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Post-Conflict and Culture: Changing America's Military for 21st Century Missions

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I want to thank Admiral Arthur Cebrowski and his team at the Defense Department's Office of Force Transformation for inviting me to participate in this workshop on the role of culture in transformation.¹ Too often, discussions on transforming military capabilities focus on the role of technology.

MacGregor Knox and Williamson Murray rightly conclude in their book, *The Dynamics of Military Revolution, 1300–2050*, that from a historical perspective, adopting new technologies alone does not account for dramatic change.² Achieving enduring competitive military advantages through transformation also requires the intellectual capacity to conceptualize employing force differently than in the past—and that may require changing aspects of military culture.

The premise of my remarks is that missions, strategy, education, and organization can be instruments for changing military culture, which, in turn, can provide new and unprecedented capabilities. I want to argue that DOD culture does need to be changed

1. Transformation is innovation on a grand scale, undertaken to exploit major changes in the character of conflict. See testimony of Andrew F. Krepinevich before the Committee on Armed Services, U.S. Senate, April 9, 2002, at www.csbaonline.org/4Publications/ArchiveT.20020409.Defense_Transfmrma/T.20020409.Defense_Transforma.htm.
2. James Jay Carafano, review of MacGregor Knox and Williamson Murray, eds., *The Dynamics of Military Revolution, 1300–2050* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), at www.h-net.msu.edu/reviews/showrev.cgi?path=313141031920315.

Talking Points

- The military's role in warfighting is unquestioned, but its responsibilities in peace operations are both controversial and poorly understood.
- The capacity to conduct post-conflict operations is one area where the military remains significantly deficient and the reasons for this are as much cultural as they are material.
- Changing military culture with respect to post-conflict operations could well require a set of initiatives that cut across the services' education, career professional development patterns, and organization.
- If the United States wishes to meet future challenges more effectively, it will have to address the cultural impediments to providing the right kind of military capabilities. Innovations in education, operational practices, and organization could provide the impetus for developing an appropriate post-conflict force for the next occupation.

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with regard to one mission in particular: the military's capacity to conduct post-conflict operations.³ Traditionally, the United States plans and executes these tasks inefficiently, jeopardizing the strategic gains achieved through battle.

Defining Strategic Requirements

The military's role in warfighting is unquestioned, but its responsibilities in peace operations are both controversial and poorly understood. Though there are no universally agreed upon terms to describe them, military peace operations can be divided into three types of actions: peacemaking,⁴ peacekeeping,⁵ and post-conflict activities. Of these, arguably, post-conflict missions (as opposed to nation-building⁶) are the only essential and perhaps appropriate task for U.S. forces.

Post-conflict activities are an integral part of any military campaign in which U.S. forces are required to seize territory, either to free an occupied country, as was the case during the liberation of Kuwait during the 1991 Gulf War, or to dispose of an enemy regime, as during the post-war occupations of Ger-

many and Japan. Such missions are not "optional" operations; they are an integral part of any military campaign.

In addition, the initial stages of any occupation have to be primarily a military-led effort. Only the occupation forces can provide the security and logistics needed to get the job done and offer a focal point for the unity of effort required to make the troubled transition from war to peace.

While this is an inevitable task for the U.S. military in any conflict, American troops rarely excel at this mission. Recent operations in Iraq, for example, do not appear to have been well organized or effectively implemented.⁷

I would argue that this reflects the military's traditional approach to post-conflict missions, which have always been ad hoc and haphazard. The capacity to conduct post-conflict operations is one area where the military remains significantly deficient and the reasons for this are as much cultural as they are material.⁸

