

The Militarization of U.S. Foreign Policy

By Mel Goodman | February 2004

The fall of the Soviet Union handed the U.S. a unique opportunity, as the surviving superpower, to lead the world toward a period of greater cooperation and conflict resolution through the use of diplomacy, global organization, and international law. This great opportunity is being squandered, as the world becomes a more dangerous place. Military force is now looming larger than ever as the main instrument and organizing principle of U.S. foreign policy. In our new national security doctrine, in the shape of our federal budget, and in the missions of the agencies the budget funds, our government is being reshaped to weaken controls on its use of force and further incline our country toward war.

The U.S. decision to use force against Iraq was both rash and senseless, ignoring the fundamental premise that force should be the last, not the first, option. There was no near-term threat to the

U.S. or to U.S. interests, let alone a clear and present danger. Yet Washington repeatedly passed up opportunities to use diplomacy or to build a coalition. Rather, it approached the problem assuming that, as the world's dominant military power, it had no need to gain the cooperation of the international community already organized to meet such challenges.

Since the 2000 election, and particularly in the wake of the Afghan War

and the buildup to the invasion of Iraq, diplomacy has been shamefully abused. Rather than using international law to deal with suspected terrorists captured during the Afghan War, the U.S. opted for its own military tribunals and the suspension of accepted judicial procedures. It ignored such institutions as the United Nations International Court of Justice, which could have provided legal procedures based on international law. And it rejected established judicial civil procedures that guarantee the rights of the accused, including the representation by an attorney, a speedy trial, and access to evidence and witnesses for defense. In conducting a campaign of deceit to justify the invasion of Iraq, the Bush administration created the greatest intelligence scandal in U.S. history.

With the invasion and occupation of Iraq, we have witnessed the end of the so-called post-cold war era and the escalation of a continuous, worldwide war on terrorism that has increased global insecurity. Nearly 150,000 American forces are occupying Iraq and Afghanistan, and the result is growing anarchy in both countries. President Bush has declared that the war against terrorism centers on Iraq. This has the ring of self-fulfilling prophecy, since Iraq had no terrorism problem the U.S. invasion. A growing number at home and abroad are concerned Washington will resort to the use of preemptive force again, perhaps against other so-called "axis of evil" members, North Korea or Iran, before this year's election.

Reversing a trend that predicated the fall of the Soviet Union, the U.S. has increased its military budget to more than \$400 billion and its intelligence budget to more than \$40 billion. Current projections point to a defense budget of more than \$500 billion before the end of the decade, with another \$50 billion for the intelligence community. Led by Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, the Department of Defense has moved aggressively to eclipse the State Department as the major locus of U.S. foreign policy, arrogating management of the intelligence community, and abandoning bipartisan policies of arms control and disarmament crafted over the past four decades. Funding cuts have prompted the Department of State to close consulates around the world and assign personnel of the well-funded CIA to diplomatic and consular posts. Though current defense costs represent nearly 20% of Washington's expenses, less than 1% of the federal budget is devoted to the needs of the State Department.

The misuse of sensitive information to justify the war against Iraq has precipitated the worst intelligence scandal in U.S. history, compromising the Bush administration's integrity. As former National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski argued, this intelligence failure has been "fueled by a demagoguery that emphasizes worst-case scenarios, stimulates fear and induces a dichotomous view of world reality."

So instead of living in a new era of conciliation and conflict resolution, we are witnessing an ugly epilogue to the cold war that finds Washington acting alone instead of working with its traditional allies. It is important to understand how the U.S. was lured into this terrible cul-de-sac and how the nation should debate and adopt policies to reverse the Bush administration's dangerous neo-conservative course.

Key Points

- The Defense Department has moved aggressively to eclipse the State Department as the major locus of U.S. foreign policy.
- In its campaign for war with Iraq, the Bush administration perpetuated the greatest misuse of intelligence in U.S. history.
- The current White House has initiated and escalated a worldwide and continuous war on terrorism that has increased everyone's insecurity.



Problems with Current U.S. Policy

The Bush administration has placed the Pentagon atop the national security policy decisionmaking ladder, thus weakening the role of the State Department and other agencies dealing with foreign policy. As a result, the long-term security interests of the U.S. have been imperiled, weakening the international coalition against terrorism and compromising the pursuit of arms control and counter-proliferation. The actions of the administration have often not been discussed with congressional committees or debated in the foreign policy community, and many have reversed major tenets of American foreign policy involving multilateralism, collective security, and détente.

