



# The American Military

A new debate in Washington began this spring over the state of the nation's defenses. Even as it urged approval of a new Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT II) with Moscow, the Carter administration cited a continuing Soviet arms build-up that threatened to upset the global "strategic balance" in the mid-1980s. The President asked Congress for a modest increase in the Pentagon's budget for 1980, reversing his earlier pledges to cut military costs. The request marked the latest in a long series of shifts in U.S. concern about the nation's security. Here, historians Samuel F. Wells, Jr. and David MacIsaac trace the ups-and-downs of U.S. defense policy since the republic's early days; editor Peter Braestrup summarizes the 1979 defense debate; and sociologist Charles Moskos examines the strengths and weaknesses of the all-volunteer force.



## A 'MINUTEMAN' TRADITION

*by David MacIsaac and Samuel F. Wells, Jr.*

In 1784, shortly after the end of the War for Independence, the Continental Congress agreed with Elbridge Gerry of Massachusetts that "standing armies in time of peace are inconsistent with the principles of republican government." So saying, the Congress ordered the post-Revolutionary Army reduced to 80 caretakers (at Fort Pitt and West Point), banned any officers above the rank of captain, and asked the states for 700 militia to guard the western frontier.

Not long afterward, in *The Federalist*, James Madison wrote:

"The liberties of Rome provided the final victims to her

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military triumphs; and the liberties of Europe, in so far as they have ever existed, have with few exceptions been the price of her military establishments. A standing force therefore is a dangerous, at the same time that it may be a necessary, provision."

Such antimilitary sentiments were reinforced by what Madison called the "happy security" afforded by America's geography: the broad oceans long made it possible for Americans to dismiss the notion of external threats to their existence. George Washington warned against "entangling alliances," and the preoccupations of the European states with "balance of power" strategies and politics seemed distant and reprehensible.

The new republic devoted its prime energies to the development of the North American continent. The rising business class saw the military professionals as economic parasites, removed from the competitive strivings of the market place; as time went on, reformers and intellectuals saw the military as alien to an egalitarian unregimented democracy. Then as later, Harvard's Samuel P. Huntington once observed, American political thinkers did not understand and were hostile to "the military function" in society.

The persistent amalgam of distrust, cost-consciousness, and isolationism helped sustain the amateur "Minuteman" tradition. Throughout the 19th century, Presidents and Congresses relied on a small regular force in peacetime, calling upon militia and volunteers to help the United States survive a second conflict with Britain (1812-15), triumph in an expansionist war

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with Mexico (1846–48), and preserve the Union (1861–65). Not surprisingly, there was little systematic thought given to what kinds of military forces—or strategy—the nation’s foreign policy might someday require. Even after it gained Great Power status by defeating Spain in 1898 and acquiring the Philippines and Puerto Rico, the United States had no regular army of consequence; the Navy, while its battleships symbolized America’s new industrial might, was unprepared for any major role across the Atlantic or Pacific.

### Over There

After the outbreak of World War I, the United States watched the European carnage from afar. Woodrow Wilson’s administration authorized the selling of munitions to France and England against Imperial Germany and Austria-Hungary but responded with only diplomatic protests to German submarine attacks and British blockading. Even as they started a naval build-up in 1916, President Wilson and Congress did little to ready the Army for possible conflict. Indeed, Wilson actively discouraged advance military planning. When he reluctantly concluded that only by joining the Allies could he protect U.S. interests and influence the peace settlement, Wilson asked Congress for a declaration of war.

Conscription, war production, and “meatless days” began. But mobilization took time. Not until early 1918, almost a year after declaring war, did the United States get significant numbers of fresh troops across the Atlantic to join the exhausted Allies. The Yanks arrived in force just in time to help stave off the German offensives of March 1918 and thus assure victory for the Western powers eight months later. Though tardy, the American effort was crucial—more than 2 million soldiers and enormous tonnages of supplies went overseas to help “make the world safe for democracy.”

