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21st Century Force Posture

Note: Below are informal notes taken by a JHU/APL staff member at the Seminar.

Dr. Krepinevich began by noting that he would discuss the background behind developing a strategic posture, current strategic challenges, the missing links between strategy and concepts of operations (conops) and the impact all of these elements will have on future land forces in particular. He also noted that there were many things to think about before coming up with projections for future forces.

Background

Trends indicate that we are in a very disruptive period in history
- Not just military and technological but also social, economic and many others trends
  - No matter what the final outcomes in Iraq and Afghanistan we can expect some sort of disruption
- Many areas of concern are showing bad trends
  - Youth bulges in developing countries
  - Competition for commodities at a level not seen in a long time
  - AIDs and other pandemics
- All of the bad trends will have an impact on US force posture

Director of the DoD Office of Net Assessments, Andy Marshall, asks: How much disruption can 10 determined people create?
- Today, it can be completely disproportionate to their numbers
- Because of disproportionate capabilities, we can now expect an era of persistent irregular conflict

We can also expect a more proliferated world
- It is amazing how often nuclear weapons come up when security issues about smaller countries are discussed
  - Not like it was in the Cold War
  - May also involve biological weapons
- Nuclear weapons are not just for mature “adult” countries anymore
  - Rather like teenagers – You give them keys to the car but can’t be sure what they will do

We may be moving into a Leviathan world (although this is not a good term)
- Involves the problems of scale and form
- There is the possibility of a the rise of an alternative power that is not a liberal democracy
  - Perhaps authoritarian capitalism – something close to fascism
  - Perhaps a quasi-dictator who is willing to trade with other countries
    - Not like the isolation of the Soviets
    - With the Soviets it was a big break when the US could finally sell them wheat

Changes and challenges of the 3 A’s: Asia / Asymmetry / Allies
- Asia now the focus for the US while most of 20th Century history focused on Europe
• Even WWII had a “Europe first” focus
  • Asymmetry is increasing where the 20th Century was relatively symmetric militarily
    o In WWII Germany and Japan had military force structures much like those of the US – carriers, subs, tanks, planes, artillery, etc.
    o In the Cold War Soviet and US force structures (including nuclear weapons and missiles) were comparable
    o Totally different today
      • US became so good at conventional warfare that enemies had to find alternatives
      • Only recently has the US been making progress in asymmetric warfare response
  • Allies are needed more now than they were in the 20th Century
    o Early in the 20th Century the US was the junior partner, then an equal, and then the leader with and attitude of: Don’t call us; we’ll call you
    o Many countries actually wanted the US to be involved in their affairs
    o The US was more relevant to others then
    o Now the US is asking for help from allies but few are willing to respond

Broad perspective strategy was presented in Krepinevich’s latest book 7 Deadly Scenarios which includes descriptions for:
  1. Collapse of Pakistan – complicated by the loose nukes issue
  2. War comes to the US – what if, instead of a single nuclear event (usually proposed in wargame scenarios), there were 4 different incidents over several months causing growing worry about the government’s ability to protect
  3. Armageddon – postulates that both Israel and Iran get and use nuclear weapons
  4. Challenges in the global commons – already seeing massive cyber attacks
  5. Not just-in-time – revolves around the fragility of the economy that relies on things like just-in-time deliveries
  6. Pandemic – influenza outbreaks such as bird or swine flu
  7. Who lost Iraq? – what would happen if things really got bad there

Scenario planners do not deal with current problems; they look at trends
  • Much like in a Gary Larsen cartoon the cowboy asks “Can they do that” when the Indians light their arrows
  • Must overcome the power of willful ignorance to focus on bigger future problems
    o An attack on Pearl Harbor was considered unrealistic in a 1930s wargame
    o Nimitz said nothing surprised us in the Pacific war in WWII except the Kamikazes
  • There is a need to raise awareness of even improbable concepts because sometimes they do occur
    o Future enemies might not be as stupid as Saddam

