

1991

President's Notes

Joseph C. Strasser
U.S. Navy

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President's Notes

August 19, 1991!

This day will be as important to future generations of Russians as that of the 1917 October Revolution. On that fateful Monday a dramatic change in the political order of the Soviet Union woke a dormant spirit in the Russian people—democracy. The fundamental lesson in this for the United States is that change in the international political order is inevitable. The end of the Cold War, the ongoing democratization of much of the rest of the world, and the success of coalition forces in the Persian Gulf do not mean the end of diplomatic and military challenges to U.S. policy. The question now becomes how best to examine and prepare for such challenges.

One means to assist in this task is the Global War Game held annually at the Naval War College each summer. In addition to being a useful means by which

Admiral Strasser holds a B.S. from the Naval Academy, two master's degrees from the Fletcher School, Tufts University and, from the same school, a Ph.D. in political science. He graduated from the command and staff course at the Naval War College in 1972. He commanded the USS *O'Callahan* (FF 1051), Destroyer Squadron 35, Cruiser-Destroyer Group Three, and Battle Group Foxtrot. His seven years in Washington included two years in the office of the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff.

to examine future U.S. policy, Global imbues military policy makers and warfighters with a larger, more varied world view. The game provides a two-way mirror through which naval officers become acquainted with a more fluid, and perhaps more volatile, world order, and at the same time become more versed in the Navy's capabilities and limitations for meeting such challenges. This summer, five hundred military and civilian leaders from across the United States traveled to Newport each of three weeks to take part in the game.

The main theme of the current Global series has been to identify issues pivotal to the U.S. national interests, to focus on those issues in the context of global conflict, and to analyze them so as to identify alternative strategies to improve upon existing operational concepts. This year's game addressed the changing international order of the post Cold War era. The keynote for Global 91 was "framing the alternative," focusing on President Bush's vision of a "new world order" and building the framework of long-term national security strategy.

During Week 1, players concentrated on the unfolding vision of the world over the next decade from the perspective of U.S. policy development. Participants were asked to determine what that vision might mean in terms of national and international institutional arrangements, regional strategies, force structures and posture, and resource implications. The week's product was a U.S. national security strategy.

In Week 2, the play was conducted in three parallel but independent regional games assessing the long-term development of the Soviet Union, the Middle East, and the Pacific Basin. The purpose of these games was to explore how these regions, and key events within them, might evolve out to the year 2000 as areas that could affect the execution of U.S. national security strategy.

Week 3 found the players dealing with a regional crisis in Europe, the Middle East, and the Pacific, growing out of trends identified the previous week. Each of these three crises was played independently, while a fourth group of participants took a composite view. Players in all games were tasked with evaluating the effectiveness of the U.S. national strategy that was developed during the initial week.

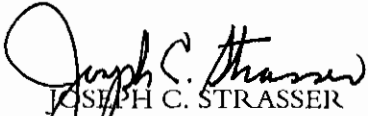
Global 91 provided a forum wherein questions of tremendous import could be examined. How should the country's military resources be configured to meet immediate contingencies; how best could they be reconstituted to meet long-term threats; what ought to be the role of the reserves; and how should the U.S. industrial base provide long-term sustainability? As part of the process, military planners sought advice from economic and industrial experts on both short and long-term responses to major crises. With the sudden demise of the Cold War and its influence on U.S. military planning, Global 91 was a useful venue to consider future U.S. policy.

By game's end, U.S. warfighters and planners came to see an interdependent world beset by regional rather than global struggles. Conflict resolution will need

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to consider a full integration of U.S. policies, and *ad hoc* regional alliances may have more impact than direct military power. In an era of total force policy and forward deployments, the idea of crisis aversion rather than crisis response may have new meaning and force new requirements different from those envisioned only two years ago. Perhaps one of the most important lessons learned was that, following force structure reductions currently contemplated, future reconstitution of U.S. forces may over time involve not merely incremental changes in force size, but also significant changes in the country's defense industrial base, educational system, and economic institutions.

Global 91 does not provide answers to all these often daunting questions, nor will any single mechanism. What the annual wargame does provide is an ongoing forum, which, in the words of the eminent historian Sir Michael Howard, "enables us to understand ourselves as well as other cultures. It teaches us what we may and may not expect in our mutual relations. It teaches us our own limitations, and thus a certain humility. In dealing with a multicultural, multi-ideological world, that in itself is not a bad beginning."


 JOSEPH C. STRASSER
 Rear Admiral, U.S. Navy
 President, Naval War College

