

National Security in the Twenty-First Century



Gary Hart

We are sailing into the new world of the twenty-first century without a compass. Despite the elapse of more than a decade, the vacuum created by the end of the Cold War—and the overnight irrelevance of our central organizing principle, containment of Communism—has not been filled by any coherent and compelling new vision. Meanwhile, the interests-versus-values debate grows stale and irrelevant. Along with disgust over corporate corruption and the legalized corruption of politics by money, public apathy today is traceable to a failure of visionary leadership—leadership driven by an understanding of the radically new world we now confront. America is adrift because it has not related its power to its principles. And it will remain adrift until our principles become the foundation of a new grand strategy.

Great powers throughout history have succeeded only when they possessed the genius to imagine, and the will to pursue, a systematic plan to dedicate the means they possessed to the achievement of large national purposes. At the genesis of a new century and a new age, America lacks a grand strategy that has the consensus support of the American people. Instead, too many peoples of the world now see the United States as a great power without purpose—and as a giant that pronounces rather than listens—and thus as a great danger.

Because we have failed to define our larger purposes, where we want to go, and how we intend to apply our resources to get there, we cannot now define our own national security in this new age. Security is the product of intelligent response to strategic realities. A nation that cannot articulate its strategy is bound to become a victim of confusion in constructing its security. And a state that cannot guarantee its citizens' security soon loses its legitimacy.

FOUR SIMULTANEOUS REVOLUTIONS

Neither strategy nor security can be understood outside our current context. Too few of our policymakers seem fully to appreciate the revolutionary whirlwinds that now shape our destiny. Indeed, we are swept up in at least four historic revolutions. They are, first, globalization, or the internationalization of commerce, finance, and markets; second, the information revolution, now creating a “digital divide” between computer literates and computer illiterates; third, the erosion of the sovereignty or authority of the nation-state; and fourth, a fundamental change in the nature of conflict. Without understanding the impact of these four simultaneous revolutions, a search for national security is futile. To respond to the first two revolutions requires foreign policy initiatives in the Middle East and elsewhere as bold as the Marshall Plan and as encompassing as energy security. To create a national security strategy requires an understanding of the changing nature of conflict in particular, and that requires an understanding of the erosion of the sovereignty of nation-states.

For 350 years, wars have been fought between the uniformed armies of nations with fixed borders, meeting in the field, to achieve a political result. Rules evolved for these wars: the Geneva conventions spell out the norms for humane treatment of prisoners, the rights of non-combatants, and so forth. But twenty-first-century warfare already looks dramatically different. Nations disintegrate; and when a nation disintegrates, as in the former Yugoslavia, borders disappear. Indeed, part of the process of creating peace among ethnic combatants in a disintegrating nation involves drawing new boundaries and building new nations. And now we have violence being perpetrated by combatants in civilian clothes, representing no nation, attacking civilian targets, with no political agenda and only a fanatical commitment to destruction. Meanwhile, despite belatedly accepting the recommendation of the U.S. Commission on National Security to create a Department of Homeland Security, the Bush administration seems to be preoccupied with national missile defense, which is at best premature, and has one new doctrine, preemption—a beautiful theory murdered by a gang of ugly North Korean facts.

HOW TO DEAL WITH THE NEW VIOLENCE

When the nature of conflict changes, the means of achieving security must also change. The new violence resembles war, but it is not. It resembles crime, but it is not. What is it, and how should we deal with it? For the moment and largely for convenience, we call it terrorism, and labeling every bad actor a terrorist leads us to embrace wretched allies on the always-dubious theory that the enemy of our enemy is our friend. On this same theory, we supported undemocratic and repressive authoritarian oligarchies during the Cold War simply because they were opposed to

communism. We set about assassinating foreign leaders we did not like. The bills we accrue from despicable allies and unprincipled policies that undermine the very virtues we claim to defend always come due.

In the past ten years, we have seen a dozen or more low-intensity conflicts between tribes, clans, and gangs. We participated in some, including Somalia, where we experienced the painful consequences of brawling, however well intentioned, in another man's alley—as memorialized in the film *Black Hawk Down*. We passively observed similar bloody conflicts, in Rwanda and elsewhere, where the weapon of choice, a machete, dated to the Bronze Age. We successfully formed ad hoc coalitions of the willing in Bosnia and Kosovo. We earned a quick victory in Kuwait largely due to intensive bombing and maneuver warfare. But, with that exception, post-Cold War conflict has been characterized by “non-arrayed” enemies—those not presented in traditional battle formation—representing “asymmetrical” threats, using ingenuity, not strength, to bypass our military might. Because they did not follow historical conventions, late-twentieth-century wars have seemed to us unfair and somehow more barbaric than conflict has been throughout history.

