
SECURITY ASSISTANCE PERSPECTIVES

Challenges of the Post-Cold War Era

By

**Frank G. Wisner
Under Secretary of Defense for Policy**

[The following is a reprint of a statement presented by Under Secretary Wisner during his confirmation hearing before the Senate Armed Services Committee, Washington DC, on 4 March 1993.]

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, it is an honor and a pleasure to appear before you today. While I have worked closely with the Senate in my better than 30 years as a Foreign Service officer, this is my first occasion to appear before your distinguished committee.

My opening remarks proceed directly from the statements made before this committee by the Secretary of Defense on January 7th and the Deputy Secretary, designee, Dr. Perry, on February 25th. Secretary Aspin recalled Dean Acheson's stirring memoir of the late 1940s, "Present at the Creation." And what a creation it was, resulting in the Bretton Woods institutions, the Marshall Plan, NATO, and the U.S.-Japan mutual security treaty. We forged in those years a system of collective defense which protected our nation and the world during the Cold War and an economic order which brought us and many others prosperity.

We are now present at a re-creation: of new security institutions and relationships, and of a new world. The most prominent feature of this new world is that the Cold War is over. The United States and its allies won; ordinary Russians and Eastern Europeans won; the cause of freedom won and that of totalitarianism was defeated. The bad news is that the threat that served as the fixed point for the U.S. compass in foreign and defense policy for all our adult lives has disappeared. As Chairman Nunn frequently quotes Czech president Vaclav Havel "Events have changed so fast that we have not had time to be astonished."

As in the post-World War II period, American leaders must ask fundamental questions. Where do American interests lie? What dangers threaten these interests? What should be our strategy to cope with these threats? What mix of initiatives and institutions could protect and defend these interests?

Answering these questions, tackling the hard work of rethinking American security and redefining our foreign and defense policies is one of the first challenges the new Administration and the new Congress must face if we are to protect American interests in the post-cold war years.

I cannot tell you how pleased I am at the prospect of joining my friend, Les Aspin, at the Department of Defense. When he appeared before this committee on January 7th, he spoke of two sets of challenges facing him at Defense:

One set challenges us to maintain the superb quality of forces and the high technology advantage we have in our systems. The other set challenges us to cope with the dangers of the new, still evolving post-Cold War, post-Soviet world.

I would like to begin with and focus most of my remarks on the second set of challenges.

During the Cold War, the Soviet threat dominated U.S. military planning. It determined the size of our defense budget, how our forces were structured, and how our military equipment was designed. In looking to the post-Cold War era, former President Bush spoke of a "new world order." As Secretary Aspin has observed, it has proved longer on the "new" and shorter on the "order." The post-Cold War security environment is ambiguous, complicated, and changeable. The old world of bi-polar rigidity has been replaced by a new world of multi-polar complexity. Understanding the differences between old and new threats is crucial to the changes in how we will provide for our security in this new environment. Four new threats dominate the world we now face.

First, nuclear proliferation, aggravated by the potential danger of loss of full control of nuclear weapons in the former Soviet Union, is one of the major national security threats now facing the United States. While the danger, always small, of a massive nuclear attack on the United States is much reduced, the risk that one, two, or ten nuclear weapons might be used, even against the United States, is larger. Indeed, the proliferation of all weapons of mass destruction—chemical and biological as well as their delivery systems must be high on our agenda—the political or military implications of their use or threatened use are very serious.

Our recent experience in the Persian Gulf drives home the importance of countering the danger of nuclear, and other, proliferation. No one doubts that the Gulf crisis would have been much more dangerous if Saddam Hussein had possessed nuclear weapons. And, we have learned since the Gulf war just how difficult it is to strip a rogue state of its capacity for developing mass destruction weapons and their delivery systems.

The second danger is from regional, ethnic, and religious conflicts. Although no country today threatens the survival of America, Saddam Hussein demonstrated that regional powers can threaten American interests. Ethnic, nationalist, and sectarian hatred also give rise to violent conflicts that bring calls for actions based upon conscience and American values.

The tragedy in what was once Yugoslavia and the relief effort in Somalia underscore the difficulty of the challenge facing us. The United States must, in concert with others, find more effective ways to prevent these conflicts from emerging, including early commitment to peacekeeping/peacemaking and humanitarian assistance. But at the same time, we must recognize that we cannot go everywhere and bear every burden. We must better engage our allies and the United Nations.

The third danger is the risk of reversal of reform in Russia and the other former Soviet republics. Reinforcing the course of political and economic reform in the former Soviet Union is vital to American security. As President Clinton stated, the success of democracy is important to our economic future:

Reductions in our defense spending that are an important part of our economic program over the long run here at home are only tenable as long as Russia and the other nuclear republics pose a diminishing threat to our security and to the security of our allies and the democracies throughout the world.

Secretary Aspin has stressed that we must look at the "demand" for defense capabilities and defense dollars. He has made the point that the single most important external variable affecting the "demand" for defense is the difference between a reforming Russia and the return to an adversarial Russia.

The reversal of reform in Russia could also deprive the United States of its new partner in addressing global security problems. Russian cooperation in solving regional conflicts, particularly in the Persian Gulf, and now their willingness to support the air drops in Bosnia, has been one of the most remarkable characteristics of the early years of the post-Cold War era. An end to reform could also slow the promising course we have set with Russia in influencing START I and ratifying START II and in carrying out our broad range of promising arms control initiatives we have negotiated over the years. Economic reform, arms control, the strengthening of democracy and stability are key objectives for us in Ukraine as well as in the other states of the former Soviet Union just as they are in Russia.