Their brief but costly World War I experience did not convince Americans back home that their country should use its new power abroad to safeguard the peace. Instead, the draftees and volunteers were demobilized; the Senate rejected both the Versailles Treaty and membership in the League of Nations; and, in 1923, the last of the regular Army occupation troops returned home from the Rhineland. Postwar Europe was left to the Europeans—including Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini. Washington turned to “normalcy,” congressional attacks on the arms industry (“Merchants of Death”), attempts at Big Power naval limitation, low military budgets, and later, the over-

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whelming trauma of the Great Depression.

Between 1936 and the outbreak of World War II in 1939, a handful of preparedness advocates began to sound the alarm over Nazi rearmament, Japanese aggression in China, and Italian and German intrusion in the Spanish Civil War. In response, the America First movement—a hodgepodge of Midwest populists, pacifists, New York socialists, and fiscal conservatives—appealed to widespread isolationist sentiment. With a modest ship-building revival underway by the late 1930s, the Navy secretly prepared *Plan Orange*, its plan to protect the Philippines and Hawaii against the resurgent Japanese Navy. The Army, always more vulnerable to the nation's political moods, had only 190,000 men and almost no modern equipment when the Nazis invaded Poland on September 1, 1939. In June 1940, a few days after Hitler's conquest of France, the House of Representatives passed the Selective Service Act reinstating conscription—by only two votes. And only then did Franklin D. Roosevelt feel he had enough public support to undertake serious rearmament.

To a far greater extent than Americans realized at the time, the second World War was much like the first. Victory came only when one of the two opposing coalitions eventually brought to bear its superiority in numbers—of men, ships, bullets, aircraft. Much of the technology was new—radar, the long-range bomber, the aircraft carrier, the German “V-2” missile, and, of course, the atomic bomb. But the decisive element, in the end, was the material and manpower superiority of the Allies.

After the victory in 1945, some things were forgotten: the early U.S. defeats; the importance of British resistance; the delays in arming and organizing U.S. forces; the preponderant role of Soviet armies in the two-front war against Germany; the serious weaknesses of the Axis powers.

### Truman and the Bomb

But certain “lessons” were firmly implanted in the minds of many who led the war effort and of many who served. These were: (a) the need for military readiness in peacetime, especially in the new era of long-range bombers and atomic weaponry; (b) the desirability of countering threats to U.S. security overseas, rather than “in our own backyard”; and (c) the critical importance of technology and a strong industrial base. The war, in imparting these lessons, was to shape the world view of an entire generation of U.S. leaders, notably Harry S Truman, Dwight D. Eisenhower, John F. Kennedy, and Lyndon B. Johnson—and

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their most influential advisers.

Neither President Truman nor his former colleagues in Congress at first understood the foreign policy implications of the wartime experience. A possible postwar economic depression was high on their list of worries, and so was voter reaction to wartime burdens. Demobilization proceeded rapidly. By June 1947, with little protest from any quarter, the nation's military manpower had dropped from more than 12 million to a little over one and a half million, including token occupation forces in Germany and Japan. To an aggressor, the United States suddenly posed no effective military threat, short of using its few existing atomic bombs.

### **Neither War nor Peace**

But 1946 was not 1919. A new world had dawned for America, heralded by its rise to a position of relative strength unsurpassed in its history, by the survival of another great power—the Soviet Union (about which Americans knew little and distrusted much)—and by the emergence of new weapons promising an age of potential massive destruction. The dramatically altered international situation produced new attitudes in Washington toward military forces. Americans traditionally had divorced war and peace, allowing only limited roles for diplomats during war and for military men during peacetime. Now a postwar consensus developed that embraced the need for the United States to organize and use military power, even without actual combat, in the exercise of its new responsibilities as a world leader. America's long epoch of "free" security had come to an end.

