respect nationhood as an organizing or regulative principle.[21]

These two quotes are mirrors to the Janus of our time: The power of information is diffusing downward to individuals; but it is also enabling the accretion of economic power in new elites who are abandoning nations. In an important, fundamental sense, the information revolution has unleashed two primal forces—elitism and egalitarianism—to run free, for the first time on a global scale Both have always been present as contending forces within human societies, but on a smaller geographical scale within nations or states. Both have historically propelled societies—as complex, nonlinear systems— back and forth between chaos and stasis:[22] Elitism can unleash great

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[20]Gladys D. Ganley, "Power to the People via Personal Electronic Media," *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 14, No. 2, Spring 1991, pp. 5-22.

[21]Benjamin R. Barber, "Jihad Vs. McWorld," *The Atlantic*, Vol. 269, No. 3, March 1992, pp. 53-63. Subsequently expanded and published under the same title by Random House, New York, 1995.

[22]The notion of human societies moving between stasis and chaos comes from the Santa Fe Institute and its work on complex systems. See, for example, M. Mitchell Waldrop,

creativity and wealth production, but unchecked, it tends to stratify societies and thus lead to instabilities and thence to chaos. Egalitarianism can distribute wealth more equitably, but unchecked, it can also undermine the incentives for wealth production and thus lead to an impoverished social stasis. The tension between these two opposing forces can be discerned in many places, once we start to look for it, as shown in Figure 4.

Evidence of Tensions
Between Elitism and Egalitarianism

right	left
haves	have-nots
Kremlin	collective
McWorld	Jihad
business	labor
peacemaking	peacekeeping
sorting out the warlords	feeding Somalians
breakup of Yugoslavia	Tito's Yugoslavia
individual rights	civil rights
the Shah's Iran	the Mullah's Iran
conservatism	liberalism
Batista's Cuba	Castro's Cuba
OPEC and Cali cartels	charitable NGOs
freedom	equality

Figure 4.

So what's new? Heretofore, these two forces contended mostly within national boundaries and were kept in check or balanced toward one side or the other by *national* instruments—political, legal, economic, police and even the military. Indeed, the chosen or imposed balance points often defined the differences between nations or blocs. In the former Soviet Union, a depressing balance was struck between the political elitism of the Kremlin and economic egalitarianism of the collective. Tito used a heavy hand to keep those two forces in balance within the former Yugoslavia; but with his death,

Complexity: The Emerging Science at the Edge of Order and Chaos, Simon & Schuster, New York, 1993, pp. 228-235.

ethnic elitism broke free once again to create the chaos of Bosnia which today disturbs much of the world.

Now the forces of elitism and egalitarianism have escaped national boundaries to contend, with few controls, on a global scale. The end of the Cold War may generally be seen as a victory of market democracies over socialist dictatorships; but the primal fires beneath those ideas can not be extinguished, despite the "end of history" for international political ideologies.[23] Their global collision is eloquently captured in Barber's metaphor, Jihad Vs. McWorld—not just between radical Islamic and American pop cultures, but more fundamentally between market elitism and social egalitarianism around the world.

Historically, within our own nation, these two forces have been constructively balanced by a government designed specifically for that purpose—around the two often contending ideas of equality and freedom. Their collision was buffered in our country, first by the unlimited land on our frontier and, later, when our rampant industrialization was dampened by labor, trust, and tax laws. But the information revolution, unlike our agrarian and industrial evolutions, does not respect our national borders. Our information and market elites are becoming global more than national actors. Moreover, as the information revolution corrodes our own national hierarchical governing structures, the forces of elitism and egalitarianism contend more directly within our own society—as in the impending collision between our defense and social programs.

Obviously, these two forces—elitism and egalitarianism—are not the only ones afoot on the global stage. Many other, more easily recognized forces are at work—nationalism, ideologies, separatism, religions, ethnicity, cultures, etc.—but this theory holds that most of these are probably, upon closer inspection, manifestations of elitism and egalitarianism under other names. The re-nationalization of the former Yugoslavia is elitist in its

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[23] With reference, of course, to Francis Fukuyama's seminal essay, *Have We Reached the End of History?* RAND, P-7532, February 1989, which was subsequently expanded and published as *The End of History and the Last Man*, Free Press, New York, 1992.

motives. Our intervention in Haiti was mostly egalitarian in its impulse. Our relief efforts in Somalia succeeded in their egalitarian purpose, but we failed in our efforts to check the elites. Perhaps not all can be fitted so neatly under these two contending forces—just as all conflicts during the Cold War were not East-West confrontations. But to focus on the East-West tension *was* apt for Kennan's time; and the theory advanced here holds that the tension between elitism and egalitarianism, more than any other, will shape the world's adjustments to the disturbances of the information revolution.

