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## The Place of the Armed Forces in the Making of National Strategy

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## **THE PLACE OF THE ARMED FORCES IN THE MAKING OF NATIONAL STRATEGY**

A lecture delivered  
at the Naval War College  
on 18 March 1953, by  
*Mr. Walter Millis*

Admiral Conolly, Gentlemen:

I have been asked to speak today on "The Place of the Armed Services in the Making of National Strategy." Let me say, at the outset, that this is a subject which raises a whole host of intricate and complicated questions for which I certainly do not flatter myself that I can give any very clear answers. They raise issues which reach into the very foundations of our constitutional system and indeed, I think, into the workings of our society itself. They are issues which spring from what is perhaps the deepest dilemma of modern man, and that is the dilemma which is inherent in our attempt to build a society, a social structure, founded upon the principles of reason, law, consent and compromise in a world in which brute violent force is, nevertheless, the final arbiter in human affairs.

To exhaust, or even to approach, all the facets of this very large subject would take not a lecture—it would take many books—which I am afraid I would not be competent to write. That is my excuse for approaching it here in only a very generalized way—a way which, I am afraid, will be pretty elementary to you, which may perhaps, however, do a little bit to clarify some of the issues involved and which will at any rate express a few ideas of my own, and possibly invite you to knock them down.

The dilemma is not peculiar to the United States, nor even to the western liberal tradition. It is one with which every mod-

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ern people, whether democratic, totalitarian, or autocratic has been wrestling with for the past 150 years at least, and it is one, I think, for which no very good answers have been developed anywhere.

Specifically, the problem is the problem of the proper relationship between the civilian policy-maker and the military technician in shaping the over-all policy or strategy of the modern nation-state. Actually, this is a problem which has been with this country at least since 1775, and which from that time on has occupied a very large place in our public discussions; but which the American people, as a whole, seem only recently to have recognized as one of basic importance to the functioning of their state.

In the past, the problem looked—and perhaps it really was—relatively simple of a solution. To all its complex difficulties, Americans brought two great dogmas, or traditions, which seemed entirely sufficient. These are the dogmas, *first*, of “civilian control”; and, *second*, of the complete supremacy of the military technician in the purely military field. These two principles appeared to define a logical and workable division of labor, and to many they still seem to do so—but, do they?

As recently as 1947, they were explicitly written into the National Security Act. That document (and to my mind, it is really a great document) was careful to preserve civilian control over the Armed Services, but was equally careful to make the Armed Services—as represented and embodied, primarily, in the Joint Chiefs of Staff—the responsible technical advisers, and consequently, for practical purposes, the real source of authority over nearly everything that a civilian policy-maker might feel it necessary to control.

If there is an element of inconsistency here, it suggests that one might take a closer look at the two foundation principles.

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*First*, "civilian control":—this is another of those things which everybody talks about and nobody ever does anything about. These magic words have been endlessly repeated on every suitable occasion in Congress, in the press, and on political platforms. They are readily echoed, I think, by every military officer who has any sense at all of public relations. So far as I'm aware, no one has ever tried to define them, however, or to say just what it is the civilians are supposed to control or just how or up to what limits this control is supposed to be exercised.

Actually, the whole concept is, itself, a survival. It is a survival from the 18th century. No doubt it was sound enough in itself, but it originated in issues really quite different from those which we confront today. The blunt truth, is that it is no longer particularly helpful or even particularly applicable to the basic problem which is now before us.

The authors of the Constitution had a much keener sense of the significance of force in society and, therefore, the significance of the military institutions adopted by societies, than many of their descendants seem to have had. They were acutely aware that, whether in a republican, monarchical, or any other form of government, the man with the gun was in the long run likely to have the last word. They did give a great deal of their time and thought to questions of who would have guns, who would control the people who had the guns, and how the military forces of their new state should be organized. But in all this they were primarily interested in the focus of military power *within* the state. The problems of so organizing the state's military resources as to meet and defy great enemies on a world stage were, to them, somewhat dim and distant. In its origins, the tradition of "civilian control" is, basically, a protection for the state against internal military subversion or usurpation.

