

**PLANNING FOR PROLIFERATION --  
RETHINKING U.S. MILITARY STRATEGY**

**Colonel Joyce E. Peters  
National War College  
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# Report Documentation Page

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**PLANNING FOR PROLIFERATION --**  
**RETHINKING U.S. MILITARY STRATEGY**

The demise of the Soviet Union, democratization of Eastern Europe, and revitalization of the United Nations as a coalition-building forum have created a new world environment and a unique opportunity for the re-examination and reformulation of U.S. military strategy. No longer confronted by a formidable Soviet Union armed with nuclear and other advanced weapons systems and possessed with an adventurous ideology aimed at gradual world domination, the United States now faces greater uncertainty, an increasingly dangerous world, and no clear enemy.<sup>1</sup> Although total global war is now less likely, the possibilities for regional conflicts have greatly increased.

The fear of a US-USSR nuclear conflict arising as a secondary consequence to a lesser regional conflict no longer hangs as shadow over other countries. Without this shadow and the attendant pressures from the United States or the former Soviet Union to suppress regional conflicts, other forces have already been loosed and are influencing regional relationships and harmony. Strong nationalistic forces have splintered Yugoslavia and created several new states. Rising religious fervor, particularly in Islamic countries such as Iran, Iraq and the Central Asian Republics, exacerbate tribal and regional rivalries and lead to conflict. Population migrations caused by insurgencies, famine and natural disasters cause economic and social displacement and create

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<sup>1</sup> Although the successor states to the Soviet Union still possess a formidable arsenal and the capability of endangering the United States, they no longer possess any present intention to do so. A serious threat requires both capability and intention.

unexpected domestic turmoil for fledgling democratic governments. Drug trafficking and international terrorism also are escalating; and the world is experiencing a proliferation of arms, armies and weapons of mass destruction.

At the same time domestic economic problems in the United States, the United Kingdom and other western states are forcing a curtailment in the resources committed to defense and maintenance of the armed forces. For example, current administration proposals for the U.S. Base Force would lead to a standing military of 1.6 million active duty troops and a defense budget of \$280 billion at the fiscal horizon. This represents approximately a 25 percent reduction across-the-board in the size of the U.S. armed forces.

At some point as these reductions occur, the United States could lose its ability to be an effective unilateral military force and could (because of its smaller size and capability) have a considerably diminished role in an international coalition. On the other hand, continued military spending at high levels causes a serious drain on the nation's economic resources and keeps the United States in the undesirable position of being looked upon as the world's policeman.

These realities raise the question of what the U.S. military strategy should be in a world of weapons proliferation. Does the recently published National Military Strategy of the United States adequately deal with the issue of proliferation and the appropriate military response? This paper will examine the current strategy in light of this issue.

## Current Military Strategy

In January 1992, in a document entitled National Military Strategy of the United States, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff published his advice to the President and the Secretary of Defense on his vision for the new strategic direction of the armed forces.<sup>2</sup> In general, this document reveals a shift from the containment strategy used to counterbalance the Soviet Union and prevent the global spread of communism to a regional and flexible strategy capable of responding to a variety of different crises. It attempts to implement the defense aspects of the President's political guidance in the National Security Strategy and develop the overarching principles to implement the policies announced in the Defense Planning Guidance and the Annual Report to the President and the Congress provided by the Secretary of Defense.

In describing the defense strategy, the military strategy document begins by surveying the strategic landscape and the significant forces that affect defense planning. Foremost among the factors identified is the transformation in the world order caused by the dramatic changes that have occurred in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. Second, however, is the expressed concern over the "proliferation of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons, combined with the means to deliver them."

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<sup>2</sup> Under the Goldwater-Nichols Reorganization Act of 1986, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff is statutorily responsible for assisting the President and the Secretary of Defense in providing strategic direction for the armed forces.

In reality, however, the second factor - proliferation - really drives defense planning. U.S. defense budgets respond to perceived threats and national security needs. The change in the world order is now a fait accompli, and a new aggressive Soviet Union will not likely arise from the ashes of the old Soviet Union. Even when the old Soviet Union existed, it was the size of its arsenals (as well as its intentions) that served as the primary basis for U.S. defense decision-making.

The proliferation of arms and weapons of mass destruction was also a major factor leading to the most recent Gulf crisis and has undermined the resolution of the Korean conflict for more than 40 years. Arms proliferation has enabled drug cartels and other insurgencies to operate freely in some countries, has created volatile situations in South Asia and the Mideast, and has drained numerous states (including Eastern Europe, Cuba and others) of precious economic resources. From the U.S. perspective, proliferation of conventional arms in various regions of the world requires U.S. planning to be more diverse and complex than if proliferation did not occur. Proliferation forces the United States to plan more strategic lift capability because armed conflicts can arise in myriad locations; it also dictates the need for extensive research and development budgets to enable the United States to keep its technological edge in warfare. In sum, conventional proliferation is costly to defense planning, yet the military strategy document does not separately address it.