So, the theory advanced here is that the information revolution has unleashed the forces of elitism and egalitarianism on a global scale—beyond the control of national laws or regulations. Those two forces are antagonistic, constantly pushing against each other; and without restraints, they are both capable of destructive excesses. Unfortunately, our most effective governing structures for balancing these forces still remain within the nation-states which are geographically centered and defined. Worse, because they focus on their geographic sovereignty, the nation-states seem unwilling to relinquish significant powers to the skeletal global structures.[24]

Why should we care about this theory? If market elitism dominates, we may be left with a brutal world of a few haves and many have-nots. If social egalitarianism prevails, we may kill the geese that lay the golden eggs; the world may be more equal but also poorer, for its creative engines of wealth production can be stifled. These seem to be the lessons of the social and economic experiments of the 20th century. Where elitism has prevailed to excess, we find such economically productive but socially divided societies as Peru and South Africa. Where egalitarianism has prevailed to excess, we have watched the economic declines of Cuba and the socialist states. So, either of these two forces, if left unchecked, can draw the world into a more chaotic or poorer place, or both. Currently, the forces of elitism appear to have the advantage in the developed world; but the forces of egalitarianism

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[24] We need look no further than the difficulties attending the formation of the European Union or Common Market—or the reluctance of the United States to grant significant powers to the United Nations.

are growing elsewhere. And we are neither isolated nor insulated from that struggle: It is growing within our society; it overflows from our nearest neighbors, and we can no longer shut out what is happening in the rest of the world. That is why we should care—not just *about* the world, but about the way it works—and not only *for* the world, but for ourselves.

Mission

If that is a pertinent theory—a concept of how the world works and why we should care—what should our mission be? To what should we commit ourselves as a task?

It is not in our interest to see the contending global forces of market elitism and social egalitarianism run unchecked and lead the world into revolutionary chaos or a poorer stasis. Just as our nation has successfully balanced those two forces within its borders throughout the first 200 years of its history, we have an interest in seeing them kept in reasonable balance throughout the world—for the world and ourselves. The global structures and instruments to provide that balance are not now in place. They may emerge or be created at some point in the future. But our efforts to foster market democracies elsewhere in the world will not suffice. Although democracies have proven themselves in providing balancing mechanisms at the national level, the contending forces have gone global and no longer respect national boundaries.

Until those global structures and instruments are in place, national instruments may be the next best alternative. And because the United States is by far the most powerful among the world's nation-states, our national instruments—political, economic, and military—may be the most important for application to the balancing problem as an interim measure. That must be our mission—by virtue of our unique position in a world whose prevailing order has been disturbed by the information revolution—we must take up the task of balancing global forces away from extremes.

Indeed, that is precisely what we have been doing in many places around the world, but without clarity of purpose and under strange flags of

convenience. Some have accused the United States of being a "status-quo" power, implying that we don't want to see changes that disturb our comfortable position at the top of the world's economic "food chain." But the theory developed here suggests that the instinct may have more altruistic roots—that we are trying to balance forces which can be dangerous to the world—and not just for us and not just to maintain a status quo, but to help navigate our larger world safely through an important and dynamic period of change.

Vision

From mission to vision is a short step along this path. The vision we seek is a Kennan-like statement appropriate to our times. To construct that vision, we should look once again at the form of Kennan's statement: He said that we must exercise

> a long-term, patient but firm and vigilant containment of Russian expansive tendencies [until] either the break-up or the gradual mellowing of Soviet power.[25]

If we adopt this form and apply it to the intellectual path followed here, we arrive quite easily at the following Kennan-like statement of a vision for our times:

> In the absence of global structures to balance the new and contending global forces which could draw the world into chaos and poverty, we must, as an interim measure, use our national instruments to balance those forces until adequate global structures are put in place or emerge.

Like Kennan's vision, this is a holding action until the problem is resolved by better or more enduring means. And like Kennan's vision, it implies purpose and outcome, but not the specific means to achieve them.