General problem is the Pentagon’s wasting assets
  • Nuclear weapons have been a wasting assets ever since the Soviets got their bomb about 1949
    o US did have the bomb first but it lost its advantage when others got it, too
  • Must look at what we have today or are about to field and see what are the new wasting assets
  • Challenges:
    o Costs of projecting power is going up
    o Costs for protecting the global commons is going up
    o Costs for protecting against nuclear/bio/chem weapons is very high

QDR and Track II

This is a good time for a reassessment – if a new Administration is going to make changes, the best time is early on
  • Unusual to have a sitting Secretary of Defense who provides some background experience / lessons learned
  • Also important that this is the first new Administration since 9/11 and all the changes it brought

SECDEF Robert Gates read the 7 Deadly Scenarios book
  • Asked General James Mattis and Andy Marshall to do an alternative study to the QDR (a Track II)
• These scenarios were wargamed in May and June
• Krepinevich is on the follow-on Red Team that starts mid-July
• Congress has interest in doing their own separate review outside the QDR
  o Congressman Mac Thornberry of Texas is leading this effort
• Obviously, SECDEF found the scenarios very persuasive

Assuming that there is agreement on this problem set, what resources will be needed to deal with them? At the same time the US is moving to a period of much more constrained resources making it that much harder
• Ballooning deficits will last a very long time and may reach up to $2 trillion
  o Won’t get back to Bush Administration deficit levels for years
  o Health care system reform costs will increase the national debt
  o Servicing of the debt will cost billions each year
  o Some in Congress also believe that there should be much more domestic spending
• Unless we have another Pearl Harbor-level event, military budgets are likely to be constrained or drop
• Other financial problems mean a long-term constraint situation
  o Expanding entitlements for the Baby Boom generation now reaching Social Security age
  o US is already the world’s leading debtor nation
• US is also losing its edge in science and technology, something that has always saved us before
  o US has about 5% of the world’s population but about 20% of its wealth because US technological advances allow US to add significant value to any product
  o S&T breakthroughs are not happening in the US as much as they did in the past

Some tasks used to be outsourced to Allies but this is no longer working
• For stability operations, what is needed most is manpower, but NATO allies in particular lack the demographic base to support helping with troop numbers
• European allies also do not have funds to spend on their militaries given much of their funding goes to social support efforts
• President Obama may be popular in Europe but not enough to persuade allies to help very much

Nuclear weapons as a wasting asset
• Need to figure out what the “Next Big Thing” will be and develop it first to get the advantage since nuclear weapons will no longer give us that advantage over our adversaries
• Also need to figure out what is the next big thing for the enemy
  o What type of warfare will the enemy use?
  o How can the US respond to or deter it before it becomes a problem

What Strategy is Not

Strategic planning is not about building a plan
• It is more about the process of making decisions
• Eisenhower said that plans were useless but that planning was indispensible
• Even if you write a very good plan, once you put it on a shelf it loses its validity
• Leaders must provide persistent attention to world events and constantly be on the lookout for advantages they can exploit
  o Needs to be done at the highest levels – National Security Council’s principal members
  o No way to know what will really happen but if planning has been going on there will be some idea of what capabilities are available and what will be needed in a crisis
• It is possible that there will be a major document coming out of the QDR
  o Would only be one datapoint
  o The important thing is persistent planning

CONOPS
There are lots of initials identifying operational plans: JOE, CCJO, JIC, JOC
• All are necessary and they are improving over earlier versions

3
• More elaborate efforts are coming
  o Need to come up with the next big step in warfare
  o Must determine what will be the next disruptive effort
  o Need to make big changes as was done in the 1920s-30s-40s
• Potential broad concepts
  o AirSea Battle
  o Counter G-RAM (Guided-Rockets/Artillery/Missiles)
  o Counter nuclear
  o Defense of the global commons

Planning Problems
• In discussing future warfare it is politically incorrect to mention specific potential adversaries – particularly China
• Winners and losers in the areas of warfare specialties are not defined yet, therefore, there is no impact on the defense budget yet

