

A MORE CERTAIN TRUMPET

Summary of Remarks by General Maxwell D. Taylor, USA  
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The need for a "More Certain Trumpet" to guide our military policy arises from the democratic concept of the subordination of the military to civilian leadership in government. Under this concept, properly applied, civil leaders determine the aims to pursue as a nation, then devise a national strategy which blends together our political, economic, moral and military assets in proper proportion for the attainment of these aims. In such a context, military means are one but only one component of the national strategy-important, indeed indispensable to our national welfare but inadequate and meaningless if unrelated to the other components thereof.

To establish a proper relationship there must be a clear statement - a certain trumpet call if you will - from civilian leadership defining national aims, outlining national strategy and setting the metes and bounds for the activities of the military services. These, the services need to be told precisely what is expected of them, what means are available to realize these expectations, and how results are to be checked and appraised. Under such a procedure, the civil authorities would exercise firm policy control without intervention in professional military matters. They would keep the books, so to speak, on our political commitments which might require some form of military support. They would remind the

military recurrently of these commitments and verify the ability of the military to meet them singly or in such combinations as prudent leadership considers them likely to occur. In this way we would avoid the everpresent danger of allowing commitments to get out of balance with capabilities. Furthermore, the military services would have a clear understanding of their mission, their resources and hence the kinds and quantities of forces which they should maintain.

It is my thesis that our present organization for the making of national strategy has failed to provide this kind of clear guidance. It is the task of the National Security Council to formulate national strategy and to assign therein the proper role to the military. In my experience, the guidance of the National security Council has been so general in nature and so diffused in terms that it has meant all things to all readers. In the debates on military strategy, I always felt that I could find paragraphs of National Security Council prose to support my views at the same time when my colleagues in the Joint Chiefs who disagreed with me were just as sure of being on orthodox ground. It is my opinion that during my time as Chief of Staff our military leaders rarely received the unambiguous direction which is essential to proper strategic planning and to proper civilian control.

Left to their own interpretation of the military strategy required, the Joint Chiefs of Staff have fallen into endless wrangling over the kinds and quantities of military forces necessary to implement their favorite strategic brand. While some of this disagreement may be attributed to service partisanship, there has been and

still is a deep philosophical division among the Chiefs over how the U.S. should be prepared to wage war. Should we concern ourselves exclusively or almost so over the waging of general atomic warfare with missiles and bombers carrying megaton weapons of indiscriminate destruction? If you answer yes, then you become a proponent of a Strategy of Massive Retaliation. But in a period when the USSR has similar weapons of great destruction, should we not give equal attention to the requirements of so-called limited war to which the megaton weapons have no application? If you accept this view, then you are inclining to a strategy of Flexible Response and to a repudiation of Massive Retaliation as an all-weather, all-purpose method of assuring our security and that of our friends. Many of the divergencies within the Joint Chiefs of Staff have been the result of differences of opinion on these fundamental points. In the meantime, there has been no clear civilian determination of who is right and who is wrong.

A final difficulty in pursuing a clear strategy results from the way we keep the defense budget. Although no strategist worthy of the name thinks nowadays of waging war in terms of a separate Army, Navy and Air Force, none the less we keep our financial books in those terms. The tasks which the armed forces perform in war generally call for task forces made up of elements of more than one service. Thus, the atomic retaliatory force with which we would respond in kind to atomic attack consists or will consist of landbased missiles and bombers of the Air Force, of carrier and submarine based bombers and missiles of the Navy and of some shorter range missiles of the Army. To build such a force in peace on a rational basis requires first a determination of how much is enough in the aggregate,

then a determination of the precise contribution which each service should make to that aggregate and the dollar cost thereof. When a similar procedure were carried out for all the other operational categories such as air defense, limited war forces and antisubmarine warfare forces, the defense budget would be little more than an addition of the sub-totals. By the present archaic system of budget-making by service department, no one really knows what we are buying with our money in terms of the operational forces although these are units for measuring our true military strength.

The foregoing discussion indicates some of the deficiencies in our present strategy-making procedures. The criticisms carry with them the implication of their remedy. If the National Security Council has been unclear in its past guidance, it should now be made to become precise. If the Joint Chiefs have wrangled in the past, civilian authority should now step in, hear the opposing arguments and decide the issues. If the format of the budget prevents us from knowing what we are buying, the budget-making procedure should be revised in terms of functional, operational forces.

If these changes were effected, the clarity of our trumpet should be greatly improved. But what about the quality of its commands? Will they necessarily be the right ones? The answer is no and that possibility of the wrong command raises my final point. There is a need for a fundamental reappraisal of our national strategy and in particular, of its military component. This need arises from changed world conditions, actual and anticipated over the next few years. These changes include such matters as our loss of technological superiority over the USSR in numerous scientific

and military fields, the consequence of the so-called missile gap exaggerated by the absence of a missile defense for the U.S., our continued inferiority to the Communists on the ground and the rise of Red China as a political and military force. Any one of these new factors carry serious implications as to the posture of the U.S. as a world power. Any one of them make it prudent for us to reexamine our military strategy to determine its continued validity. In the aggregate, they make irresistible the argument for a thorough going reappraisal.

There is wide disagreement as to what results such a reappraisal should bring. My own opinion is recorded. I would discard the present Strategy of Massive Retaliation for one of Flexible Response. Thus, while retaining a powerful retaliatory force limited in size, we would recognize the need for greater readiness to wage limited, conventional war in a period of atomic stand-off. At such a time our atomic strength would become a shield warding off the danger of general war while our conventional forces became a maneuverable sword, and a flexible instrument of national policy.

But whether this particular view is right or wrong is not too important. It is important to recognize that the world is changing and that the military trend is against us. It will take heroic measures now to reverse this trend. It will take men, money and sacrifice.

What is the alternative? The inevitable result of standing pat on what we have done or are doing is eventual military inferiority to the USSR at a time when momentous political decisions face us and our Allies, at a time when it is highly dangerous to talk from weakness. While doubts may assail us as to the specific measures

we should take, there is little doubt of one thing. We cannot live long with Communism as an inferior.

MDT/smf