Instead, proliferation issues are folded into the analysis of the national military strategy. Arms control is identified as one of the

strategic principles,<sup>3</sup> but the discussion in the national military strategy suggests that arsenals are being reduced and that political efforts at arms control will have enduring effects. This is simply not true in many parts of the world. U.S. defense forces may well be expected to intervene in conflicts arising in diverse regions because of arms proliferation within smaller nations that may lead to attacks on allies or on U.S. interests.

Halting proliferation politically by preventing the transfer of sensitive technologies or militarily by building defensive countermeasures does not deal with the critical issue of what military actions should be taken to dissuade other countries from building those arsenals in the first place or from eliminating them once they exist. Although huge U.S. and former Soviet Union stockpiles are now being reduced as the result of successful treaty negotiations, a key concern of the national military strategy should be how to deal with nations involved in arms races.

The National Military Strategy states, "We have engaged in arms control not as an end in itself but as a means to enhance our national security." This relationship is backwards. If arms control were in fact an ultimate goal, national security would necessarily be enhanced. Is there a role for military forces to encourage states not to proliferate? Can defense activities enhance the political efforts at

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<sup>3</sup> The National Military Strategy identifies eight strategic principles that will be applied to achieve broad defense goals: readiness, collective security, arms control, maritime and aerospace superiority, strategic ability, power projection, technological superiority, and decisive force. In essence, these strategic principles are seen as the factors that make the U.S. military strong and enable it to prevail.

arms control? Clearly, the answer is yes. But, the national military strategy now does not adequately address this issue and needs to refocus on ways that military actions can affect arms control efforts.

### Causes of Proliferation

Proliferation among nations takes several forms. At the lowest level, conventional proliferation involves creation of a military force (ground, sea or air) with conventional armament. International law recognizes a state's right to self-defense, and conventional arms often provide a relatively inexpensive, yet effective means to provide national security. Conventional armament also has civilian domestic uses, and may be employed to maintain internal order or facilitate rescue and humanitarian activities. A state can realistically choose to develop conventional armament for multiple legitimate purposes in the international community.

Excessive armament by a rational state would, however, only be sought (1) to counter perceived fears concerning its own security or prestige (e.g., India or Israel), (2) to offset the proliferation of arms by its neighbors (e.g., Pakistan in response to India), or (3) to build its armed forces so that it could carry out hostile aggressive actions against its neighbors (e.g., Iran, Iraq, or Libya). If arms races can be prevented and fears eliminated, only those few renegade nations with hostile intentions would become the world's proliferators. This would permit more focused world efforts toward security, as fewer regions would be enveloped in proliferation turmoil.



Nuclear, chemical and biological weapons proliferation raises some slightly different issues. Each of these weapons is capable of mass destruction and mass casualties. Nuclear weapons theory recognizes that these weapons are more valuable for their deterrent effect than for considerations of their actual use. Chemical and biological weapons cost less to produce and may be produced from facilities used for other domestic purposes; poor countries view them as the alternative to nuclear weapons.

So why would a country develop a weapon that it does not expect to use? There are several reasons why this might occur. First, the country may be seeking prestige in the international community. A traditional view, enshrined in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty,<sup>4</sup> recognizes the existence of nuclear and non-nuclear states. The nuclear states have always been the respected major powers in the world: the United States, the Soviet Union, China, Great Britain and France.<sup>5</sup> Other states (such as India, and more recently Libya, North Korea, and Iraq) have sought to extend their regional influence and status by developing nuclear capability. If a country has a nuclear weapon and the ability to deliver that weapon outside its borders, other countries will view that country more cautiously because they

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<sup>4</sup> Signed in 1968 and effective in 1970, the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty provides that a conference will be held in 1995 to determine if it should remain in force. This treaty has been the central means of obtaining nuclear nonproliferation in the past and continues as a mainstay of U.S. policy.

<sup>5</sup> France's decision to develop nuclear weapons resulted from its desire for superpower prestige within the European community, its refusal to rely on NATO or any other alliance for its self defense, and its desire to deter German militarism after having been overrun by Germany twice within 40 years.

question the nuclear power's intentions. Similarly, a state possessing chemical and biological weapons would also be treated more deferentially by its neighbors because of the uncertainty over the possessor's intentions to use its weapons capabilities. The respect and deference given by other states create power in the state possessing the weapons and expand its ability to influence events beyond its borders.

A second reason why a state might seek to acquire nuclear, chemical or biological weapons is fear and the need for deterrence of a neighbor state. Israel is a good example of this situation; so are the countries in South Asia. In 1974 India exploded a nuclear device. Since then, Pakistan has been actively working to develop its own nuclear capacity -- primarily because of its perceived need to protect itself and deter its neighbor India. India's nuclear program was motivated both by its suspicions of the intentions of its old enemy China (which already had nuclear capability) and its desire to assume a more important role in South Asia.

Finally, a third reason for acquiring nuclear, chemical or biological weapons would be to create a source of terror in the world community by threatening to use or actually using these weapons. Aggressive, radical states may actively seek these weapons to enable their governments to carry out ideological crusades against other nations and other states. These radical states are not easily influenced by the world community through the United Nations and other organizations and, as modern outlaws, often have independent political agendas.