Past CONOPS such as the AirLandBattle developed a high level of granularity over years of development
• No current conops are at that level yet
• AirSeaBattle – a lot depends on what happens with China
  o There could be offsetting challenges for China especially its need to maintain the unparalleled gains it has made over the last 20 years
  o US and Allies must do what they can to offset what the Chinese have been doing in the global commons
  o Need to identify what strategic options are available
• Counter G-RAM – identify what to do when forces such as Hezbollah get guided missiles
• Counter nuclear – identify what to do when Third World countries get access to nuclear weapons
  o Need to envision how to operate in a day-after-nuclear-explosion situation
  o Need to develop conops for “loose nukes”
• Future conops cannot be just a variation on Cold War conops

Force-sizing Metrics
• No longer can use the concepts of being prepared for 2 big and one small contingency or any other combination
  o The system used in the last few years has been broken
  o No new metrics have developed
• Must have forces for contingencies and for preparing for normal operations
  In some cases the steady state is more stressful than any of the contingencies
  o Recent thinking has indicated the US may need more carriers or more Marines for standard ops than for contingencies
  o May need a strategic reserve for other types of operations
  o Makes it hard to figure the force size needed
• One size definitely does not fit all – not all scenarios need the same size / type of force
  o Each service has a different answer about its biggest challenges
  o Different problem sets for each
  ▪ Deterring China is likely to be an Air Force/Navy task
  ▪ Counter-insurgency warfare is more likely to be an Army task
• Does the Army now need more training- and governance-expertise personnel rather than troops for surging?
• What do we need to handle or deter against space asset attacks?
• Fundamental questions relating to force structure during the Cold War are no longer valid
• New force sizing cannot be one-third/one-third/one-third across the 3 services since some scenarios are more orientated toward the capabilities of one service or another
Ground Force Shaping

- What are the demand signals?
  - If keeping a lid on problems is the most important mission, then must have land forces in the area of interest consistently more than occasional port visits by carriers
  - Also may need to consider what forces are needed to
    - Build-up the capabilities of partners
    - Handle modern irregular warfare
    - Maintain conventional warfighting skills so that no other country tries to surpass US
    - Isolate areas for counter-nuclear or post-attack consequence management

- May need to decide whether to build a full spectrum force or only the leading element for forces provided by others
  - If you have a full-spectrum force, could you really have specialists for all potential problems?
  - To address problems on a world level, must recognize that there are limits on what you can do – must find the sweet spot between needs and available capabilities
  - May need an Army with 2 wings – one for high end operations and one for low
    - Each is always ready to back up the other

- Principal challenges of each different scenario relate to scale/scope/location of that scenario
- Must recognize that the Allies won’t be there to help

Reactive transformation – getting better at it
- However, this is not the anticipatory transformation that we really need
- Need to develop transformation that anticipates requirements

Continuing issues:
- There is a lack of links between force size/shape and needs
- No matter what the needs/strategy/etc., there will be limits on force size
- Developing a strategy might be considered to be like solving a problem, but Eisenhower would disagree because the problem keeps changing
- Using the Ben-Hur (cast of thousands) approach will not solve the strategy planning problems
  - Need a small group of people with specific skills to do the planning for the next strategy

QUESTION & ANSWER SESSION

China
- China has trade deficits with other countries in its region
  - Australia has major pocketbook relationships with China, not with the US
  - In a crisis would Australian side with the US or be forced to side with China despite political similarities?
- China is planning to use its planned aircraft carriers more for humanitarian relief missions, which will then provide them more political influence
- Commodities are likely to be a source of contention
  - China does not trust the market to get them access to what they need
  - Instead, China is locking up sources of commodities like rare earth metals
    - Includes things like Indium – used in night vision goggles and flat screens
    - Shows both political and commercial interest in materials that may also be strategic
- China is likely to have major internal problems over the next decade including with
  - The economy
  - Governance issues
  - Demographic issues
  - Environmental issues
  - Limited availability of commodities
  - Water quality and availability made worse by the way they have been handling it
- US prospects look good in comparison to China’s
  - US has better fundamentals but needs to focus them better
Russia may be even worse off than China