The militarization of the intelligence community has been particularly profound. Nearly 90 % of the \$40 billion budget for intelligence activity is allocated to and monitored by the Pentagon, and more than 90 % of all intelligence personnel report to the Pentagon. The Pentagon controls the tasking, collection, and analysis of all satellite photography. Moreover, such key intelligence bodies as the National Security Agency, the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (formerly the National Imagery and Mapping Agency), and the National Reconnaissance Office are designated as “combat support” agencies. This is exactly what President Harry S. Truman was trying to avoid in 1947 when he created the Central Intelligence Agency separate from the Pentagon, and made the CIA director of central intelligence as well.

Defense Secretary Rumsfeld has gone further than any other defense secretary to control intelligence collection and analysis. He created the position of undersecretary of defense for intelligence without vetting this move with the Senate intelligence committee. In preparing the case against Iraq, he created the Office of Special Plans, which collected specious intelligence and misused intelligence community collection to justify the war and to create a congressional consensus in favor of war. Rumsfeld’s moves received rubber stamp approval from the Senate Armed Forces Committee, undermining the oversight roles of the Senate and House intelligence committees.

Despite marked decline in the strategic threat to the U.S. since the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the Warsaw Pact in 1990, and the Soviet Union itself in 1991, military influence over national security policy has grown substantially, and congressional support for the Pentagon has never been greater. The influence of the military has led to the Senate’s defeat of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty; the abrogation of the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty (ABM), the cornerstone of deterrence for 30 years; U.S. rejection of the International Criminal Court and the ban on the use of

land mines; and the weakening of the bipartisan Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction Act, which contributed to the demilitarization and denuclearization of the former Soviet Union. The only arms control treaty that the Bush administration has negotiated with Russia, the Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty of May 2002, calls for no specific reductions before 2012, contains no provision for verification or monitoring, and allows missiles and warheads taken off the front line to be placed in storage rather than destroyed or dismantled. The treaty thus preempts any real disarmament agreement.

The doctrinal policies of the Bush administration have helped to make the international arena a more dangerous place. In his commencement address at West Point in June 2002, President Bush endorsed preemptive attacks, and several months later, the White House issued its National Security Strategy, which discarded the policy of détente and containment and endorsed preemptive or preventive military actions against states with which the U.S. is at peace.

Ominously, the strategy report warned that the U.S. would “make no distinction between terrorists and those who knowingly harbor or provide aid to them.” The Pentagon’s Defense Planning Guidance and the Quadrennial Defense Review projected an indefinite future of continuous and worldwide war, endorsed the policy of regime change, and championed preemptive attack as the means for securing peace through international acceptance of U.S. hegemony. The Nuclear Posture Review of 2002 lowered the threshold for using nuclear weapons, and the 2003 defense bill eliminated restrictions on researching low-yield nuclear weapons and provided additional funds for research on high-yield nuclear bombs for use against deeply buried targets. To paraphrase Mark Twain, the U.S. has demonstrated over the past three years that “if the only tool in our toolbox is a hammer, then all of our problems will soon look like nails.”

Key Problems

- The Bush administration’s Defense Department has exceeded all predecessors in appropriating control of intelligence and analysis.
- Washington’s current militarized foreign policy entails the abandonment of virtually the entire fabric of arms control agreements negotiated over the last 30 years.
- The White House has replaced multilateral agreements with a radical—and unilateral—doctrine of preemptive war and a lowered threshold for the use of nuclear weapons.

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The history of global affairs has been marked by major turning points—times when the systems and processes that shape relations among nations shift dramatically. We are alarmed that the domination of U.S. foreign policy by militarists and unilateralists is undermining the constructive, peaceful management of global affairs. By devaluing diplomacy, cooperation, and negotiations, U.S. foreign policy has created new distrust for U.S. global leadership.

— excerpt from the Statement of Concern

Toward a New Foreign Policy

U.S. foreign policy under the stewardship of Bush, Cheney, and Rumsfeld has been based on unilateralism and militarism. The condition of continuous, worldwide war has created an operational tempo for the military that the U.S. cannot afford and the Pentagon cannot endure. With so many “boots on the ground,” the U.S. has triggered a series of diplomatic and political problems with both allies and adversaries. Moreover, the U.S. doctrine of preemptive war has set a dangerous precedent for other nations, validating the first Israeli attack against Syria in thirty years in October 2003 and

Key Recommendations

- International diplomacy, not military action, must be the first option in crisis management.
 - Intelligence and law enforcement must be the first line of defense against terrorism; military force must be the last resort.
 - Arms control, disarmament, and nonproliferation must be restored as priorities of U.S. foreign policy.
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The major international problems that the U.S. faces today, particularly international terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) cannot be addressed unilaterally and cannot be resolved by the use of force. The same can be said for nontraditional security issues dealing with demographics, the environment, and AIDS. All of these problems require multilateral involvement and solutions.