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[25] Gabriele Menke, the author's wife, suggested the following metaphor to capture the form of Kennan's vision: Kennan said this nut is simply too hard to crack right now; so we must wait for it to either rot or soften.
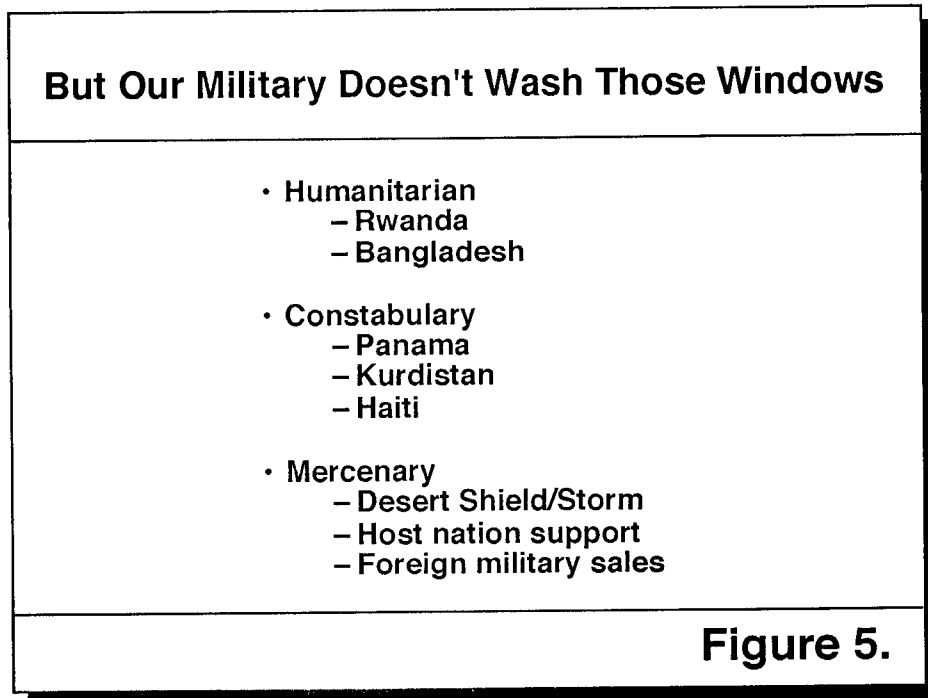
Strategy

The national means available to balance the global forces of elitism and egalitarianism until adequate global structures emerge are the "usual suspects"—the familiar political, economic, and military instruments. These are the same instruments that were available to the nation in the pursuit of its Cold War vision of containment: Political efforts can be aimed at establishing the global structures needed to balance the forces. Economic instruments—such as trade policies and economic assistance programs—can be more quickly and directly applied toward re-balancing the forces. But the military may be the most immediate and direct of all of the nation's instruments for restoring an imbalance when—

- Elitism exceeds reasonable bounds, as in Saddam Hussein's seizure of the Kuwaiti oil fields and the Serbian aggression in Bosnia. Then we have employed our military in traditional deterrence and war-fighting—as well as less comfortable mercenary and constabulary—roles to limit or roll-back the gains of elitism.

- The principles of egalitarianism are violated beyond reasonable bounds, as in the natural and man-made disasters of Somalia, Rwanda, and Haiti. Then we have employed our military in humanitarian and constabulary roles to provide needed infrastructures—food, shelter, medical care, and security—to meet the minimum demands of the egalitarian ethic.

These new roles are disturbing to many in the military. Among other things, they see them as breaking with our cherished military traditions; but our history—even our recent history—says otherwise, as shown in Figure 5. We may not think of our military forces as mercenaries, but some of our bill-payers in the Gulf War might say we are—like the lady at the bar—only haggling over the price. Operation Desert Storm has been given many labels, including the first PGM war, the first information war, the last battle of the Cold War, and (by Air Force chief Merrill McPeak) "the last of the ancient wars." It may also come to be seen as the "first American mercenary war," where our military bills were paid by states that benefited most from our intervention and who, for various reasons, did not want to participate with their own military forces. Some have gone so far as to suggest that we made a slight profit on our military intervention.

But Our Military Doesn't Wash Those Windows

- Humanitarian
  - Rwanda
  - Bangladesh

- Constabulary
  - Panama
  - Kurdistan
  - Haiti

- Mercenary
  - Desert Shield/Storm
  - Host nation support
  - Foreign military sales

Figure 5.