3. Post-conflict operations include those minimum military activities that are required in the wake of war. After any campaign, the United States will have moral and legal obligations to restore order, provide a safe and secure environment for the population, ensure that people are being fed, and prevent the spread of infectious disease. In short, the military's task is to provide a secure atmosphere for the reestablishment of civilian government and domestic security and public safety regimes. In addition, maintaining a safe and secure environment in the post-conflict phase will be vital for ensuring the national interest that precipitated U.S. involvement to begin with, whether that task be disarming and demobilizing an enemy force, hunting down the remnants of a deposed regime, or restoring a legitimate border.
4. Peacemaking involves the use or threat of violence to compel compliance with resolutions or sanctions designed to end conflict. These are the most problematic of all peace operations. Maintaining neutrality is an especially difficult challenge. This is particularly true for the United States. As a global power with interests in virtually every corner of the world, it is difficult to conceive of many conflicts in which America would be seen as a neutral power. Peacemaking should not be a routine mission for U.S. forces. See James Jay Carafano, "The U.S. Role in Peace Operations: Past, Perspective, and Prescriptions for the Future," Heritage Foundation *Lecture* No. 795, August 14, 2003, at www.heritage.org/Research/NationalSecurity/hl795.cfm.
5. Peacekeeping operations are undertaken with the consent of all major warring parties and are designed simply to implement a peace agreement. The need to conduct these operations is a matter of strategic judgment. The United States is engaged in a global war on terrorism, a war that may take many years and require the extensive use of our troops. The armed forces are already straining to meet the demands of global conflict. America needs to pace itself and reserve its military instruments for advancing vital national interests. The United States should refrain from taking on major roles in peace enforcement operations. These activities offer substantially fewer risks than peacemaking, but that means many nations with only a modicum of military capability and some outside support can also perform them. The United States should reserve its forces for the great-power missions that require the preponderance of military power that only the United States can provide. See Carafano, "The U.S. Role in Peace Operations."
6. Nation-building comprises a far broader range of political, military, social, and economic tasks associated with reconstruction of a country in the aftermath of war. Many of these activities are tasks for which military forces are neither well-suited nor appropriate.
7. James Jay Carafano, "After Iraq: Learning the War's Lessons," Heritage Foundation *Background* No. 1664, July 3, 2003, at www.heritage.org/Research/MiddleEast/bg1664.cfm.

Among the traditions, experiences, preconceptions, and routine practices that determine how the armed forces conduct post-conflict operations, the most powerful force shaping the services' thinking is a "tradition of forgetting." The services, particularly the Army, have a long record of conducting various kinds of peace missions. Traditionally, however, the armed forces concentrate on warfighting and eschew the challenges of dealing with the battlefield after the battle.

The Army's experience and knowledge in peace operations is a case in point. They have never been incorporated into mainstream military thinking in any major, systematic way. For example, the official report on the U.S. participation in the occupation of the Rhineland after World War I noted that, "despite the precedents of military governments in Mexico, California, the Southern States, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Panama, China, the Philippines, and elsewhere, the lesson seemingly has not been learned."⁹

After World War I, the tradition of forgetting continued. As the United States prepared to enter World War II, the military discovered it had virtually no capacity to manage the areas it would likely have to occupy. The Army did not even have a field manual on the subject before 1940. In fact, one of the planners' first acts was to root out the report on lessons learned from the Rhineland occupation.

After the Second World War, the Pentagon largely forgot about the problem and continued to reinvent solutions each time it faced a new peace

operation. This tradition has changed little to the present day.

Other aspects of the military's traditional approach appear to have detrimental affects as well. When American forces do undertake peace missions, they try, as much as possible, to make them mirror traditional military activities. Such an approach can result in the misapplication of resources, inappropriate tasks and goals, and ineffective operations.

In addition, the armed forces largely eschew integrated joint, interagency, and coalition operations, as well as ignoring the role of non-governmental agencies. The result is that most operations lack cohesion, flexibility, and responsiveness.¹⁰

Changing a Military

If we agree that the military is poorly prepared to conduct missions—and that these are important tasks to get right—how can we insure that the armed forces are more ready to conduct these operations in the future?

I would argue that the obstacles to conducting post-conflict missions more effectively are largely cultural in origin. Therefore, changing military culture with respect to post-conflict operations could well require a set of initiatives that cut across the services' education, career professional development patterns, and organization. These innovations might include the following.

- The skills needed to conduct effective post-conflict tasks require "soft power"—not only the capacity to understand other nations and cul-

8. The military's reluctance to think deeply about the place of peace operations in military affairs derived from a rich tradition of Western military theory, typified by the 19th century Prussian thinker Carl von Clausewitz, who emphasized the primacy of winning battles and destroying the enemy's conventional troops. Clausewitz, a veteran of the Napoleonic Wars, could perhaps be forgiven for not even mentioning peace operations in his classic treatise *On War*. After all, peacekeeping operations were something new and novel in his time, first conducted by allied forces dismantling Napoleon's empire in 1815. Erwin A. Schmidl, "The Evolution of Peace Operations from the Nineteenth Century," in Erwin A. Schmidl, ed., *Peace Operations: Between War and Peace* (London: Frank Cass, 2000), p. 7. For a detailed history of the occupation of France by the allies, see Thomas Veve, *Duke of Wellington and the British Army of Occupation in France, 1815–1818* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1992).