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This is no longer the problem. No one, today, seriously fears the man on horseback, or the military dictator. I think no one, even among those of our citizens who were alarmed by some of the implications of the episode of General MacArthur's recall in 1951—none, even of these, ever imagined that General MacArthur could or would take political power by other than constitutional means. No one then saw the army turning Congress out into the streets or marching down Pennsylvania Avenue to capture the seats of power. There may be some lingering fear still lest a military caste, unduly influenced by its own ambition or self-interest, should build up too large a claim on the economic resources of the country. This fear may be there, but I think that even this is hardly a real issue any longer.

“Civilian control” in fact, has in very large measure accomplished what it was supposed to do, but it has very little relevance to the problem which we must now meet. It is no longer one of balancing the military and the political forces within the state. It is one of the devising an external policy on strategy which will, in fact, secure the safety of the country; which will further its legitimate national aims, and mobilize its resources to the degree necessary—but only to the degree necessary—to ensure its defense and welfare.

Here, civilian control is not much help. Here, we have traditionally relied upon the *second* great dogma, or principle: that of the complete supremacy of the military technician in the purely military field. The tradition that in military matters, reliance must be upon the trained soldiers, seamen, and airmen who are supposedly competent in these fields has long been accepted in the United States, and today is seldom questioned in the run of popular or Congressional debate. Only the other evening at the annual West Point dinner, it was given rather a sonorous, if somewhat uncritical,



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expression by General MacArthur, who sent his message to the various diners in these words: "The nation," he said, "must trust to the soldiers when the statesmen have failed to keep the peace . . . It must be said again, again, and again that in war there is no substitute for victory."

In the light of history, it seems to me that this is at best a somewhat dubious proposition. The principle upon which it rests is not even primarily American; it is not even, like the general principle of civilian control, a product of the major stream of 19th century Western, liberal, democratic thought. It was, to be sure, subscribed to in greater or less degree by virtually every Western Great Power, but its most classic origins, I think, are probably to be traced to none other than Carl von Clausewitz, with his generally sharp distinction between the military means and the political ends. And surely, it was given its most rigid, practical application during the 19th century, in the strict, devoted, and non-political professionalism of the Prussian Great General Staff.

It was in the Great General Staff that the idea was most rigorously cultivated of a complete divorce between policy and war. It is said of the elder Moltke that he had "an almost nervous fear of politics." The policy would be made by the civil powers—and for that the soldiers would take no responsibility. It was the function of the military to prepare (in isolation and usually in a large measure of secrecy even from their own political colleagues) whatever technical means might be necessary to make good these policies decided upon by the civil powers. The Prussian Great General Staff was the epitome of expert military professionalism, operating with supreme authority in its own field. While the concept, perhaps, was never so completely and rigorously developed in other countries, it was very widely imitated. So wise a statesman as our own Elihu Root took the Great General Staff as the

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model for his Army reforms here; Haldane in Britain did much the same thing, and the French, Russian and other systems prior to 1914, were all based on the same principles.

Of course there were frequent clashes under this principle between the military and the parliaments; when the military made demands for funds, the parliaments refused; or, the parliaments made demands for reductions which the military refused. But, in general, if the soldiers did not always stay out of politics, at least they stayed out of the difficulties and the responsibilities of national policy formations. Few of the civilians, on their side, cared very much what the soldiers were doing nor even knew much about it. This seemed a reasonably sound arrangement.

Then came 1914, bringing a very rude awakening.

The opening crisis of that war itself gave a terrible demonstration of the fact that there was no such thing as a "purely military problem," and that military plans and preparations could not be evolved in a monastic isolation from the political and policy issues to which these plans were to be applied. The military plans turned out, in this moment of crisis, to have an inescapable and often a controlling effect over the efforts of the civilian authorities. I might say, to repeat what you all know, that the Russian mobilization plan made it impossible for Russia to mobilize against Austria, alone, and, therefore, she had to mobilize against Germany as well. The great Schlieffen Plan, which was so elaborately and professionally developed to enable Germany to fight a two-front war, made it impossible for her to fight anything else—and, so, committed her to the appalling horrors and ultimate defeat which, otherwise, she might conceivably have escaped.

The Anglo-French military conversations, which were begun as a safeguard without specific obligations against certain pos-

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sible eventualities, ended as a commitment to act in those eventualities and a straight jacket from which the British civilian statesmanship could not easily and entirely extricate itself.

