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UNITED STATES FOREIGN POLICY

THE OPERATIONAL ASPECTS

OF

UNITED STATES FOREIGN POLICY

A S T U D Y

PREPARED AT THE REQUEST OF THE
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

UNITED STATES SENATE

BY

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G. The Military Standoff

The rate of technological change in military weapons systems is everywhere acknowledged as a remarkable fact of these times. But the ramifications of some of the major changes have not yet been built into U.S. foreign policy.

Weapons systems are presently subject to block obsolescence. Missile-carrying submarines are replacing aircraft carriers. Ballistic missiles are replacing manned bombers. With these changes has come a shift in the very basis of military strength. As the industrial needs of war have become less, its research and development needs have become greater: the factory has given way to the laboratory, and expenditures on research and development are now a better measure of strength than expenditures on manufacturing.

Changes in military weapons not only affect research, development and production policy, but foreign policy as well. In the one as in the other, there have been serious lags in the adjustment of policy to possibility--as indeed one would expect, for nothing has proven more difficult in the light of history than has the creation of doctrine for the rational use of any new weapon. Thus in the decade since World War II there have been a number of areas where. With the advantage of hindsight, we can see that U.S. military policy has lagged well behind military technology. Surely the policy of slicing the budget three ways, one more or less equal slice for each of the three services, as was the case in the years before the Korean war, failed to take due account

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account of the increased role of airpower. Likewise the money spent on trying to increase the range of manned aircraft through the development of the guided air-breathing missile would have been reallocated had developments in ballistic missiles been given the attention they warranted.

Even more difficult than relating doctrine to technology is the task of relating changes in military technology to changes in the range of political possibilities. In afterthought it seems extraordinary that before Korea some military experts believed that the atomic bomb had made all other forms of warfare obsolete. If military policy is to relate to foreign policy, then changing military requirements must be considered with respect to the foreign policy alternatives: these requirements either open up or foreclose. Furthermore, military requirements must be anticipated if adequate leadtime is to be given to changes in direction in foreign policy, and if the latter is not to tag along several years behind the march of military technology.

The trend in military requirements will shortly allow for greater flexibility in our relations with our allies. Yet at the same time the military is becoming a less flexible instrument of foreign policy vis-avis the enemy. This apparent paradox is easily explained: the weapons of mass destruction will, over a 5-year time span, no longer need

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some of their present overseas base structure, and, concurrently, the weaponry designed for less than total war will have become even more difficult and more dangerous to use. As the shift is made from manned aircraft to long-range missiles, both water and land based, the possibility of releasing bases, with the exception of those few needed for the pre-positioning of troops and supplies for brush-fire wars, becomes a reality.

New limitations on the future of limited war reinforce the need for new thinking in the never-never land between diplomacy and war. Substantial parity in atomic weapons and in the means of their delivery between the United States and the U.S.S.R. will very soon be a fact. Logistics for limited war have become more difficult with the growing obsolescence of U.S. transport fleets and the increase in the enemy's submarine and mine threat. Support from bombers carrying high explosives has become less significant with the introduction of the atomic arsenal. Because of all these developments, wars of less than total, or near total, dimensions have become more difficult for the United States to fight. Objectives for such "minor" actions, except as a very important adjunct to a diplomatic warning system, tend to be elusive--"victory" and "surrender," in historic terms, become policy nonsense.

Thus the emerging trend in military possibilities makes

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urgent the consideration of a wider latitude of foreign policy alternatives. By making the military an increasingly more deadly, less stable, and hence less usable instrument of policy, military technology is simultaneously outmoding military participation as an active ingredient of policy. This in turn means that diplomacy, and other nonviolent aspects of foreign policy, must be given a new importance in the security arrangements of this Nation. In this the military as educators, rather than as fighters, can play an extremely significant role; if the military can foretell the future developments in weaponry, perhaps international diplomacy can make it more probable that the newest weapons will not have to be used.

Two examples will suffice to illustrate how the indicated changes in military technology might open up new opportunities in our foreign policy during the next few years.

1. Withdrawal from overseas bases

Since the war in Korea the necessity to expand the base structure of the Strategic Air Command outside the continental limits of the United States has dictated the acquisition of a considerable number of military bases in foreign countries. In many cases this military necessity has been in conflicts with the close and amicable relations which U.S. diplomacy seeks. Major or minor conflict have arisen not only with the

countries

countries directly involved but with other allies as well. There have been difficulties in Japan and the Philippines, in Iceland, in Spain, in North Africa, in Turkey and the Middle East. However, U.S. policy can now look forward to a future in which these bases will no longer have the high military priority which they have had in the past. Intercontinental ballistic missiles and missile-carrying submarines will shortly modify drastically the requirement for the present base structure. To keep policy abreast of the anticipated changes in military needs, U.S. policymakers should consider the following:

First, one quite critical complication may well involve interdepartmental differences between the Pentagon and the Department of State. The military, who will be criticized only if they give the Nation too little protection, may tend to continue to maintain overseas bases after their present priority has descended to a relatively low level of necessity. Here the balance between military desirability and political liability must be constantly reexamined. Withdrawal should be given the earliest possible consideration, so that the greatest possible political capital can be made of it. In some places, even a somewhat premature decision to withdraw may be preferable to staying so long that we are thrown out, with long-range ill effects that undermine our security

position

~~security~~ position in nonmilitary ways.

Second, as politically desirable as withdrawal most certainly is in many cases, there are others in which it can be a political handicap. In some areas, U.S. military spending makes a substantial contribution to the national economy. In Libya, for example, it is one of that new nation's biggest "industries." Some way will have to be found, therefore, to offset the economic depression which withdrawal would otherwise leave in its wake.

Third, the embarrassment of political friction in those areas which are used for the pre-positioning of troops and supplies for limited war situations makes consideration of alternate areas mandatory. If the troubles to which the stationing of U.S. troops on Okinawa has given rise were to continue after the need for a SAC base had ended, it might, for example, be wise to inquire into the possibility of shifting limited war forces to Australia or to some other area where they would be welcomed. Modern technology, including faster air transport, may sometimes make it possible to pre-position troops and materiel at alternate bases even for so-called "brush fire" wars.