The threat to America's interests posed by the Soviet Union proved difficult to define precisely. Joseph Stalin seemed far stronger than he was. The military could do little but attempt to prepare for the worst possible contingency, namely, overt Soviet aggression. Events in Eastern Europe, Iran, Turkey, and Czechoslovakia—followed quickly by the blockade of Berlin and the first Russian atomic explosion in 1949—had the effect of setting in concrete the policy of "containment," first spelled out in George Kennan's famous "Mr. X" article on "The Sources of Soviet Conduct" (*Foreign Affairs*, July 1947). While Kennan stressed economic means for containing Soviet "expansionism," Washington saw a military deterrent as more urgent.

Providing the necessary funds, however, raised again the troublesome question—intermittently on the nation's agenda from 1775 to 1979—of how much defense spending is enough.

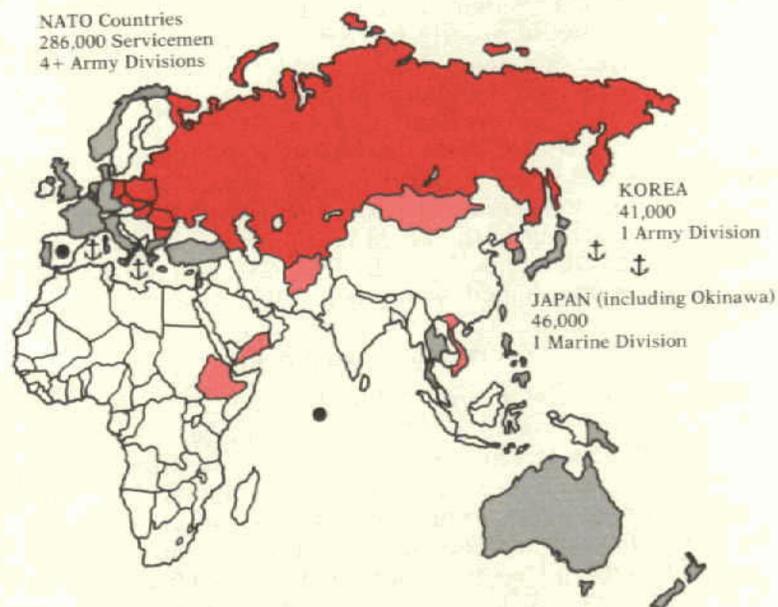
DEPLOYMENT OF U.S. FORCES, 1979



*Portrayed above are the principal current deployments worldwide of U.S. military manpower, ground units, and forward Navy carrier forces. Air Force deployments are not shown. The general pattern has not changed since the mid-1950s, after the U.S. rearmed under the impetus of the Ko-*

From the end of World War II to the outbreak of war in Korea, neither President Truman nor Congress felt the nation's economy could support a major increase in military outlays; instead, the President, like most Americans, tended to rely on the newly independent Air Force (primarily its Strategic Air Command) to deter or prevent all-out Soviet aggression. Despite the Navy's short-lived "revolt of the admirals," the Air Force got the lion's share of rigidly controlled defense budgets.

As the Cold War intensified, Congress reinstated the draft in 1948, but few were drafted. Cut and cut again, the Army, Navy, and Marine Corps were stretched thin around the world—from General Douglas MacArthur's understrength garrison in Japan



rean War. However, Communist China is no longer seen as an adversary; France is no longer in NATO; U.S. manpower in NATO is down from 434,000 in 1962; U.S. access to overseas bases has declined; the Soviets now have an "open ocean" Navy and are active in Africa.

to the token units under the new North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in Germany. In 1949, to conserve its forces, the Defense Department brought home its occupation troops from South Korea.

Even as U.S. non-nuclear strength declined (and development began, after much internal debate, on the H-bomb), an *ad hoc* State-Defense study group, led by Paul H. Nitze, head of State's Policy Planning Staff, explored the nation's defense needs in light of the Soviets' newly-demonstrated atomic capability. The Soviets were seen as achieving an ability to attack the United States by 1954, making their superior ground strength count for more than ever before. Moscow could fight general or

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limited wars, encourage subversion, rupture the Western alliance, undermine American will. In its report, NSC-68, the Nitze group told President Truman on April 7, 1950, that the United States should greatly increase its defense spending to right the balance and deter war.

