



# DEFEATING TERRORISM

## STRATEGIC ISSUE ANALYSIS



### Potential Changes in U.S. Civil-Military Relations

Marybeth Peterson Ulrich and Conrad Crane

#### Conclusions:

- A nation at war gives its military strong support and power, but military leaders must still provide expert and professional counsel. They must also resist the temptation to force policy, to make inappropriate demands on the budget, or to avoid “out-of-the-box” thinking.
- The current crisis provides the military a chance to strengthen its connections with the rest of American society.
- With public confidence in the military soaring, it is even more essential that military leaders maintain professional standards for nonpartisanship.
- The Army must accept and focus on its essential homeland security mission, including rethinking of AC/RC roles and analyzing potential legal issues.

#### State of U.S. Civil-Military Relations Prior to September 11.

While the state of U.S. civil-military relations prior to September 11, 2001, was generally strong, certain tensions warranted monitoring and attention both within the military profession and across the governmental agencies that interact regularly with the military.

*Imbalance of Power.* Perhaps the most important issue was the improper relationship between the political leadership and the military in the policymaking process. Political leaders should make policy decisions with advice from the military. During the Clinton years, though, the administration’s reluctance to confront the military and the military’s disagreement with many policy initiatives of its elected and appointed masters combined to allow the military to exert undue influence in the policy-making process. Critics contended that the U.S. military did not consistently follow the norm of supporting political objectives—especially

those requiring the limited use of force in various peace operations—in good faith, but instead engaged in behaviors that, in effect, had a determinative effect on policy outcomes. Some observers believed that the interjection of conditions, such as the “Powell Doctrine,” into the policymaking process was an overplaying of the military’s designated role as expert advisers.

During the first months of the Bush administration, there were signs of attempts to redress this apparent imbalance—and some military resistance to the change. There were many reports of friction between Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld and the Joint Chiefs of Staff over his strategic review, especially concerning the impression that Rumsfeld was ignoring or bypassing them in shaping his policies. Many in Congress also became involved in this dispute over future national security strategy and the structure and transformation of military forces.

*Civil-Military Gap.* Another concern that may have relevance for civil-military relations

in this newly emergent era is the much touted civil-military gap. Years of an all-volunteer force, major down-sizing of that force, and recent rounds of base closings have contributed to a growing isolation of the military from the society it serves. Scholars have warned that the implications of this gap may have negative consequences for manning the all-volunteer force and for sustaining the ideal image among the American people of the U.S. military as being comprised of America's Army, America's Navy, America's Air Force, and America's Marines—that is, forces of America and not forces separate from U.S. society. Concerns also exist about a lack of military experience in civilian leaders, and that generals and admirals will not properly respect congressional oversight from those who are perceived as unqualified.

*Partisanship.* Another source of tension, and closely related to the policymaking imbalance, is the perception of many that political partisanship gradually has been increasing within the U.S. military. The concern is that the U.S. military is losing its adherence to an apolitical ethic. Some critics contend that assumed and perceived preferences of the military—sometimes openly expressed by retirees—were leading to attempts by military institutions to influence unduly the American political process.

*Homeland Security.* Homeland defense issues in civil-military relations were also evident prior to the September 11 attacks. Various strategic reviews were attempting to focus the U.S. military—and the U.S. Army, in particular—on homeland security issues. Perhaps the foremost issue regarding homeland security was the military's reluctance to accept it as a high-priority mission, relegating it instead to police forces or, at best, the National Guard. The low priority assigned to this mission—similar to that assigned to peacekeeping operations—allows the Service to continue focusing on its warfighting mission. There were several other key emergent challenges in this area. Among

these was fulfilling the homeland security mission within a domestic environment where civil liberties remained intact. Another issue was articulating the homeland security mission in such a way that effectively differentiated responsibilities across the U.S. Government, while distinguishing between civilian and military roles.

#### Anticipated Changes in U.S. Civil-Military Relations.

The full impact of the September 11 terrorist attacks on civil-military relations is still evolving, but some projections can be made. While a united civil-military front is apparent now, many sources of potential friction and concern remain.

*Imbalance of Power.* The role of the military in the post-September 11 policymaking process may pose particular challenges for both civilian and military participants. Many of the parameters that regulated civil-military relations in the policymaking realm have changed since the attacks. Budget constraints that limited the demands of the Services have been lifted to some extent, Congress and the Executive are united to an unprecedented degree, and the nation as a whole is focused on national security in general and the war on terrorism specifically. Such an environment calls for strict adherence to traditional standards of military professionalism in policy councils.

The present process relies heavily on military expertise relevant to the application of force in the attainment of stated political objectives. Military professionals must be careful in their presentation of options to include all potential applications of the military instrument of power without limiting choices to those options consistent with a particular preferred doctrine, e.g., the Powell Doctrine. The current strategic challenge does not appear to have a short-term exit strategy and may not be conducive to the application of overwhelming military force, as required by that doctrine. The civilian leadership should

not deny military leaders the right to argue in favor of particular options, but they must demand presentation of comprehensive military options on ways and means to achieve political ends. Media reports suggest that Secretary Rumsfeld has been disappointed by the lack of innovative military advice he has received. In general, the military leadership should stay within their roles as expert advisors to the President and the Secretary of Defense, even when greater influence may be solicited by other forces—particularly congressional—in the policy-making process. The leadership must still think “out-of-the box” to meet the needs of this new war.