Yet military breakthroughs have often been achieved by weaker powers. Nowhere was this more evident than on September 11, when nineteen suicidal men in civilian clothes using e-mail, the Internet, elementary flight instructions, and tradesmen's tools converted kerosene-burning commercial aircraft into weapons of mass destruction. There was an evil genius about it. It was a shocking initiation into the twenty-first century, so shocking that it left some with the naive belief that it will never happen again or that, if it does, it will not be in their cities. But does anyone seriously believe that the bin Ladens of the world are done with us?

Our massive military and technological superiority did not protect us from this non-arrayed, asymmetrical, iconoclastic, new form of conflict. Indeed, technology may have seduced us into assuming security. While we poured enormous capital into national missile defense—trying to hit a bullet with a bullet—our enemies turned our own technology against us. Faith in technology can blind us to the necessity of innovation in the age of the transformation of war; faith in technology handcuffed our imagination and lulled us to sleep.

We are now trying to force new forms of conflict into traditional categories so that we can try to understand and respond to them. Our response to the first terrorist attack was to declare “war on terrorism.” But that is a two-front war being fought on one front only. So far in Afghanistan, our military has replaced a repressive theocracy with a less repressive, but still tribal, form of government. But the fate of the most wanted man on earth is still uncertain and our leaders tell us al Qaeda cells still operate in the United States and elsewhere. And we invaded Iraq without adequate preparation—as a recent report by the Council on Foreign Relations has documented—for what experts believe will be inevitable retaliatory attacks on the United States from radical fundamentalist groups. So, it is far too early to declare victory in this war.

Meanwhile, the “warriors” rounded up in this conflict and detained at Guantanamo are denied warrior status. They are also denied criminal status and thus the rights inherent in our criminal justice system. If they are not warriors, and they are not criminals, what are they? The answer is consequential in that it may contain a clue to the broader question of how to define security in the age of this new conflict. We don’t know what to call the “detainees” because we don’t know exactly what they’ve done. The Taliban fought for a theocratic regime that harbored an anti-Western, antidemocratic, antiliberal radical fundamentalist terrorist group. Are they warriors, or are they criminals? Or are they something else? Are they the wave of the future? Will conflict in the twenty-first century resemble more the high-tech games of *Star Wars* or the barbaric combat of the twelfth-century Assassins, the medieval Islamic sect widely credited as being the first terrorists?

A RETURN TO THE ASSASSINS

If a return to the Assassins is the wave of the future, and I believe it is, this has dramatic consequences for how we define security and how we seek to achieve it. There are two basic schools of thought about dealing with terrorism. One school believes the threat is inevitable and that we should crush it, including preemptively, in places like Iraq. The other believes that we should try to understand the nature of the threat with considerably more thoughtfulness and eliminate, to the degree possible, its causes. The first school of thought has the virtue of simplicity. The second has the much greater chance of ultimate success.

The preemption approach, moreover, has long-term foreign policy consequences. For example, in Afghanistan, we armed the Mujahadeen to fight the Soviets in the 1980s. Then, when the Soviets left, we rode away and the Taliban took over and eventually provided hospitality to al Qaeda. We mounted a major invasion of Iraq. Now what? If we ride away again, we leave behind a much bigger breeding ground for terrorists that will haunt us in years to come. If we stay, we will be there for a very, very long time and at very great cost.

This new century requires a much clearer understanding of new threats and the causes of those threats than our leaders seem interested in pursuing. Who exactly is our enemy, and why does he hate us? Unlike the clear-cut twentieth-century ideological struggle between democracy and communism, the role of poverty, disease, and despair becomes much more central. The role of cultural difference becomes much more crucial: “Take your filthy movies and go home,” cry those who resent us and our popular culture. And the role of resentment—of our wealth, of our power, of our willful consumption of resources, of our arrogance—becomes a much greater factor.