Truman endorsed the idea in principle. But he was not willing to try to push an unreceptive Congress into accepting an expensive new military build-up. Nor was Truman quite ready to endorse Secretary of State Dean Acheson's conclusion that "what we must do is create situations of [allied] strength. . . . If we create that strength, then I think the whole situation in the world begins to change. . . ." The B-29 bomber and the Air Force, Truman apparently hoped, would be deterrence enough.

### **Korea and Rearmament**

A few months later, on Sunday, June 25, 1950, the Soviet-equipped North Koreans invaded Syngman Rhee's Republic of Korea, and President Truman and his advisors felt there was no choice but to respond—without atomic bombs. With a United Nations mandate but no congressional declaration of war, Truman ordered General MacArthur to intervene first with air power, then with his troops from nearby Japan. Once again, the United States paid a high price for unpreparedness—in dead soldiers and lost ground. Many Americans saw the communist invasion as part of a worldwide Kremlin plan for aggression, with Western Europe and NATO as the next target. Truman himself likened the Korean invasion to Hitler's early moves in the 1930s; not to respond would be to repeat the West's failure before World War II to halt aggression at the outset.

The 1950–53 Korean War ended in a truce as a stalemate following MacArthur's victory over the North Koreans, Communist China's massive intervention, and bitter fighting. Truman fired MacArthur in 1951 after the latter broke with the President over his indecisive "limited war" policy—for a time, the frustrations of the seesaw war gave a certain resonance to MacArthur's charge that there was "no substitute for victory." But the independence of South Korea was preserved (at a cost of 34,000 U.S. dead alone), and the NATO governments, even as they worried over MacArthur, were heartened by proof that the United States would go to war, if necessary, to support an ally.

Korea was a shock to Congress and the country. Even though the cost and duration of the conflict soon made it extremely unpopular, its chief critics were not the Left, then in a subdued state, but the Right, who saw any willingness to forego

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“victory” against communism as softheadedness or worse.

Yet, the North Korean attack provided the impetus for what amounted to American rearmament. Despite its origins in Northeast Asia, the war’s principal enduring military results were a sizeable build-up of U.S. forces in Europe, a growing nuclear arsenal, and a heavily-reinforced Strategic Air Command with bases in Spain, Morocco, Okinawa, Britain, and Guam, all within striking distance of the Soviet Union. The Navy got a go-ahead on new ships; the Marine Corps deployed amphibious forces in the Mediterranean and the western Pacific.

All this was fostered by Dwight D. Eisenhower, the hero of victory in Europe in World War II, who won election in 1952 promising, as the Republicans put it, to solve the problems of “Korea, communism, and corruption.” He surrounded himself with advisers like Treasury Secretary George Humphrey and Defense Secretary Charles Wilson, who felt strongly, in the wake of the Roosevelt-Truman era, that the greatest threat to the United States lay in excessive federal spending. At first, Eisenhower’s authority in defense matters was unchallenged; he cut back on the costly conventional forces and, like Truman before Korea, put his primary faith in the nuclear deterrent (“more bang for a buck”), but he continued substantial shipments of military equipment to NATO allies, Taiwan, and South Korea.

### **Eisenhower’s New Look**

In military terms, the new approach placed heavy reliance on nuclear weapons, not only against Soviet attack on the United States but against overt aggression of any kind. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles christened this new strategy in a speech during January 1954 when he called for an ability to “respond instantly, by means, and at places of our choosing” to aggression launched anywhere in the world. What was needed was a “maximum deterrent at a bearable cost.” The doctrine of “Massive Retaliation” had no sooner been announced than it came in for severe criticism by the new breed of “policy intellectuals” in the Pentagon-subsidized “think tanks” like RAND and in the universities. Economists, historians, and political scientists, the new strategists, began to examine and propose new concepts of defense, both nuclear and conventional.\* The impracticality of invoking nuclear retaliation in less than mortal

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\*Among the best known: RAND’s Bernard Brodie and Albert J. Wohlstetter; Harvard’s Henry Kissinger (*Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy*, 1957); Chicago’s Robert E. Osgood (*Limited War*, 1955).