This was the first disconcerting discovery of 1914:

In their combined efforts to assure military security, the soldiers had assisted powerfully in turning a local crisis into an inescapable general war. Much worse was to follow. The war which they had thus prepared was one of which they themselves had no prevision. They had all, in every country been thinking and planning in terms of a short conflict and a quick victory—something on the order of 1870; of course to be much larger and more violent but, nevertheless, of the same general kind. What they actually ran into, was the four years of dreadful stalemate in which millions of men were to be ground up and destroyed to no rational purpose and which was, also, to call up moral, political and psychological forces as well as more strictly military strategic innovations which were totally beyond the experience of the military professionals of that time to manage or to direct.

Their planning had helped to produce a war of a kind to which their technical military skills were largely inadequate. None of them knew how to mobilize the great industrial resources demanded by this new kind of war. There was lack of political experience to call out their nation's manpower and emotional reserves. Every one of the warring powers soon found itself locked in a dilemma between civil and military control of its national strategy. The Russians never solved the problem, and ended in utter chaos. The Germans, in effect, adopted the military solution when they established the Ludendorff-Hindenburg military dictatorship—precisely on the principle enunciated in the quotation that I just read from General MacArthur. The result was a

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complete defeat. One can hardly say, consequently, that this was a sound answer.

The Western democracies, by and large, chose the civilian solution. In general, they tended to promote their civilian leaders to a more direct control over military operations; and such very unmilitary figures as Wilson or Lloyd George; such amateurs of war as Clemenceau or Churchill, exerted a degree of control over purely military strategy which would have horrified a pre-1914 soldier and of course, as you all know, frequently did.

Their reward was victory, but it was a victory which had to be paid for. There was much more than mere cynicism in Clemenceau's famous dictum about "war being too important to be left to the soldiers." War, with all its political, moral and economic factors, *had* become too important and too intricate for the mere military technician. As Churchill himself summed it up much later—in fact, during the Second War:—"Modern war is total and the technical authorities must be sustained and, if necessary, directed by heads of government who understand not only the military but the political and economic forces at work, and who have the power to focus them all upon the goal."

True as this may have been, however, it was to turn out in the succeeding years that if war was too important to be left to the soldiers, peace was too important to be left to the politicians.

In the two decades after 1918, the soldier throughout the democratic West was generally held in a fairly low regard. The civilian statesmen were inclined to neglect his advice and to deny him the money necessary to keep the sword arm of the state reasonably bright. The tragic and ironic result, however, was another great world crisis—another general war—for which the pacific statesmen could be held at least as culpable as the military

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planners had been in 1914. If it is true that prior to 1914 the largely secret military planning had gone forward with too little regard for the problems of statesmanship, it seems equally true that after 1918 the statesmen went forward with too little regard for the hard facts of military plans and potentialities.

As the world came up to 1939, the deep problem of civil military relationships in the modern state was still, it would seem, largely unsolved. Once the Second War had broken, the problem was never, for the Western people, as acute as it had been during 1914-18. So far as the Western coalition was concerned, the war direction in the second struggle seems to have reached a considerably higher level of smoothness and success than in the first. My own belief is that this was partly the result of circumstance; that it was partly due to the lessons which had been learned, but that it was mainly due to the fortuitous presence of several remarkable individuals in the seats of civil and military authority.

Whatever you may think of their purposes or ideologies, Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin were all men of unusual capacities. All were essentially civilian politicians with a keen sense of civil and political relationships. They all three had an understanding of war and its conduct beyond what one might ordinarily expect to find in a civilian leader. One more name I would like to mention here—not that he was the only such person, but that he was a distinguished one—and that is the name of George Marshall. It seems to me that he was a soldier with an almost equally unexpected capacity for the larger human and political relationships involved in the conduct of modern war. All of these men, of course, made their mistakes—some of them were serious ones—but, on the whole, the results were good.