It does not go without notice in the world, especially the impoverished world, that the United States consumes a quarter of the world’s energy and produces a quar-

ter of the world's pollution and trash. And to say that this will all be overlooked because multitudes of people would like to live in the United States is to miss the point; we are seen by many to be not only rich but also arrogant, arbitrary, and wholly self-interested.

A NEW DEFINITION OF SECURITY

Let me return to the four revolutions. If globalization opens an even wider gap between haves and have-nots, it will increase poverty and despair, widen cultural clashes, and dramatically increase resentment against us. If the information revolution also adds a digital divide between the computer literate with future opportunities and the computer illiterate without those opportunities, it will swell the swamp of despair, the breeding pool of future terrorists. How short is the time before suicidal young people with nothing to gain and nothing to lose blow themselves up in American shopping malls in a tragic search for martyrdom?

This new age requires, at the very least, a new definition of security and, to achieve it, a toolbox filled with more than weapons. National security in the twenty-first century will require economic and political tools, not simply military ones. Trade and aid programs must become more grassroots and human-scale than top-down and bureaucratic. For example, microloan programs directed at home, land, and small business ownership have proved enormously promising in several countries in Asia and Latin America. And in the political arena, our diplomacy must once again be based on the principles underlying our Constitution and nation: principles of honor, of humanity, of respect for difference. Our diplomacy must be aimed at people, not just governments. We can explain our principles and ideals much better than we have been; but we must then also be prepared to live up to them. The ideals of democracy are not marketed; they are lived.

Of the three resources required by terrorists—money, weapons, and people—the resource most vital is people. Our “war on terrorism” should aim to dry up the swamp of despair found in refugee camps, favelas, and impoverished villages throughout the world. As Robert Kaplan has pointed out, for millions of young people from this swamp, barracks life and terrorist training camps are a step up. Though the first suicidal attackers did not come from refugee camps, it's a safe bet that the next wave will.

THE TWENTY-FIRST-CENTURY MILITARY

But the military component necessarily remains at the core of genuine national security. And that must take into account another policy that we do not usually consider

when we're talking about national security. Our government refuses to admit what everyone knows to be true—that our foreign policy and national security priority in the Middle East, particularly, are inextricably conditioned by our dependence on oil from that region.

We should either publicly acknowledge that our wasteful lifestyle binds us to a tacit policy of trading American lives for foreign oil or undertake to change our lifestyle. It is a simple choice between selfishness and greed on the one hand and national sacrifice and our national honor on the other.

But we do have to have that military component and we should consider what it should look like. The military of the twenty-first century must look and perform much differently than that of the twentieth. Paradoxically, it will be more technological, but it will also be more human. Technologically, our military will expand into space, but I think that component must be defensive, not offensive.

We are indeed in a “revolution of military affairs” largely driven by technology, but dependent on intelligence collected and analyzed by humans. Our fighting forces are increasingly directed by and through a complex web of command, control, and communications networks all interwoven and interrelated. The first Persian Gulf war was directed from a makeshift headquarters in Saudi Arabia. A decade later the Afghan war was directed from Central Command in Florida. The war in Iraq involves similar refinements. We are relying on UAVs, unmanned air vehicles, andUCAVs, unmanned combat air vehicles, as fast as we can produce them. The commander-in-chief can monitor real-time pictures from these vehicles in the White House.

But high technology can be both extremely vulnerable to and dependent on the human actor. Exotic Pentagon communications networks are vulnerable to twenty-one-year-old hackers. The precision-guided munitions on board planes flying from Diego Garcia or aircraft carriers in the Indian Ocean were guided by Delta Force personnel wearing civilian clothes and riding mules across the hills of Afghanistan.

Even in the age of terrorism and “crime/war,” we will need expeditionary forces. But they must be lighter and swifter. Getting there fast is now more important than getting there big. And ultrasophisticated, post-Cold War conventional weapons systems—ships, planes, and tanks—will have to be different. Despite our enormous wealth, we can no longer afford to integrate technology so closely to platforms that the platform must be replaced when technology changes—as it does with lightning speed. We cannot afford ships, planes, and tanks that are outdated the year they come into service. Platforms—once again, ships, planes, and tanks—must be built for durability and long life. The weapons and sensors we place on them must be “plugged in”—that is, readily removable when new ones become available.