Restraint on the part of military professionals also will be needed especially on the budget front. More monies are available to fight the war on terrorism, but military leaders must subordinate institutional interests to national interests. Some might be tempted to take advantage of the environment to fund other service desires that might not be consistent with the national interest of limiting deficit spending, or which might not be sustainable when public, congressional, and administration support for increased defense spending inevitably declines. Service chiefs must also not become so focused on current needs that they forget about transforming for the future, and must not allow their civilian masters to develop similar myopic views.

While the pre-attack clashes between the Services and Secretary of Defense over his vision of transformation have been muted, the issues still remain. Secretary Rumsfeld's position in Washington, though, has been strengthened by both his own strong leadership and the unified national support for the military that has accompanied the war on terrorism. The media reports that he wants to revise the Unified Command Plan because of the global nature of the current conflict to create a central command structure more responsive to direction from Washington. This

might create new friction with the CINCs as well as the Services.

*Civil-Military Gap.* Additionally, there may be challenges related to congressional oversight of covert operations. One of the primary objectives of the war on terrorism is to conduct it in such a way that democratic institutions remain intact and that American democratic values are not undermined. The military and the administration must fulfill their responsibilities to be accountable to the American people via complete cooperation with the requisite oversight committees in Congress.

On the positive side, American society is unusually focused on national security issues. The heightened visibility of the military and an appreciation that the armed forces will play an ongoing and crucial role in a protracted war presents opportunities for recruitment, reenlistment, and—more importantly—the general reconnection of American society with the military. Military experts can also play an important part in exercising the information element of U.S. national power through an educational role that explains the national security challenges at hand and publicizes its myriad successes and challenges in an effort to sustain public support.

*Partisanship.* Challenges related to political partisanship include maintaining professional standards for nonpartisanship in the upcoming 2002 mid-term elections and presidential campaign in 2004. Assuming that the war on terrorism will be a long-term effort, it will be incumbent upon the military profession to disconnect consistently their professional support for the war effort with political support for candidates of a particular party that may be conducting the effort.

*Homeland Security.* The defense establishment has not been quick to adopt homeland defense as its primary mission in the wake of the September 11 attacks, preferring to focus on a warfighting campaign in Afghanistan. Critical infrastructure protection and control of borders are still seen as police missions,

although National Guardsmen and some Active Component soldiers are involved. The Army must immediately apply the necessary focus and resources to this vital mission, ensuring the homeland is secure enough to allow operations overseas.

Consensus on the ongoing threat of terrorism has heightened awareness that the Pentagon must be ready to provide its capabilities and support to other federal agencies, both in counterterrorism efforts and in a response role. As emerging details of the new Homeland Security Council and Governor Ridge's powers become clearer, the Army should be actively studying its long-term roles and missions and the implications of participating within such a broad-based homeland security effort. Though the exact scope, powers, and budgetary authority of the new homeland security entity are still unknown, its final form will inevitably include a mix of law enforcement and national security tasks that will call for ongoing collaboration between civilian and military authorities.

The Army and the other services should be thinking about the potential effect these various new relationships will have on the overall state of civil-military relations and on the ability of the services to perform their functional obligations across a comprehensive array of national security threats. As new civil-military relationships are formed—such as that between the Secretary of the Army as DoD's executive agent for all homeland security matters and Governor Ridge as the head of the Office of Homeland Security—civilian and military participants should strive to ensure that their efforts remain collaborative rather than competitive.

Challenges also exist with regard to the long-term implications of using the Reserve Components (RC) to participate in small scale contingencies and major wars abroad and in the homeland defense role domestically. Active Component (AC) and military leaders must think through such issues as the

viability of prolonged employer support for RC utilization, functional specialization of the AC or RC for homeland security and finding funds for equipment and proper training.

A new focus on homeland security will also highlight a number of legal issues. *Posse comitatus* considerations need to be examined to insure optimum military involvement in domestic operations to combat terrorism. Other legal issues that need to be resolved include permissible methods to obtain critical intelligence domestically and whether to treat captured terrorists as criminals or POWs.

### Conclusion.

Clearly the events of September 11, 2001, have resulted in new challenges and opportunities in U.S. civil-military relations. Some of the tensions that existed prior to September 11 seem trivial in light of recent events. Others have taken on a new significance as the current environment could possibly exacerbate pre-existing tensions. U.S. military leaders must provide expert and comprehensive advice in a complex and uncertain war that does not fall neatly into traditional conceptions of military campaigns. U.S. military leaders also face significant challenges in monitoring their own professionalism in ways that best serve the nation and the profession itself. Finally, a unique opportunity exists to reconnect with American society as America's Army, an Army that fully accepts its responsibility to protect the homeland and that needs the ongoing support and participation of all Americans to accomplish its many missions.



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