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On the German side, again, however, they were bad. The Germans were led by a madman. They were entangled in all the complications of his very peculiar command system—the OKW, the General Staff, the Luftwaffe, the Army, the Navy, the Todd Organization and so on, and they, again, ended in a total disaster in which no one would wish to imitate them. But even with the comparative success of the Western allies and the failure of the Germans before us, the dilemma remains unsolved. The devices adopted by the West during the Second War worked at least well enough while that war was under way. Even so, they worked to something less than perfection, I think we would agree. Now that the Second War is over, now that we find ourselves not in the expected peace but in a “cold war” which we had to enter almost completely unprepared, it sometimes seems questionable whether these devices are working at all.

The relatively successful wartime collaboration between the civilian makers and the military executants of national policy and strategy has in many ways largely broken down. In total war, although everything is sacrificed to the military end, civil-military relations (though they are difficult enough) are at least simpler than they may be under “cold war” conditions, under which the military needs must be continuously balanced with the legitimate aspirations and freedoms of civilian rights— and balanced in this way, perhaps, over long periods of years.

In facing this task, it is true that both sides have learned a lot. The civilians, and the great public to which they are responsive, are more keenly aware than they used to be that great political or moral aims cannot be established or sustained without reference to the military means available for their support. I doubt that another American president could repeat the almost staggering military insouciance with which President Woodrow

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Wilson, in 1917, managed to enmesh American policy in a great war situation in almost total ignorance of all the actual military factors involved. A review of how little Wilson either knew or even wanted to know about the military conditions in Europe in 1917 would, I think, bring any modern military intelligence officer or C. I. A. man to his grave with horror.

On the other hand, military men, I think, have a much livelier sense than they once did, both of the political consequences of their military planning and of the limitations imposed on the plans by political and economic considerations. If this interest in the civilian side and the civilian mind were not present among our uniformed forces, I doubt very much that you would be sitting here this morning listening to such a civilian as myself.

These twin ideas—that civilian policy-makers must have at least a hand in even the technical details of military planning and that the military technicians must have some part in the development of those policies in national strategies which require military means for their furtherance—are, I believe, reasonably well established, even if they are frequently overlooked. But that is about as far as we have got. How do we build the bridge between the two?

The National Security Act of 1947, as amended, certainly presents the most thoughtful and thorough effort ever made in this country to establish such a bridge, to apportion the heavy responsibilities involved on both sides, and to provide the organizational machinery through which to achieve operational results. Judging by what one reads and hears, there seems to be almost no one who is really satisfied with the workings of this system. There isn't any real agreement on the limits of civilian control or of technical and military issues. There is no agreement on the matter of how

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far a technical and military finding must be respected by the civil organs of policy. There is no directive to tell a high military officer just what weight he must give to economic, political, and similar considerations in drawing his military plans. There is nothing to make the President, the civil executive officers, or the Congressional committees accept any strictly military conclusions reached by the military advisers. Despite the Security Act, despite all the experience from which it was derived, the underlying problem is about as acute as ever. This was, I think, quite clearly indicated by President Eisenhower (when a candidate) when he spoke in Baltimore last September:

“In time of peace, we have always cut the military establishment to the bone. In time of war, we have said: ‘Let the professional soldier take care of it.’ This matter has been bad enough in the past. In today’s world of continuing tensions, it has been intolerable. Complexity creates confusion everywhere. Generals who used to be trained to concentrate on military decisions, now are compelled to consider economic factors. Those civilians who should exercise authority in military matters, feel hesitant because of their lack of authority and specialized knowledge.”

But what he intended to do about it, he did not say. If he has said so since, it has at least escaped my attention. Actually, I am beginning to wonder whether anything more than the most generalized sort of tentative answers ever can be worked out. I am beginning to wonder whether we shall not have to abandon (or at least to modify) the very logical yet ideal concept on which the Security Act was primarily based, in favor of a somewhat greater willingness to accept in these vast fields something of the illogicality and confusion in which all human institutions (particularly in democratic societies) have always progressed.



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If you will pardon a very elementary review, let us look at the Security Act. The civil power is supposed to define national aims and policies, after due consultations, through the National Security Council, with the military departments. The Joint Chiefs, as principal military advisers, would then determine the military means required to sustain these national aims and policies. The several Services would then determine the amounts of money, manpower, and equipment which each required to fulfill its part in providing these means. Their findings would then be consolidated into a military plan and military budget, which would then go back to the civil power for review. Ideally, it would then be up to the civil power—operating, first, through the President and his Budget Bureau and, subsequently, through Congress and its committees—either to supply the indicated men, money and materials or, if the total looked like too large an order, to revise the national aims and policies downward to those more modest proportions which could be sustained on lower military levels. This is the way it was supposed to work. As we all know, I think, nothing like this has ever actually happened. We all suspect, I imagine, that nothing like this has ever happened in any great modern power.