The two illustrations are, of course, the venerable B-52 bomber and the aircraft carrier. The B-52, now in its sixth decade of life, is still performing—even though it's older than the fathers of the pilots who fly it. And we keep aircraft carriers in ser-

vice for over half a century. The platform doesn't change. But the technological sensors and weapons change almost overnight these days. Even then, human ingenuity trumps everything. Delta Force, as I mentioned, used a 3,000-year-old transportation system, the mule, to direct twenty-first century technology.

The roots of current, uneven attempts to transition from twentieth-century weapons and warfare to prepare for what some have called the "fourth generation of warfare" of the twenty-first century can be traced to the military reform movement of the late 1970s. Even then, we reformers were advocating unit cohesion and officer initiative, maneuver strategy and tactics, and lighter, faster, more replicable weapons. Without attention to new people policies and innovative strategy, tactics, and doctrine, cancellation of weapons such as the Crusader artillery piece will by itself not transform the military sufficiently for a new kind of conflict.

Paradoxically, once again, the most technologically superior superpower in human history is now dependent on human ingenuity more than ever. If intelligence fails, as it did on September 11, all the technology in the world cannot save us. (See Ray McGovern's assessment of the Central Intelligence Agency in chapter 3.) To know when, where, and how terrorists intend to strike, and what they intend to use to do so, is almost entirely dependent upon human intelligence collection. Electronic surveillance, intercepts and wiretaps, bugging and pursuing cannot altogether replace the human agent.

IRAQ: AMERICANS DESERVED TO KNOW MORE

We now occupy Iraq. Under these circumstances, and acknowledging the unity of America behind our forces once committed, any attempt to outline a national security policy for the future requires several observations to be made.

The American people deserved to know the costs of this commitment. They deserved to know which members of the international community openly support us, including those with military resources. They deserved to know, most of all, casualty estimates on both sides. We were told none of these things. It cost us 50,000 American lives in Vietnam to learn the lesson that the American people must not be misled, lied to, or treated as incompetent on military engagements.

The U.S. military does not belong to the president; it belongs to the American people. Our support for its commitment to combat is crucial for its success. That support cannot be granted in the dark and without a candid statement by the commander in chief regarding the probable costs in human lives and national treasure of its commitment.

There was yet another assurance the president should have given: that we are prepared for what the Department of Defense, among other institutions, believes will be virtually inevitable retaliatory terrorist attacks on the United States for our invasion of

an Islamic country. The Council on Foreign Relations task force that I co-chaired with Warren Rudman reported that we are woefully unprepared for, and still at risk of, future terrorist attacks. It is imprudent in the extreme to attack a nation in a region seething with hostile suicidal forces when we are vulnerable to their retaliation.

A BALANCE BETWEEN SECURITY AND LIBERTY

This leads, of course, right back home to the new age of homeland security. On January 31, 2001, the U.S. Commission on National Security/21st Century strongly recommended to the president that a new national homeland security agency be created to restructure and reorganize federal assets, and well over a year after the first terrorist attack, one finally was established. But the new Department of Homeland Security must not become a domestic Pentagon, a bureaucratic behemoth that crushes initiative and imagination. A very large coordinated agency can succeed only if it integrates functions and at the same time rewards individual creative energy. Presently, the new department is not moving with the sense of urgency it must possess.

Structured from almost two dozen existing federal offices, the new department has, among its many missions, two crucial ones: control of our borders and protection of our critical infrastructure—our communications, finance, energy, and transportation systems.

But an even greater challenge for the nation itself is the search for a balance between security and liberty. Here the role of the standing military in civil society becomes crucial. The Pentagon has created a new Northern Command, headquartered in Colorado Springs, whose duties are as yet unclear. The new command is charged with coordinating the role of the military in homeland security. The easiest and most obvious solution is to put the entire mission in the Department of Defense.

There are, however, important reasons why it is not that easy. A review of the Constitutional debates in 1787 makes clear that the founders understood the danger to a republican form of government from stationing full-time soldiers on the streets of our nation. This was a fear that united the often-divided founders. Indeed, this fear led to the passage of a statute, the Posse Comitatus Act in 1878, a hundred years later, prohibiting the military from enforcing the laws of the land. Congress wanted to make it clear that there is a great difference in a democracy between protecting our nation from foreign attack and policing our neighborhoods.