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crises became an immediate focus of their criticism; reflected in the press, if not in Congress, it led to increasingly fuzzy statements from the Eisenhower administration as to whether nuclear weapons would actually be used in every case of communist aggression.

The budget-conscious Eisenhower "New Look," concentrating on SAC and development of ballistic missiles for both the Air Force and Navy, involved substantial reductions in conventional forces, especially the Army. Despite direct appeals by the military to the President, Eisenhower enforced the cuts. Army Generals Maxwell Taylor, Matthew Ridgway, and James Gavin retired to write critiques, among which Taylor's *Uncertain Trumpet* (his name for massive retaliation) would wield decisive influence in the following administration. The military was poorly prepared even for those bloodless interventions that occurred during Eisenhower's tenure (notably in Lebanon and the Taiwan Straits); but the nation felt secure behind its ever-increasing nuclear shield.

#### JFK's 'Flexible Response'

The Russian launching of Sputnik in October 1957 was interpreted in the West as a Soviet lead in the development of a nuclear-armed ICBM force.\* Eisenhower's hopes for a summit agreement with Soviet Premier Nikita S. Khrushchev on arms control were torpedoed by the downing of an American U-2 "spy plane" over Soviet territory. As the 1960 election campaign got underway, John F. Kennedy and the Democrats in Congress exploited fears of a nonexistent "missile gap." Once again, the question of "how much is enough for defense" surfaced in peacetime election politics. "More" was the Democrats' answer.

Kennedy assumed the Presidency determined to restore "vigor" to American policy abroad and to resist communist aggression wherever possible. He sought a more powerful nuclear deterrent plus a stronger conventional force. He wanted a "flexible response" to counter both Soviet conventional ground threats in Europe and Khrushchev's declared support for "wars of national liberation"—including one in South Vietnam. Discovering that there was no missile gap, he nonetheless initiated a massive increase in strategic nuclear forces toward a ceiling of 1,000 Minuteman and 54 Titan ICBMs and 41 nuclear submarines, each capable of carrying 16 Polaris missiles. Coming

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\*Actually, Sputnik was an experiment; The Soviets did not develop a "serious" ICBM capability until the late 1960s.

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on top of a significant lead in strategic bombers, this missile buildup was based on the premise that it would give the United States a degree of nuclear superiority that the Soviet Union could not hope to match without unacceptable strains on its economy. The idea was also to create a nuclear force that would be sufficiently large, dispersed, and well protected to enable enough of it to survive a surprise Soviet attack and retaliate in kind.

All this cost money, but the "Berlin Wall crisis" of 1961 (when JFK partially mobilized U.S. reserves) helped convince Congress to go along with the administration's new effort, even as Kennedy sought agreement with Moscow on a partial ban on atomic testing. If the New Frontier faced difficulties in Congress on domestic spending, its military budgets had little trouble.

Kennedy's Secretary of Defense, Robert S. McNamara, symbolized the "New Frontier" image of efficiency and toughness. A dynamo who regularly beat his military aides at squash, McNamara imposed new analytic criteria of cost effectiveness on the Pentagon bureaucracy. Theoretically neat, McNamara's concepts met with stiff resistance from the service chiefs who resented his intrusions into the domain of military expertise. Impervious to unquantifiable matters such as morale or esprit, the Secretary ranged high and low in his efforts to impose control. When he saw that the Air Force had adopted a plane originally designed for the Navy (the F-4 Phantom), he decided that the next generation of fighter aircraft should be similarly "joint-purpose." The variable-wing TFX fighter-bomber that he forced on the services resulted in the costly F-111A and F-111B, neither of which was in the end adopted by the Navy.