9. *American Military Government of Occupied Germany, 1918–1920: Report of the Officer in Charge of Civil Affairs and Armed Forces in Germany* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1943), p. 64.

10. James Jay Carafano, *Waltzing into the Cold War: The Struggle for Occupied Austria* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2002), pp. 11–13, 19–22. Typically in post-conflict planning, the U.S. military fails to implement the lessons of previous operations, coordinates poorly with allies and nongovernmental organizations, and participates inadequately in inter-agency planning.

tures, but also the ability to work in a joint, interagency, and multinational environment. These are sophisticated leader and staff proficiencies, required at many levels of command.

In the present military education system, however, much of the edification relevant to building these attributes is provided at the war colleges to a relatively elite group being groomed for senior leader and joint duty positions. This model is wrong on two counts.

First, I think these skills are needed by most leaders and staffs in both the active and reserve components,¹¹ not just an elite group within the profession.

Second, this education comes too late in an officer's career. Virtually every other career field provides "graduate level" education to members in their mid-20s to 30s. Only the military delays advanced education until its leaders are in their mid-40s.

- The armed services also need special schools specifically designed to teach the operational concepts and practices relevant to post-conflict missions. The services already have advanced schools (such as the Marine Corps' School for Advanced Warfighting) for instructing in the operational arts at their staff colleges. These courses train the military's finest planners. The curriculum in these courses should be expanded to include post-conflict missions.
- The combatant commands¹² should be reorganized to include interagency staffs with specific responsibility for developing post-conflict contingency plans in the same manner as current operational staffs plan for warfighting contingencies.¹³

In the event of war, the post-conflict interagency group can be attached to the operation's joint force commander to provide the nucleus of an occupation staff.

In addition, the joint force command should include a general-officer deputy commander who would oversee the work of the planning group and assume command of the occupation force after the conflict. These staffs and command positions could provide a series of operational assignments for the career development of a cadre of officers especially skilled in post-conflict duties.

- The military should also retain force training and force structure packages appropriate to post-conflict tasks. There are three ways to obtain commands suitable to post-conflict missions: (1) training and equipping allies to perform these duties, (2) retraining and reorganizing U.S. combat troops for the task, and (3) maintaining special U.S. post-conflict forces.

I would argue that, as a great power, the United States needs all three of these options to provide the flexibility that will enable the nation to adapt to different strategic situations which might require different levels of commitments from U.S. forces. Special post-conflict units could be assembled from existing National Guard and Reserve units including security, medical, engineer, and public affairs commands. Since many of the responsibilities involved in post-war duties are similar in many ways to missions that might be required of homeland security units, these forces could perform double duty, having utility both overseas and at home.¹⁴

11. The Reserve Component, which includes both the Reserves and the National Guard, represents 47 percent of the nation's available military forces. See James Jay Carafano, "The Reserves and Homeland Security: Proposals, Progress, Problems Ahead," *CSBA Backgrounder*, June 19, 2002, at www.csbaonline.org/4Publications/Archive/B.20020619.The_Reserves_and_HI/B.20020619.The_Reserves_and_H.htm.

12. The combatant commands are established under the unified command plan (UCP), a document that describes the geographic boundaries and functions of the combatant commands charged with conducting U.S. military operations worldwide.

13. For one proposal, see John R. Boullé III, "Operational Planning and Conflict Termination," *Joint Force Quarterly* (Autumn/Winter 2001–2002), pp. 99–102.

14. James Jay Carafano, "Shaping the Future of Northern Command," *CSBA Backgrounder*, April 29, 2003, p. 12, at www.csbaonline.org/4Publications/Archive/B.20030429.NORTHCOM/B.20030429.NORTHCOM.pdf.

The Consequences of Cultural Change

The 21st century has not seen the last of war. Regardless of the outcome of the current operations in Iraq, the United States will no doubt again be called upon to conduct post-conflict tasks in the future.

There is at least one clear lesson from the current experience, a powerful reminder that these operations are complex and difficult: If the United States wishes to meet future challenges more effectively, it will have to address the cultural impediments to providing the right kind of military capabilities. Innovations in education, operational practices,

and organization could provide the impetus for developing an appropriate post-conflict force for the next occupation.

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