Now some in Washington are saying we should “review” this law with an eye to qualifying or even repealing it. Beware. This would be a mistake of dangerous proportions. For then the very liberties for which we stand and which we are seeking to protect would be in danger. Short of an emergency of catastrophic proportions and a presidential declaration of martial law, we neither want nor need the 82nd Air-

borne Division on the streets of Cleveland, Boston, or Denver. And, schooled in constitutional principles and history, the vast majority of professional military officers do not want that mission either.

But who, in addition to our public safety agencies, our police and fire departments and emergency responders, should help respond to an attack and keep the peace and restore order? Might there not be the need for some kind of military capability? Once again, based upon their understanding of classical history, our founders anticipated the future. They created such an army and called it the militia; citizen-soldiers under the immediate command of the various states that can be deployed in times of emergency. Since the late nineteenth century these militia have been known as the National Guard, and they were created and given constitutional status as the first responders and the first line of defense in the case of an attack on our homeland.

Our commission on twenty-first-century national security insisted that the National Guard be given the principal mission of response to homeland attack. These are people like us, teachers, office workers, bankers and business people, nurses and medical personnel, who are or quickly can be trained and equipped for the primary homeland security role. They also do not conjure up the danger of military rule so feared by republicans since the Greek city-state.

A NEW NATIONAL SECURITY FRAMEWORK

So now we can begin to see the outlines of a national security structure and a set of strategies, tactics, and doctrines necessary to protect us in an age of multiple revolutions. First, we must understand the changing nature of conflict and the concurrently changing nature of security. Second, we must appreciate the nature of threats and respond to the causes of those threats not only with military means but also with economic and diplomatic imagination to reduce the despair that fuels terrorism. Third, the military means we use when necessary will look dramatically different from the recent Cold War age. They will capitalize on our technological superiority but recognize its increasing dependence on skillful human direction. And fourth, homeland security must achieve a balance between security and liberty by constant recognition of our peculiar constitutional heritage and the mandate that heritage provides to rely on citizens and citizen-soldiers devoted to civic virtue and civic duty.

For the first time since 1812, our security has become a function of the community. America will prevail in this new age more because of the strength of its citizens than the power of its arsenal. But our citizens must be engaged in this fight, to a much greater degree than they have been, by the president himself.

The new century of paradox dictates that the world's greatest power must look not to its far-flung branches but to its roots; not to its elaborate materialistic systems of production and consumption but to its ideals and principles; not to its greed but

to its honor. From 1949 until 1991, we lived under the threat of nuclear war and depended on a policy of containment and a doctrine of deterrence to protect us. That was the basis of our national security. I leave to the reader the task of coining a name for the new national security policy for a new age.

But whatever it is called, we must never forget that those tasked with carrying it out are our neighbors and fellow citizens, men and women with homes and families just like ours. When we take their vigilance and sacrifice for granted, we demean our rich heritage of democratic freedom guaranteed by the bloodshed of generations of Americans who have stood the lonely post far from home to assure our safety and security.

Until we discover ways to eradicate evil from the hearts of those who wish us ill, those who accept the duty of standing that post will risk, and tragically lose, their lives so that we here may enjoy our freedom. Somewhere in the Persian Gulf there is a young sailor who is someone's daughter, a combat pilot who is someone's husband, a young Marine who is someone's son. For the American nation, they are all our sons and daughters.

War is not an instrument of policy; it is a failure of policy. We cannot today discuss the use of military power as an instrument of national policy without the recognition that it is the lives of our sons and daughters that are most immediately at stake. We all must now earn our rights by performance of our duties. And our duty to our sons and daughters requires our policymakers to hold their lives in sacred trust. Only then will our national security be just as well as strong, and only then can we be truly proud of who we are.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Gary Hart, "In Search of National Security in the 21st Century," speech delivered at the Council on Foreign Relations, New York, January 21, 2003.
- , "Note to Democrats: Get a Defense Policy," *New York Times*, Op-Ed page A-27, Thursday, October 3, 2002.
- , *Restoration of the Republic: The Jeffersonian Ideal in 21st-Century America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).
- and Warren B. Rudman, *America Still Unprepared—America Still in Danger*, Council on Foreign Relations, Washington, D.C., October 2002. At http://www.cfr.org/pdf/Homeland_Security_TF.pdf.
- Robert D. Kaplan, *The Coming Anarchy* (New York: Random House, 2001).
- United States Commission on National Security/21st Century: *Road Map for National Security: Imperative for Change*, Phase III report, February 15, 2001.