It may be that the people of the Kremlin really do adjust the military preparations and political aims of their monolithic state in this rigorous way. It may be, for example, that their political goal is “conquest of the world,” or, say, the “overthrow of the United States.” That they have very nicely calculated the number of aeroplanes and armored divisions, the number of propaganda broadcasts, atomic bombs, and so on, which this will necessitate and are following a consistent military-political plan toward this clearly defined end. It may be, but I am bound to say that I doubt it—I doubt it very much. For all their rigid ideology, I suspect that they operate on *ad hoc*, opportunistic, and evolutionary principles almost as much as do other statesmen. And I am sure

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that the United States operates in this way; I wonder, too, whether it ever can or should do otherwise.

Admittedly, this present illogical and uneasy balance between the civil and military powers in our own society has two great defects. The *first* (and the least often noticed), is the civil power itself. Actually, in our country there is no *one* civil power, and that is something which those who talk so much about "civilian control" ought to remind themselves of more often. Rather, there is a vast milling and interaction of many powers and policies. To these, I think, an able President, or a strong Secretary, or an effective party organization can give leadership. They can give them a certain direction, a certain consistency. They never, however, can give them a hard and fast determination. They never can set up a national "line" comparable to the Soviet "line" or a national strategy from which the military man can draw concise, responsible and consistent directives as to just what it is the military men are supposed to do.

The literature may be full of the supposed misdeeds of the military men, but it is even more replete with the legitimate complaints of the military against the elusiveness and inconsistency of the instructions which the civilians vouchsafe to them.

The case of Korea is an illustration. If the civil authority could provide the Joint Chiefs, say, with a clear, concise statement of just what they want to achieve by military means there, I think it would be quite within the abilities of the Joint Chiefs to come up with an estimate of just how much it would cost in men, money, and possibly even in certain international complications. But the Joint Chiefs are seldom asked questions in this factual, positive way. And even if they were asked in such a way, perhaps it wouldn't do too much good because policy is always fluid. Any

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consistent, long-range military plan which they brought up (if it could be published at all) would immediately be at the mercy of all those forces and factions which wanted to do it all differently, or wanted to do the same thing in the same way but for much less money and blood. That is the first difficulty.

The *second* difficulty, it seems to me, is the obverse of the first. If the forces of civil policy-making are inconsistent and often irresponsible in the demands they make on the military technical advisers, the military technicians are themselves inconsistent and inclined to shirk responsibility in the answers which they give to the civil authorities.

I may be unjust about this, but it has often seemed to me that while military men are eager enough to give their advice in specialized fields of interest in which they are particularly concerned, they are the first to pull in their necks and to take to their shells when it comes to those broader decisions having the greatest effect on over-all national strategy, in which sound military advice is most to be desired. Thoughtful naval officers have advanced many sound and cogent arguments for the importance of sea power in any over-all scheme of national strategy. Air Force officers have advanced other impressive arguments as to the importance of land-based, long range air power. But when the civil authority comes up against the hard core question of whether he is going to bet the nation's roll on Forrestals or B-47's, or if on both, then in what proportion—he usually draws a good deal of a blank. The Air Force is inclined to say that Forrestal aircraft carriers are outside its province altogether, and the Navy is apt to reply that it can say nothing about the military utility, or otherwise, of B-47's. The civilian is left in the middle.

The net result of present JCS planning is, to be sure, a kind of "least common denominator" or general average of the Service

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views. In other words, CNO will not take public responsibility for the military utility of what he has agreed to in the Air Force budget. Neither will the Chief of Staff of the Air Force go to bat for the armored divisions which he has allowed to be allotted to the Army. If the civilians are confused when it comes to asking the right questions of the military, the military with their three Services, are equally confused in giving the answers. In fact, there is nowhere under the existing system to which civil policy can go to get a unified, over-all, military answer any more than there is anywhere for the military to go to get an over-all, unified civil policy directive.