US force structure issues
- No great leap forward in deployed forces is expected
- The ability to project power remains important
  - Millennium Challenge 2002 and other events have shown the problems forces could have in areas with narrow water passages providing no warning time before an attack
  - Need to figure out a way to deal such problems at an acceptable cost – or look for alternatives
- Future ground battles will be non-linear
  - There are many questions about what will happen with the development of G-RAM
  - It is likely that there will be no rear area for protecting and resupplying
  - 40-50 mile guided rockets would need an enormous perimeter protection force – much more than would be available given expected constraints on force size
- There are some promising aspects about the future
  - Distributed networks were once thought to be the answer
  - Need to first beat down the A2AD (antiaccess and area denial) threat
    - Make it so the adversary would be crazy to attack
    - But then the adversary would likely move early on to irregular warfare
- Maybe can sustain US leadership by handling the global commons problems better
  - US has had no challengers in the last 20 years
  - Might have more challenges at very different levels of sophistication in the future
  - Must work on solving all the problems at once

China would not want to be in a disorderedly world or a more proliferated world
- China should be working with the US to avoid these worlds
- US objective should be to convince the Chinese that have nothing to gain from aggression
  - China is more likely to use forms of gentle coercion
  - Will try to convince neighbors that the US won’t be coming to their rescue
  - Tactics would be like those that the Mob would use
- Japan knows what is going on but others might not
- US would not want to invade China but would want to make it unattractive for China to push too aggressively anywhere else
  - If the price of aggression is too high, they will decide sooner rather than later
- Need to look closely at recent activity in Lebanon
  - US not likely to fight there but look at capabilities/tactics used there
  - Those tactics/weapons are going to be available to others
  - They could change the dynamics of a situation especially if used at oil transportation chokepoints
  - Must diffuse the value of these new capabilities – either ignore them or face up to them

Recommended reading: SECDEF Gates “A Balanced Strategy” in Foreign Affairs (Jan-Feb 2009)
- Are there trends to change the competition to a position that would favor the US?
- IEDs were considered the “new thing” but are really much like booby traps in Vietnam
- Must figure out the Next Big Thing and how to engineer it for own purposes
- If there are a series of disruptive events, how should we place our force investments?
  - Iraq and Afghanistan are two different environments with different requirements
  - What might be good for one would be bad for the other
  - What you do might be a judgment call
- The US Navy in the 1920s and 30s thought that aviation would be helpful but might also destroy the surface fleet because of ships would be vulnerable to aircraft
  - Looked to industry to see what was coming in the near technological future
  - Have the same problem today but we are also at war, making things harder to handle

If you are writing a messy scenario, you should align weaknesses with advantages
- Can’t draft new team mates in the middle of the game – must have required skills available
- Must build a system that causes enormous costs for the other side
• Iran would like to impose costs on the US
• Links from Hezbollah to drug dealers in Latin America and other places make things more difficult
  ▪ Drug dealers don’t want to run countries
  ▪ Drug dealers want to be left alone to sell their drugs
• It would be impossible to overthrow the US government using just snipers but a few could make governance very difficult
• DIME comes into play here

Probabilities versus consequences
• How important would it be if the Russians did take back the Baltics?
• At the other end of the spectrum the prospect of Pakistan falling apart may have a low probability but the consequences would be enormous given the loose nukes problems
• We should not be preparing for any one thing but for all possibilities
• Judgment call for where to put resources at any given time

The G-RAM problem
• Growing as strike ranges increase and accuracies improve
• Issues came up frequently in the four wargames used in the Track II effort
• For protection must disaggregate forces over a larger area
  ▪ Avoid presenting a rich target
  ▪ Would not have too large a forces since it would require a lot more to sustain it
• Problem is that the adversary can surge anywhere he wants while we must defend everywhere

Israel
In its recent Gaza operations Israel did better based on lessons learned from the last incidents with Hezbollah
• Tight integration of combined arms
• Narrative coverage of the war was better, too