

THE COMMISSION ON INTEGRATED LONG-TERM STRATEGY

The United States stands at the brink of a new era in international politics. In the next two decades, China and Japan may become major military powers, breaking down the familiar East-West bipolar world. Lesser powers, such as Iran, may acquire weaponry capable of challenging both the U.S. and the Soviet Union. The U.S. may lose access to many of its air and naval bases overseas, while arms control may change the size and nature of nuclear and conventional forces. Further, advancing technology not only may change the way U.S. forces are manned, outfitted and operated, but may be used by the Soviets to erode the West's traditional qualitative edge in conventional military forces.

These assumptions about America's future are found in a new report by the Reagan Administration's Commission on Integrated Long-Term Strategy. Chaired by Under Secretary of Defense Fred C. Ikle and internationally respected strategy expert Albert Wohlstetter and including such members as former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger and former National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski, the report concludes that the U.S. needs a new strategy for the rapidly changing world. Specifically, the Commission concludes that U.S. strategy must:

Prepare for threats to U.S. interests in the Third World. Conflicts in the Third World, including those involving terrorists and guerrilla forces, are less threatening than a Soviet-American war, but more probable. The Commission believes the U.S. must be prepared selectively to support Third World anti-communist insurgencies, provide more security assistance to allies, ask allies to replace some U.S. troops, and develop long-endurance aircraft and low-cost satellites as an alternative to communication and intelligence-gathering functions of U.S. bases overseas.

Strengthen U.S. capabilities on the USSR's periphery. The massive Soviet conventional might is most intimidating in the Persian Gulf, Europe, and the Far East. To help protect the Persian Gulf, the Commission suggests that the U.S. purchase more long-range cargo planes for troops and supplies, build up Turkey's defenses as a deterrent to Soviet military attacks on the Gulf, and encourage Saudi

Arabia and others in the region to make bases available in an emergency. To bolster NATO, the U.S. needs to devise a more flexible nuclear strategy, be able to mobilize forces on receipt of warning, and design precision-guided missiles and weapons. To block a Soviet thrust into the Pacific, the U.S. should encourage Japan to bolster its air defenses and to coordinate air defense efforts with the U.S.

Develop nuclear flexibility. The Commission concludes that U.S. strategy prepares too heavily for such extreme and improbable threats as a massive nuclear attack. To deter more likely threats, says the Commission, the U.S. has to develop more accurate nuclear and conventional weapons and lower-yield nuclear warheads, have a more survivable nuclear force and command and control system, and deploy defenses against Soviet ballistic missiles and cruise missiles.

Manage technology. The U.S. should exploit its quality edge over the Soviet Union. The Commission recommends that the U.S. develop new technologies for controlling space, new radar evading "stealth" aircraft and cruise missiles, and "smart" precision-guided munitions. With this, better force planning must determine how many new planes and missiles the U.S. needs and the appropriate mix of "stealth" and non-"stealth" systems.

What the Commission does not address is whether the U.S. has the forces to meet its current security commitments. While the Commission thus seems to accept the Carter Doctrine that the U.S. will protect the Persian Gulf from outside hostile forces, the Commission does not seem to recognize that the U.S. may need far more than enhanced airlift and sealift and alternative overseas basing to make good on this guarantee. The Commission also should have paid more attention to the problem of how the U.S. could mobilize domestic and allied support for a new strategy, especially since it envisages discriminate use of nuclear force.

The Commission on Integrated Long-Term Strategy serves a useful purpose. It has demonstrated the necessity of taking an integrated approach to national strategy, bringing together questions about new technology, force structure, mobility and bases, extreme threats and Third World conflicts, and conventional and nuclear arms. For too long U.S. strategy has been a hodgepodge of inconsistent and often contradictory rhetorical statements designed to justify a patchwork of international commitments and security requirements. The U.S. policy of promising strategic retaliation for Soviet conventional attacks on Europe, for example, rests on the dubious assumption that Moscow always will be deterred by threats which, if executed, could amount to U.S. nuclear suicide. Making U.S. nuclear strategy more flexible, as the Commission recommends, will make U.S. nuclear threats more credible, thus making deterrence stronger.

The Commission's vision should be translated into policy. For one thing, Congress should stop trimming Administration requests for security assistance and restricting military aid to a mere handful of countries. For another, Congress should set aside funds for the Pentagon to research and develop advanced technologies for precision-guided munitions and very accurate conventional cruise missiles. Congress should, however, avoid "micromanaging" how these funds are used.

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