After reviewing the causes for proliferation, one must ask how U.S. national military strategy can support political efforts to minimize proliferation. Political activities clearly dominate efforts to deal with proliferation issues through diplomatic exchanges, use of export controls over sensitive technology, inspections and assistance by international political organizations such as the United Nations and the IAEA, and direct arms controls negotiations. Military activities, however, can bolster these political activities and make them more effective if arms control is identified as a legitimate military goal and not just a collateral consequence.

#### Military Strategic Options

In the past military force has been used preemptively to stem proliferation. On June 7, 1981, Israeli F-16s struck the Iraqi nuclear reactor at Osirak to eliminate a nuclear threat to the region. More recently, the United States launched a preemptive attack against Libya in response to terrorist activities in Europe in an effort to eliminate the Libyan chemical weapons capability. During Operation Desert Storm coalition targets included not only conventional military equipment but also the nuclear, chemical and biological capabilities of Iraq.

In each of these cases the military force used to take the action predominated over the forces available to the victim. A superior force was needed, and it was used.

The United States, however, as it decreases the size of its armed forces, cannot always be certain that it will have the pre-eminent

force or that it will be able to design a coalition to achieve the overwhelming power needed to prevent retaliation by the victim state. Although a preemptive military strike can be a useful tool when all else fails, use of military forces in this manner to stem proliferation reveals a failure of other measures. As delivery capabilities increase, there is also no certainty that a preemptive strike would not be followed by a retaliatory strike against an ally or an innocent neighboring state (not unlike Iraq's scud launches during the Gulf War). When backed into a corner by the United States or a country like Israel, the victim state may well take action involving a third state and the political ramifications will overshadow the military actions. In planning to use military forces for preemptive purposes, senior military planners must account for these other possibilities.

This suggests that military forces should be used in other ways to curb proliferation of other states. It is unlikely that military actions not involving use of force will effectively halt states motivated by radical ideologies, hatred or adventurism from increasing their weapons arsenals, both conventional and otherwise. These states must be targeted by aggressive political action to bring their activities into public view, chastise them publicly for their proliferation efforts, create economic pressures on them through multi-national actions and sanctions, yet prevent them from becoming totally isolated from the world. Depending upon the geostrategic location of the state, normal military activities can boost these political actions by demonstrating U.S. presence in the region, creating deterrence by highlighting commitments to neighboring states, and using information

developed through intelligence sources to reveal the true intentions of these rogue states. These activities would need to be done on a continuing basis, not simply in response to a crisis as it arises. This means that military strategy must be broadly drawn not to exclude regions in the world. Continuing military activities are needed to avoid U.S. military forces being seen as the "911" forces for crisis.

Beyond the truly aggressive states, however, military activities can have a beneficial effect in curbing proliferation if the underlying reasons for the proliferation are understood. As previously discussed, proliferation is often the result of fear, mistrust of neighbors, and concern for security. Proliferation has an escalation aspect to it, i.e., as one state increases its arsenals, so does its neighbors. The potential for accidental violence, accidents involving weapons of mass destruction, and terrorist capture of arsenals expands as the arsenals expand. If U.S. military activities can improve the cooperation among states, dilute fears, build confidence, and create an environment in which states do not feel that their security can only be secured by building a bigger arsenal, military activities can have a positive effect in slowing or preventing proliferation.

The current national military strategy contains discussions of planning and employment options under a variety of headings: regional focus, adaptive planning, nuclear weapons, forward presence operations, conflict resolution, and planning for a global conflict. None of these options, however, deals directly with proliferation issues, and most of the discussion under each heading reveals a reactive rather than affirmative approach to security issues. For example, the nuclear

weapons discussion deals only with targeting issues and political arms reduction initiatives.

Combatting proliferation should be added to this list as a separate part of our national military strategy. This could be done either as an identified area for planning or possibly as a subsection under the heading of forward presence operations, which now includes operational training and deployments, security assistance, protecting U.S. citizens abroad, combatting drugs, and humanitarian assistance. Certainly, combatting proliferation is at least as critical as combatting drugs and rendering humanitarian assistance.

From a military perspective numerous measures could be taken without changing defense budgets or force structure. Expanded forward presence through port visits and deployments, military contacts and exchanges, security assistance, and multilateral military efforts can work to build confidence throughout the world. Relationships forged through these efforts would not only tend to create stability in times of crisis but also might avoid crisis escalation generated by misinterpretation of intentions and interests. Military information exchanges, sharing of certain intelligence data, and use of other creative measures to diffuse misunderstanding can eliminate the fears and security concerns of states in diverse regions of the world and directly influence the course of arms proliferation.

These confidence-building military activities, however, need to be viewed as measures aimed specifically at combatting proliferation, not simply as corollaries to other security goals. By adding a war against proliferation as a purposeful military strategy, imaginative military

planners may devise other nonviolent military activities tailored to regional needs that will compliment political efforts. The net result would be a diminution of proliferation and a more secure world for everyone.

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