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# EDUCATING STRATEGISTS: SOME DISCOMFORTING CONTRADICTIONS

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*personal views, not official  
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# Discussion

- 🎬 Observations on professional military education (PME) 20 years after the Cold War ended
- 🎬 How we craft the PME system: credentialing and strategizing
- 🎬 Administrative trade offs increasingly at work in the system
- 🎬 Thoughts for the way ahead

# 20 years after cold war-1

- ⦿ Competing goals drive PME. Each admirable goal, based on where its supporters sit in the community, confronts similarly admirable alternate priorities which, taken together, complicate dramatically the PME mission.

Example:

- ⦿ International Fellows educate officers from overseas but primary goal probably to strengthen mil-mil ties and strategic relations which may conflict with classroom priorities

# 20 years after cold war-2

- ⊗ Primary client/funding for PME is military student body which has been major student contributor and decision-maker on objectives for mission EXAMPLES
  - ⊗ Military Services seek to educate while building professional understanding and networks
  - ⊗ Civilian agencies seek to understand the armed forces, other national security agencies, and various other players in the community but do not bring the same capabilities to the table
  - ⊗ International Fellows come learn about United States, learn values, see the nation, and get to know peers from elsewhere

# 20 years after cold war-3

- 🎬 Challenges in national security harder but specialized careers--*for good, sound reasons*—may conflict with the needed breadth of thinking to address the exploding variables in the international system or to think across the spectrum of national objectives
- 🎬 25 years after Goldwater-Nichols Act, Services retain fairly different views of the value of joint PME

# 20 Years After Cold War-4

- ⦿ Civilian agencies hunger to understand DoD and strategy but have different objectives and missions
- ⦿ Much new technology and many new technology-driven pedagogies offer a new direction for educating strategists but require sustained funding
- ⦿ The academic community now driven by concerns about assessments and proof which now affect the environment for U.S. military education

# Crafting the System

- Military education in 2011 has multiple masters who have rather different goals in mind
  - J-7 and the military side: the OPMEP
  - Congress and adding rigor: credentialing process
  - Agencies providing civilian students seeking to learn about the military and security missions in era of declining funding

# Crafting-2

- 🎬 Faculty composition leading to tension: how do these affect the mission of educating strategists?
- 🎬 Uniformed faculty with tactical/operational/strategic experience worried about who they send to the field but not as interested in abstract academic arguments
- 🎬 Agency faculty with vast tactical/operational/strategic experience but stretched thin by their agencies' challenges to keep up with ops tempo

# Credentialing

- Title X civilians hired to increase rigor and strategic thinking
- All faculty are expected to teach, mentor, travel with students, engage in research and outreach
  - How do these affect the education mission?
  - Are the effects positive or negative?

# The Effects-1

- ④ Uniform and agency faculty come to the College for shorter periods, thus
  - ④ have significantly less impact than Title Xs on the curriculum development, and
  - ④ teaching may be harder for these practitioners who come because their experiential skills.

# The Effects-2

- 🎬 Hiring traditional civilian academics
  - 🎬 Under Title X in renewable, non-tenured positions,
  - 🎬 increasingly advocating for a PME system which focuses more on both publishing in peer-reviewed, mainline academic disciplines and journals, and
  - 🎬 develops a curricula looking at strategy in a more abstract way rather than based on current national security policies or challenges

# The Effects-3

- Title Xs tend towards specialization along academic disciplinary 'research' lines rather than across the institution's broadest mission, perhaps
- creating a disincentive to focus on broad curriculum because specialists prefer to teach where they have invested time rather than a core curriculum OR
- theoretical academics may not be as interested in educating students in broadest grand strategy questions outside of the faculty's 'lanes'

# Trade Offs in Student Selection-1

## 🎬 Pre-arrival dilemmas

A student may 'fill a billet' rather than be best prepared for a particular school

Student personal desires may trump 'logical' school because of location, spouse jobs, and other concerns

Mix of schools increasingly reflect desire by non-DoD active duty to increase their staff's understanding and skill in national security education, but is it diluting DoD objectives?

# Selection trade offs-2

## 🎯 Post-PME

- 🎯 Staffing needs for Services and for career advancement do not correlate always with educational capabilities of individual graduates
- 🎯 Should the PME system address this?

# Immutable for the future

- 🎬 Educating strategists is a zero sum game: the time available is finite and extraordinarily unlikely to increase for fiscal and professional reasons
- 🎬 Any addition to the curriculum leads to watering down of quality or removing something else
- 🎬 Each and every topic has a fierce advocate
- 🎬 Faculty composition, goals, and incentives matter
- 🎬 PME will continue to have costs, esp for technology

# Thoughts for future

- ❉ No single agreed standard exists for achieving the best education for strategists, but we likely cannot achieve everything to the highest level in the time the taxpayer and the Services want to allocate.
- ❉ Educating strategists requires prioritizing objectives for PME as much as thinking great thoughts