### **Confrontation over Cuba**

Two Cuban crises further strained relations between the military and their civilian superiors. There was the fiasco of the Bay of Pigs in April 1961 where, equipped and trained by the CIA, 1,500 anti-communist Cubans came ashore in a futile effort to topple Fidel Castro's two-year-old regime; Kennedy and McNamara tended to blame the service chiefs and the CIA. Then came the 1962 Cuban missile crisis when the Soviets secretly emplaced medium-range missiles on Castro's island within range of most of the U.S. South. Once again the President expressed dismay over the attitudes of some of the service chiefs who seemed all too willing to risk Armageddon, insensitive to the nuances of finding a solution short of direct attack on Cuba. Subsequent critics have blamed the President himself for

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raising the ante beyond reasonable proportions in the confrontation.

In the end, the incident revealed clearly to both sides the advantages of nuclear superiority, especially when combined with local air and naval hegemony. A U.S. blockade and the threat of further action against Cuba resulted in Khrushchev's decision to pull out the offending missiles—in return for Kennedy's promise not to invade Cuba. Chairman Khrushchev soon paid a heavy price for over-extending Soviet power; he was ousted in 1964. His successors in Moscow apparently decided to avoid further serious confrontations until they could eliminate the disparity in strategic forces between the United States and the Soviet Union; a steady Russian build-up soon began.

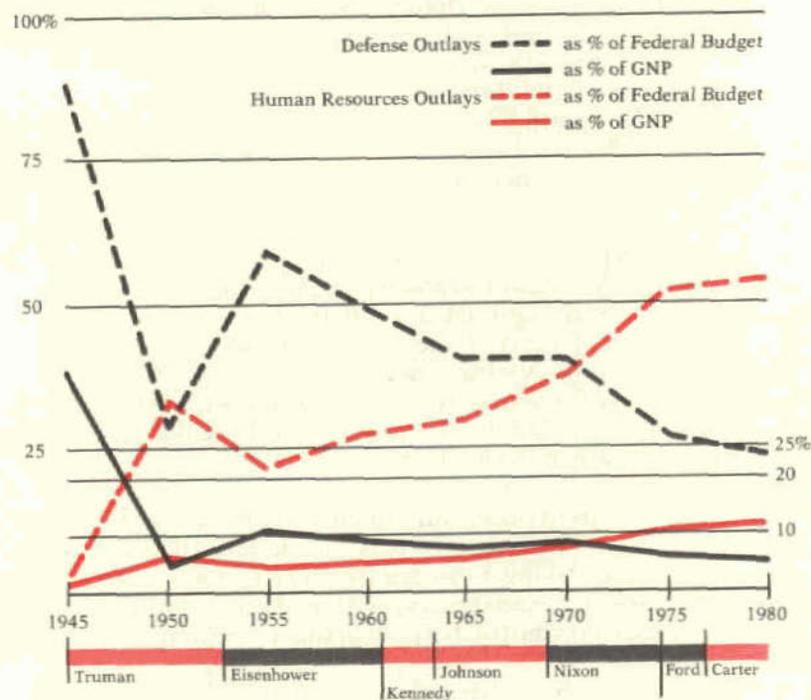
### **Johnson's Limited War**

Within a year of Kennedy's untimely death, Lyndon Johnson had secured sweeping congressional authorization for offensive action in Vietnam through the August 1964 Tonkin Gulf Resolution. He won election that fall in his own right, partly on an apparent campaign pledge not to enlarge the Vietnam War. Largely untutored in foreign affairs, he relied heavily on Secretary McNamara, Secretary of State Dean Rusk, and other former Kennedy advisers. Vietnam was far away, yet Kennedy had sought to shore up the Saigon regime with aid and 16,000 "counter-insurgency" advisers. The nature of the conflict was complex. But American civilian officials believed their overwhelming technological and military superiority could ultimately deter the North Vietnamese from trying to take over South Vietnam.