These are the two defects of the present system: The civilians can't say what they really want and the three-service military establishment can't tell them how they are to get it. Both sides meet on a kind of confused, middle ground. Again, we have seen many illustrations of this recently—the most recent, and one of the most interesting, being the whole episode of General Van Fleet's return and his testimony as to the want of ammunition in Korea. You might think that there is no question which would be so completely technical as that of ammunition supply, that this was a matter which General Van Fleet would normally send through channels and which would never reach the civilian policy maker at all. Of course, quite the opposite has happened. General Van Fleet spoke out—very sincerely, I am sure—and he was immediately picked up by the senators. The senators started a hearing. Most of the military experts told the senators that there was no ammunition shortage; Van Fleet said there was an ammunition shortage; Senator Byrd prepared an angry resolution which declared that Van Fleet had been completely justified—"substantiated" was the word—and the senators will now go on to investigate still further.

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This doesn't, it seems to me, to be making strategy—it seems to me to be mixing it, to be confusing it almost to the last possible point. It is a confusion of civil interfering in the military; of the military, perhaps, using appeals to civilian political factors in a way which perhaps they should not have done. The general result so far, I think, has been a complete mess. I would be willing to make a very small bet that when it is all over most of it will be forgotten and that not a single concrete and useful suggestion as to the improvement either of the ammunition supply or the national strategy is likely to emerge from it.

Admitting these two defects, both of them, I think, are subject to mitigation. It seems to me that strong direction—particularly if it comes from the White House—can define our real military problems perhaps a little more clearly and that organizational improvement could perhaps secure, on the part of the military as a whole, a greater sense of their unified responsibility in the formation of national strategy in its wider sense. But I doubt that either of these ends can be achieved, primarily, by re-drawing the organization charts. As you know, there are now a number of proposals going about—some from very high sources—for a complete, or nearly complete, revision of the Joint Chiefs of Staff structure (or, rather, perhaps I should say of the Department of Defense structure). It would be somewhat temerarious of me to attempt to analyze any of these proposals and I don't think, after all, it would be particularly useful because I don't think that the primary failings of the past can be relieved by this type of reorganization—they may be helped, but they certainly will not be finally solved. And if there is danger in the present confusions and inconsistencies, I think we must not forget that logic alone also has its dangers, and some of these seem to me to be almost as menacing today as they have proved to be in the past.

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Before we set up any one comprehensive, complete, professional, and authoritative source of military planning and policy—before we give it a commanding voice in the Councils of State—let us remember that this type of system, too, has its perils today just as in 1914. Already, at least some of the dangers into which Western civilization then fell seem to me to be uncomfortably real before us.

I hope you will not consider it invidious of me to use another small illustration. It seems to me that there is already a very ominous parallel between the efficient and professional logic of the Schlieffen Plan and the no less efficient and professional logic which, if I understand it rightly, now rules in the councils of the United States Air Force.

The Air Force, like the Prussian General Staff, has approached its problem with a philosophical rigor. The Prussians concluded that the great danger was a two-front war. The Air Force has decided that the great danger is an all-out attack upon the West by the Soviet Union. The Prussians developed a military plan to meet and quickly win a two-front war, with the result that when the crisis came it had to be a two-front war or none at all—and the Prussians failed to win it. The Air Force has developed a plan to meet an all-out attack by the Soviet Union on the West. Reasoning very soundly, they have concluded that the only way to win in this case would be by the destruction under nuclear attacks of—I think it was something like—70 Russian population centers; that the Russians know this, and that our attacks, therefore, will have to be delivered at once before the Russians can have a chance to knock out our own Strategic Bombing Command installations. All this is certainly well reasoned, but is surely in the spirit of the rigid professionalism of the Great General Staff. It is indeed, to my mind, a kind of aerial Schlieffen

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Plan, based on the same presumptions that to win one must employ overwhelming force in the first moments of the war, sacrificing every political, or even moral, consideration to the military necessity for doing so. This seems to me now to possess not only the virtues, but also the fearful defects of the Prussian model. Perhaps this is a prescription to win the Third Global War, if it comes; but it is certainly to my mind a prescription to make impossible anything less than a Third Global War, a probably frightful total devastation with quite unpredictable final effects.