The **fourth** danger is economic in nature. The economic well-being of all Americans is vital to U.S. national security—foreign and domestic policy are inseparable in today's world. As President Clinton stated repeatedly, if we are not strong at home, we cannot lead the world we have done so much to make. And if we withdraw from the world, it will hurt us economically at home. In turn, our security will be compromised.

Responding effectively and decisively to these four dangers is the key national security challenge facing the new Clinton team.

- Countering the threat of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction demands an effective and diverse array of policy tools to reduce the incentives to proliferators, and potential proliferators, and to constrain suppliers. U.S. military forces must be structured and equipped to minimize the effect of proliferation if our efforts to prevent it fail.

- The presence of U.S. military forces overseas and U.S. participation in international peacekeeping and peacemaking arrangements can help deter regional conflicts. But U.S. military forces must be fully capable of handling regional threats to American interests and values—in concert with our allies if possible; on their own if necessary.

- Our defense policies and initiatives can help prevent the reversal of reform in Russia and Ukraine, as well as help promote democracy worldwide, by helping, for example, their counterparts develop new security identities and establishing new processes for civilian control of the military. The vision of Senators Nunn and Lugar and other legislators made these initiatives possible.

- Coping with threats to our economic security poses a difficult challenge to Defense. Much of the pressure to reduce defense spending stems from the need to free up resources for domestic investment and deficit reduction. This is a reality in the post-Cold War era. But I also believe that we need to work with our major allies in Europe and Japan to reach a new “strategic bargain” that enables us to cooperate to meet the new security threats and, at the same time, to compete in the global economy.

Secretary Aspin is reshaping the Department of Defense so that we can focus on these new threats. This restructuring will directly affect the organization of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy. We intend to put in place offices that will have as their primary responsibility the responses to these new threats.

The Secretary plans for a strong regional affairs organization to enable us to respond to regional threats. He expects to bring into one office the Department's counter-proliferation programs and couple them with our export control agencies and the full range of threat reduction and nuclear policy programs which we have established. The response to threats to democracy and to human rights will center in a new organization, headed by an assistant secretary, who will have

the responsibility for peacekeeping and humanitarian affairs. Assistant Secretaries will also head the Strategy and Resources and the Plans and Policy functions to give these organizations stronger leadership to ensure that our new military is in fact driven by the new strategy and to revitalize long-range planning and policy development.

For the time being, other elements of the Policy organization will continue to function much as they have in the past, including SO/LIC [Special Operations/Low Intensity Conflict] and Security Policy. The Secretary of Defense understands how important special operations and related forces are in our new security environment. In fact, as missions such as nation building, humanitarian affairs, peacekeeping, and counter-proliferation increase in importance, the potential roles of such forces grow even more important. He also understands that senior civilian oversight of these especially consequential military operations is absolutely crucial. Thus more, not less, attention will be paid to issues associated with Low Intensity Conflict.

The President will nominate a superb team from within and without the government to staff these functions. They will merit your confidence and I hope you will give them your support when their nominations reach the committee. We have much to do together, including an important budget to be passed and START II and Chemical Weapons Treaties for which we will seek ratification.

This brings me to the second set of challenges facing us, namely how to maintain an effective military force even as we reduce what we spend on defense. If confirmed, I am determined to do my part in this regard. I am a child of World War II; I have known war throughout my lifetime. I early understood that we can only stand as a free, prosperous nation if we are secure and if order is maintained internationally.

We must maintain the extraordinary quality of our forces and the high technology advantage that we saw demonstrated in the war with Iraq. The training of U.S. forces was decisive in Desert Storm. General Schwartzkopf even quipped that if we had the Iraqi weapons and they ours, our troops, training and leadership still could have ensured victory. We will have a smaller force structure, but it must be ready and effective.

We also saw the value of high-technology weapons in the Gulf war. They reduced U.S. casualties and brought a more rapid end to the war. The challenge facing us today is how to maintain our technological edge and the industrial base to produce the systems that are needed without the high production levels of the Cold War.

* * * *

The objectives on behalf of which American military power can be deployed must have their limits. We have to concentrate our nation's energies on what is most important to us—maintaining peace, promoting democracy and human rights, securing our alliances, and protecting commerce. American military forces should be used selectively—primarily in those instances when important U.S. interests are threatened and military means are required to secure them, where the objectives are clear and where we can make the difference in a short period of time.

In the post-Cold War era, our approach to national security will change—it must change. International diplomacy, national security, and the health of the domestic economy are linked as never before. And the way the Defense Department does its business must and will change as well.

But the fundamentals do not change. If confirmed, I will take as my first duty to work with the Secretary to maintain a sound, ready and effective military able to defend the nation's interests

whenever and wherever needed. I will do my level best to protect the outstanding quality of our military personnel and the dear superiority of U.S. defense technology.

These are daunting challenges that must be met in the context of a new defense strategy, but they are ones that can be met if we work together. That work will be furthered by an informed and open dialogue with the Congress, and particularly with this committee and its counterpart in the House. I look forward to working with you to keep our military strong, capable, and focused on the new threats, while at the same time making the needed adjustments in the size and shape of our military.

Our Armed Forces are being buffeted by change, but they are strong and resilient institutions. The spirit and dedication of the men and women in the U.S. military has no equal. I look forward to working with them during this time of momentous change.