Bombing began, little by little. Congress, having forfeited its authority after Tonkin Gulf, sat back, approved the sharply increased defense outlays, and hoped for the best. There was a grim consensus, in the press and on Capitol Hill, on the need to draw the line against Soviet- and Chinese-backed "wars of liberation," without bringing on World War III.

Reluctant to embark on a land war in Asia, the Joint Chiefs recommended drastic measures or none at all. For personal and symbolic reasons, the President wanted desperately to avoid losing Vietnam to the communists. But he wanted both "guns" and "butter." He was unwilling to pay the price of a full-scale effort by mobilizing the reserves, increasing taxes, and possibly risking his "Great Society" social programs in Congress. Temporizing, Johnson, McNamara, and their civilian advisers in 1965–68 approved step-by-step increases in ground and air operations

## "GUNS VS. BUTTER" IN FEDERAL SPENDING, 1945-79



Source: Office of Management and Budget, 1979, Federal Government Finances

Since 1971, the federal government has been spending relatively less on "guns" than on "butter." In 1949, U.S. defense cost \$11.5 billion, or 30.3 percent of all federal outlays and 4.5 percent of the gross national product; spending for "human resources" (ranging from housing to education to welfare) was \$10.6 billion, or 27.3 percent of the federal budget and 4.1 percent of the GNP. Thirty years later, defense spending totals \$114.5 billion—23.2 percent of the federal budget and 5.0 percent of the GNP. About \$259 billion, or 52.5 percent of the federal budget and 11.3 percent of GNP, goes to human resources.

but rejected military urgings to carry the war to communist sanctuaries in North Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos. In his incremental efforts to avoid defeat, Lyndon Johnson gravely misused his nation's military forces, prolonged the war, created inflationary pressures at home, soon divided his own party and the country, and assured the victory of Richard M. Nixon.

Nixon brought to office in 1969 the outline of a grand design, worked out with the help of his national security adviser, Henry Kissinger. Its goals were improved relations with the

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Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China and an end to the costly U.S. military role in Southeast Asia. In Vietnam, "peace with honor," not "victory," was the goal. The administration pursued a dual strategy: continued (fruitless) negotiations with Hanoi and a build-up of Saigon's fragile forces ("Vietnamization") while slowly pulling out U.S. troops to appease domestic opinion.

### **Locking the Barn Door**

After the Cambodian "incursion" of 1970 and strong bombing of the North in 1972, the United States ended its direct involvement in Vietnam in January 1973. Under the Paris peace accords, the Nixon administration gained a nominal cease-fire and the release of most of the POWs held by North Vietnam. That was all. South Vietnam was left with a superior Soviet-equipped enemy force on her territory and no realistic hope of U.S. support when Hanoi's victorious final drive began in 1975. It was the first war America had "lost."

During his first term, Nixon made significant progress toward reshaping great power alignments. He began the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks with the Russians in late 1969. He used a dramatic trip to Peking in February 1972 to re-establish relations with a longtime adversary; within three months, the new Sino-American cordiality helped bring the Soviet Union to agreement in the SALT I treaty.

Although the Nixon-Kissinger diplomacy radically changed the international environment, Pentagon decision-making began to return to pre-McNamara patterns. Even as he pressed Nixon and Kissinger for faster troop withdrawals from Vietnam, Defense Secretary Melvin Laird, a former U.S. Representative from Wisconsin, left the service chiefs to operate without interference in matters of detail.

The Democratic Congress asserted its authority by actively criticizing both the administration's policies in Vietnam and its proposals for defense spending. Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield (D.-Mont.) even urged withdrawal of U.S. troops from Europe. In November 1973, as the Watergate scandal grew, Congress passed, over Nixon's veto, the War Powers Act; it set a 90-day limit on hostilities initiated by the President without congressional approval and allowed any combat commitment to be terminated by a concurrent resolution of both Houses of Congress. Congress locked the barn door on Richard Nixon long after Harry Truman and Lyndon Johnson had rushed through it.