Mercenary military forces have been common features in revolutionary periods—during the Renaissance, the American Revolution, and post-colonial Africa—and we should not be surprised if they appear more frequently during the adjustments to the information revolution, including mercenaries sponsored by corporations and criminal syndicates. Even developed nations, such as Germany and Japan, may, for obvious reasons, prefer to pay other nations to do their military work for them. So far, we seem willing to have our military bills paid by others—for example, not just in fighting the Gulf War, but more routinely in the provision of host-nation support for American forces stationed overseas and in foreign military sales. The money may be "laundered", but the mercenary character of the arrangements remains detectable if one wants to look for it. Some of the poorer nations seem eager to participate in our carefully orchestrated coalition efforts as a way of getting a portion of their forces paid and supported.

The constabulary use of the American military comes from a much older tradition—in the American west, in the aftermath of the Spanish American war, in the search for Pancho Villa, and so on, right down to the present in

our embargoes of Serbia and Iraq and in enforcing civil order inside Haiti. Moreover, that constabulary role has frequently been ordered within our national borders—most recently in Los Angeles, but many times throughout our history.[26] Posse comitatus has never barred the domestic uses of regular military forces, provided their chain of command to the president remains unbroken. So we should expect more, not less, constabulary uses of our military—at home and abroad—in the turmoil that lies ahead.

We are likely to see mercenary uses of the military arise to support or check elitism, just as we are likely to see the constabulary uses of the military to support or check egalitarianism. Those two new roles are repugnant to most of the American military. One role will tend to dominate and drive out the other. But the American military must be pertinent to both roles. It must serve reasonable elitism, or the *economic* base for the military will disappear. It must serve reasonable egalitarianism, or the *popular* base for the military will disappear. If the military serves only one, it will foster dominance by one over the other; and the world can only be the poorer for it. To serve both, the military must be relevant to both and helpful in balancing them. The 20th century roles of deterrence and war-fighting will remain, of course, to be called upon—perhaps with less frequency—as the old order gives way slowly to the new which has yet to emerge.

As with Kennan's vision, we can look to Brodie's statement of deterrence strategy for its form:

> Thus far the chief purpose of our military establishment has been to win wars. From now on its chief purpose must be to avert them. It can have no other useful purpose.

The equivalent, albeit less terse strategy statement for the new national security landscape might be as follows:

> Thus far the chief purpose of our military establishment has been to deter wars or, failing that, to fight and win them. From now on,

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[26] For examples, see Carl H. Builder, "Nontraditional Military Missions," chapter 12 of the *1994 American Defense Annual*, edited by Charles F. Hermann, Lexington Books, New York, 1994.

it must take on additional and sometimes uncomfortable roles to
balance the contending global forces which could draw the world
into chaos and poverty—at least until adequate global structures
for managing that balance are either created or emerge. Those
additional roles will almost certainly include mercenary,
humanitarian, and constabulary uses of our military, both at home
and abroad.

This is a strategy—a concept for relating means to ends—but it is not a
prospect that will be welcomed by the American military. But then again,
neither was the prospect set forth by Brodie 50 years ago.

Stars to Steer By

The path trod here says that the national security threat is the prospect
of growing chaos and poverty, at home and elsewhere. That threat arises
now because the information revolution has unleashed the primal forces of
elitism and egalitarianism on a global scale—beyond the reach of the laws
and regulations of the nation-states, but not beyond the reach of their
militaries. The militaries of the nation-states can play an important role in
the balancing these two forces until new global structures emerge; and the
United States, as the most powerful by far of the nation-states, should lead in
the necessary holding action. Unfortunately, that leadership will require our
military to be employed increasingly in mercenary and constabulary roles—
two roles which our military culture denegrates and would most like to avoid.

Is it really that simple? Isn't the world more complex than that?
Doesn't national security involve much more than balancing the abstract
forces of elitism and egalitarianism? What about nuclear proliferation and
defending our society against weapons of mass destruction? Those are fair
questions, but their answers—if there are any—lie on different paths or
destinations than the ones chosen here: through the forest of concepts to the
high grounds where Kennan and Brodie stood.

Kennan and Brodie didn't address—let alone solve—all of the world's
problems as they tried to define containment and deterrence. But their
simple formulations and ideas went to the very center of our problems then

and served as points of departure and stable reference points for much that was to follow. The pertinent question is whether the concepts developed here go to the heart of national security and the role of the military as they will unfold in the decades ahead. We should be pleased if we could do as well as Kennan and Brodie—if we, too, could find comparable, simple stars to steer by. If not those found along this path, then let us together find better ones to guide those who will have to navigate over the strange new landscape opening up before us.