If Air Force doctrines—as they have been expounded to the public, at any rate, in recent years—had actually ruled from 1945 to 1950, we could never have met and held the enemy in the limited operation in Korea. We would have been obliged either to abandon that peninsula and go to work on Moscow with nuclear weapons, or else to abandon the peninsula, period, probably finding ourselves a few years later not only going to work on Moscow with nuclear weapons, but Moscow going to work on us.

Now, any completely unitary system of military planning—and such a system would be virtually an inevitable result of any program that gave the military complete and unquestionable authority in all purely military questions—must, it seems to me, lead to this type of danger. On the other hand, to say that the civil statesmen must be the final authority in all military matters is to run into the opposite mistake made by nearly all the democratic statesmen in the dire years between 1918-1939. On both counts, I am opposed to too much reorganization, centralization, and too much narrow definition as to either civil or military authority. It seems to me that the statesmen must have sound and continuous military advice available at their elbows; that they must always be reminded that their policies are only as good as the effective force which can be put behind them. The

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military planners must, at the same time, have political and economic advice constantly available at their elbows, and they must always be reminded that their plans are only as good as the social and economic potentials which they can command and that the military plans are, themselves, a vital determinant in the course of the policy—inferring, naturally, a corresponding responsibility on the planners.

Statesmen and soldiers alike are both dealing with essentially fluid and constantly changing situations in which each must listen to the other, but in which neither can hope to get from the other those absolute answers which will solve his own problems for him. These “musts” are, of course, easy to state, but extraordinarily difficult to translate into common practice. They are obviously not things which can be set up in an organization chart, or decreed by legislation. There is very little to support the popular idea that by changing the laws and the charts it will be possible to make defense less expensive, more efficient, or more responsive to the true strategic needs of the nation. Improvements in the present system are, doubtless, possible—but miracles, I think, are not.

It seems to me that the present three-service system is, on the whole, desirable as a means of giving a vitally needed flexibility, variety and competence to the whole defense structure. It seems to me that many, if not most, of its alleged duplications are not really duplications. They are only representative of what you would have to have under three uniforms, or one, to meet the practical problems that the world will continue to present. It seems to me that both on the civil and the military sides there is a vast deal to be done towards harnessing our total national energies into a more coherent national policy and strategy, but that most of it will simply have to be done in the slow, rather undramatic course of education, experience, trial and error—rather than by redrawing the legislative lines of authority.



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The basic problem of civil-military relations in the modern state is real, it is urgent—and from the success with which we solve it from day to day may well depend our national welfare and survival. Yet, it is a problem for which I doubt there is any one comprehensive, automatically operating solution. It is, and will continue to be, a day-to-day problem, present in all our decisions and reactions. Solutions are likely to emerge in the future only as they have, in fact, developed through the past—out of that rather magnificent clash of conflicting views, theories, purposes, patriotisms which we know by the name of “democracy.” If only enough of us have a good enough grasp of the underlying historical principles involved, then I think the day-to-day answers will probably be increasingly better and better.

Improved organization and definition of responsibilities must surely help, but these are not the main things. The main thing, as I see it (possibly this is a very lame conclusion, yet it is the only conclusion which I could bring myself to)—the main thing, I think, is that all of us, whether in uniform or out of it, should live, learn, and grow to our common responsibilities as common partners in a great adventure in human history—the adventure of the armed, yet law-abiding, democratic state.

## **BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH**

### **Mr. Walter Millis**

Mr. Millis was born in Atlanta, Georgia, in March 1899. He received his B. A. degree at Yale University in 1920, and immediately started his long and distinguished newspaper career, with his first assignment as Editorial Writer for the Baltimore News (1920-23).

During 1923-24, Mr. Millis was with the New York Sun and Globe. In 1924 he joined the staff of the New York Herald Tribune as an editorial and staff writer. He has remained with the Herald Tribune continuously since that time, except for a short tour of duty as a 2nd Lt. in the Field Artillery during World War I.

In addition to contributing to many magazines, and his daily newspaper writings, Mr. Millis is the author of: **THE MARTIAL SPIRIT** (1931), **ROAD TO WAR** (1935), **WHY EUROPE FIGHTS** (1940), **THE LAST PHASE** (1946), and **THIS IS PEARL!** (1947).