The 1972-74 Watergate scandals gradually pre-empted the

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attention of the White House, Congress, and the media. The 1973 Arab-Israeli war and the attendant Arab oil boycott added the “energy crunch” to the agenda. The armed services shifted to a shrunken, all-volunteer force. Defense budgets dropped as low as 15 percent below the pre-Vietnam level, in real terms, and congressional liberals urged deeper cuts to “re-order national priorities.”

Replacing the disgraced Nixon in August 1974, Gerald R. Ford suffered for the sins of his predecessors as he sought to restore public confidence that had been eroded by Vietnam and Watergate. In defense matters, the consensus on Capitol Hill was “no more Vietnams”—and no more CIA subsidies for the foes of a Soviet-backed faction in Angola’s civil war. At the same time, Defense Secretary James R. Schlesinger (1973–76), like Melvin Laird before him, had to cope with a major change in the “strategic balance”; in 1971, the Soviets surpassed the United States in numbers of strategic land-based and submarine-based missile launchers. And the Soviet build-up was continuing. Over a 30-year period since World War II, the United States posture had gone from atomic monopoly under Truman to nuclear superiority under Kennedy to nuclear “sufficiency” under Johnson to “essential equivalence” under Nixon—and was on the verge of what officials of a new administration would call “rough equivalence.” It seemed to Ford that the post-Vietnam decline in U.S. military spending had to stop, and, finally, it did in 1976.

### Questions for Carter

Gerald Ford left to his successor a year later an uneasy new “strategic balance” with the Soviets, now active in Africa and Southeast Asia; the continuing arms limitation (SALT) talks with Moscow; and a tentative rapprochement with Peking. If antimilitary sentiment had receded in Congress, worries about inflation had not. And the increasing costs of modernizing the military—with cruise missiles, \$385,000 MXI tanks, \$8 million jet fighters, and \$1 billion nuclear submarines—made almost every new Pentagon weapons decision a matter of controversy.

There were other military issues awaiting the new Carter team: After Vietnam, was the United States prepared to intervene *anywhere* outside the NATO area, or was disengagement the better part of valor, as some Democrats suggested? In case of surprise attack, were there alternatives to massive retaliation against Soviet cities, such as focusing on Russian military targets (the “counterforce option”)? Could the volunteer force

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provide enough men to maintain U.S. readiness, or, in effect, was America again relying on the old "Minuteman" tradition to beef up its forces in time of war? Could diplomacy again be divorced from military power, as it was prior to 1945?

Most of these issues had their antecedents in past American experience. They were inflamed by the chronic tensions between the military's needs on one hand and the values of a liberal democracy on the other. The issues were not likely to fade away.



## THE CHANGING OUTLOOK

*by Peter Braestrup*

Seeking the Presidency in 1976, Jimmy Carter ran on a platform calling for cuts in defense spending of \$5 to \$7 billion. He assailed the Pentagon's "swollen bureaucracy" and the cost overruns of defense contracts. To many, it seemed as if Jimmy Carter (Annapolis '46), with his talk of welfare reform and national health programs, had opted for more "butter" instead of more "guns," that he tilted, on matters of defense, toward his party's doves. Yet today, this pledge to reduce Pentagon spending seems to have gone the way of Franklin D. Roosevelt's 1932 pledge to slash federal outlays as a means of countering the Great Depression. New realities tend to crowd in on the man in the White House.

As President, Jimmy Carter ordered the gradual withdrawal of U.S. ground troops from South Korea, canceled the costly B-1 bomber project, and, last year, vetoed a fourth nuclear-powered aircraft carrier for the Navy. But a major problem became increasingly apparent to him in 1978: For all the energies and hopes he had committed to the Strategic Arms Limitations Talks, the Soviet Union was not relenting in its 15-year expansion of military power that, among other things, threatened to upset the Soviet-American strategic balance by the mid-1980s.