In both Afghanistan and Iraq, nation-building and peacemaking must be internationalized under civilian—not military control—as quickly as possible. The Bush administration has commandeered more than half of America’s ground forces to pacify Afghanistan and Iraq, and the U.S. is spending \$5 billion a month in this effort with no end in sight. Neither the U.S. government nor the American people are prepared for the burdens of empire; U.S. military forces are overextended and are in no position to deal with emergencies that may arise, such as the a genuine crisis on the Korean Peninsula.

The United Nations and non-government organizations (NGOs) must be involved far more extensively in order to share the burden of governance and elicit collective resources for the job of reconstruction. Many countries most experienced in the field of peacemaking are prepared to commit troops and treasure, but only if Washington is willing to yield its domination of the transition process. The U.S. must participate with both the UN and NATO as group member—not hegemonic power. As Senator Chuck Hagel (R-NE) put it: “America needs more humility than hubris in the applications of American military power and the recognition that our interests are best served through alliances and consensus.”

International diplomacy, not military action, must be the first option in crisis management. The Bush administration has down-

played the role of international diplomacy in all crisis situations, including the Israeli-Palestinian peace process and the North Korean and Iranian nuclear challenges. In the Middle East, our aim should be the creation of a viable Palestinian state and security for Israel. This is probably best pursued by insisting that Israel abandon settlements in the occupied territories and by fostering Israeli acceptance of a Palestinian capital in East Jerusalem. The U.S. should also insist on an end to terrorism against Israelis, support of such a policy by members of the Arab League, and diplomatic recognition of Israel. In North Korea and Iran, the U.S. must establish or reestablish diplomatic relations, offer a combination of security guarantees and economic arrangements, and forge regional alignments to end the isolation of Pyongyang and Tehran. And Washington will need the cooperation of Iran and Syria to find a workable solution to the Iraqi crisis.

Intelligence and law enforcement must be the first options against terrorism; military force should be the last. West Europeans had to deal with terrorist organizations throughout the 1980s, and they did so effectively with law enforcement and intelligence agencies. Now that the terrorism problem is international, close relations with intelligence bodies are essential, as are knowledge of languages and regional studies in key areas. In the post 9/11 period, there have been no arrests or captures of key al Qaeda leaders that have not been relied on liaison intelligence and support. Cooperation between law enforcement and intelligence agencies—not the application of unilateral force—is the key to success.

The U.S. must support arms control and disarmament in order to stop the proliferation of WMDs. The White House must preserve and enhance an effective arms control regime, not dismantle it. This means adhering to outstanding agreements, not abrogating treaties that previous administrations have signed. And it means desisting from actions that compromise agreements or open new areas for competition.

A militarized foreign policy offers Americans a country on a perpetual war footing, but not one that is more secure. The U.S. must return to the ABM Treaty, end the deployment of national missile defense, and abide by Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty to end underground testing. U.S. support for arms control could end nuclear testing worldwide and even attract India and Pakistan to the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty. The current administration must commit itself to the agendas of Bush I and Bill Clinton to significantly reduce nuclear weapons and embrace international conventions on chemical and biological weapons. Washington must also end its development of low-yield nuclear weapons, such as bunker busters, and must prevent the weaponizing of outer space in order to return to the high moral ground in the quest for disarmament.

Melvin A. Goodman is senior fellow at the Center for International Policy and co-author of the forthcoming Bush League Diplomacy: How the Neoconservatives are Putting the World at Risk (Prometheus Books, March 2004).

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CELEBRATE INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY MARCH 8, 2004

International Women's Day is a time to reflect on progress made, to call for change and to celebrate acts of courage and determination by ordinary women who have played an extraordinary role in the history of women's rights. The Charter of the United Nations, signed in San Francisco in 1945, was the first international agreement to proclaim gender equality as a fundamental human right. The growing international women's movement, which has been strengthened by four global United Nations women's conferences, has helped make the commemoration a rallying point for coordinated efforts to demand women's rights and participation in the political and economic process.

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