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PRESENT AND FUTURE NATIONAL OBJECTIVES

An Address delivered by
Bernard M. Baruch
at the Naval War College
March 31, 1950

Admiral Beary has asked me to talk to you on the subject of strategy. I certainly am not equipped to discuss strategy as it relates to specific weapons or to the role of the different services or even to the military importance of the atomic bomb. Since World War One, however, I have studied the inter-relationships of war and peace and some of my thoughts in this regard may interest you.

A little more than a year ago, one member of the Senate Armed Services Committee came to me in great agitation. He had heard that a defense budget of \$30 billions was being prepared and he was frightened at what it would do to our economy. He asked my advice as to what policy should be followed in the matter of defense expenditures for the cold war.

My reply was that we had to avoid panicky over-spending. Instead we had to learn to pace ourselves in relation to the Russians and the threat of war. We dared not over-spend on armaments to where our social, political and economic system might be wrecked—that would suit the enemy as much as to defeat us militarily. Yet we dared not maintain so feeble a defense establishment as to invite aggression, as it did in Hitler's time.

With each year of added cold war attrition, this concept of "pacing ourselves" becomes more vital—and also more difficult to carry out. The longer the cold war drags, the more essential it

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becomes to husband our resources, yet the greater grows the danger that the cold war may erupt into a hot, shooting war. In the past few years, while the whole world has been digging itself out from under the destruction and exhaustion of the last war, no potential aggressor has had the material means for waging another war. But what will happen when the potential aggressor has recovered his strength and there still is no peace?

Now by “pacing ourselves” I do not mean that we should undertake to match Soviet armament, plane by plane, tank by tank, man for man. On that I am completely in accord with General Omar Bradley. However, I do feel that we must vigilantly watch the over-all degree of Soviet mobilization for war and that we dare not permit too great a variance with our own mobilization—or we risk war.

By “pacing ourselves” I also mean that we must preserve a flexible attitude towards our problems of defense and not freeze rigidly on too narrow a strategy. For example, I would not think it wise to base our defense exclusively on our ability to retaliate against the enemy’s cities and industries. To prevent aggression, it is true that we must be able to retaliate instantly and that the enemy should know we can do it. Still, I am not sure that the “next war”—May it never come—will begin with flagrant open attack upon this country. It seems to me quite likely that the test may come in the more subtle form of civil war—probably in Germany. In event of such a civil war, the situation might be such that it would be unwise to retaliate against the enemy directly and yet we would not dare stand by impotent.

In short, I believe our defensive strategy must not only anticipate the danger of another all-out war, but that of civil war as well.

As a matter of fact, it might be said this state of civil war already exists, that that is what the cold war really is, neither peace nor total war, but a succession of civil conflicts, more or less violent, wherever the Soviets can foment such strife. In Western Europe we have managed to achieve a sufficient degree of stability to prevent open civil war. In Greece, after a bloody and costly struggle, the civil war appears to have been decided in the favor of the democracies. In China we have suffered a truly serious defeat.

That defeat has stirred a good deal of public discussion of whether we are losing the cold war. Certainly there is sufficient reason to feel that what has been done so far is inadequate.

A few weeks ago, the Secretary of State called for "total diplomacy". Undoubtedly that is what is needed. Undoubtedly that is not what we have.

Although the cold war is now dragging into its sixth year and despite the enormous resources we have expended, we still have not faced up to what the total peace-waging requires. We still stagger from crisis to crisis, with the initiative left to the enemy. We still treat each country as a separate problem, instead of as part of a unified global strategy.

For several years, now, I have been pressing, both publicly and privately, for this over-all global strategy, which would do for the peacemaking what our global strategy did during the recent war. To devise this global strategy I have urged that a central "think body" be created, to survey the whole of the cold war, re-examining our policy and advising the President.

Recently my good friend Senator Vandenberg proposed a somewhat similar group. I am afraid, though, that the re-evaluation of American policy he proposes would not go far enough—his letter talks only of political and economic policy. Then, I do

not believe that a special committee, which would study the problems of ECA, report and then disband, is enough. What is needed is a non-partisan group which will stay on the job until the cold war is won, a group which would sit in continuous deliberation on the whole of the peace-waging, serving as a central point of decision, weighing all the many commitments pressed upon us, guiding the best disposition of our strained resources, determining where in the world we are to fight a more holding action and where we can achieve a decisive break-through—and at what effort.

In short, what is needed is a General Staff for Peace.

To cite only one instance of the sort of decisions now going by default—take Indo China. For tranquility to be restored to that Asian outpost the civil war now raging there will have to be brought to a victorious conclusion. Where are the French to obtain the necessary military supplies? It has been suggested that the French government use the materiel now being allocated to it under the Military Aid Program. But the aim of that Military Aid Program was to strengthen Western Europe against possible Soviet aggression. Are we then to weaken Western Europe for some half-hearted and possibly ineffective action in the Orient?

Sooner or later we must expect a showdown over Germany—since Germany cannot be expected to remain divided indefinitely. Are we pacing ourselves so that we will be ready for that showdown when it comes? Or will it find us as unprepared as we now seem to be to deal with conditions in the Far East?

Are we to continue to spread ourselves too thin, unable to achieve decision anywhere? Hasn't the time come for the expenditure of sufficient resources to force a decision somewhere?

If our diplomacy is to be truly "total", we must mobilize not only public opinion but the necessary economic, military and

political resources, applying those resources on the basis of an overall global strategy. That is not now being done. I doubt that it will be done unless some central peacemaking agency is created.

I began urging the formation of such a GHQ for Peace even before the last war ended. In memoranda to President Roosevelt I pointed out that America's greatest power in the peacemaking would lie in the fact that we would emerge from the war with our enormous productive power untouched by devastation. No country in the world would be able to raise its living standards without American help. Our problem would be how to bring this great productive power to bear upon the peacemaking as decisively as we had done in the warmaking.

I proposed to President Roosevelt that an Advisory Peace Council be created consisting of the secretaries of State, War, Navy, Treasury, the Director of War Mobilization and Reconversion, the Foreign Economic Administrator and Harry Hopkins. This body was to consider all peace questions, formulating their recommendations for policy, which were to go to the President for his final decision. This Council was also to have a small staff of its own under the direction of a Counsellor who enjoyed the complete personal confidence of the President.

Roosevelt liked the idea and said he would put it into effect. He told me he would name James F. Byrnes as its chairman and Judge Samuel Rosenman, as the Counsellor. Judge Rosenman was then in Europe and the President put off establishing the Council until Rosenman should return. Shortly after that, President Roosevelt sent me to London to discuss some matters with Winston Churchill and while there I told Judge Rosenman about the President's plan. A few days later we received the tragic news that the President had died.

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When I returned from London, I repeated the suggestion for this peace council to President Truman and he said he would create the body. But the idea got shunted off.

° Possibly the reason was the creation of the National Security Council, which, I was told, was modelled upon the earlier suggestion of an Advisory Peace Council to the President. Unfortunately if that is what the Security Council was intended to be, it hasn't worked out that way. The members of the Security Council are overworked; its membership needs broadening; its functioning must be reorganized to come to grips with the problems of achieving a decision in the peacemaking, instead of avoiding decision as has happened too often in the past.

A revitalized Security Council could do the job but it would have to be brought under the direction of a man of the stature of General Marshall, and enlarged with men who have no other business but this. To win the cold war, there must be one group which does nothing but think, work, plan—live and breathe—the cold war.

The first task of this revitalized Security Council might well be to re-examine the whole situation to determine what would be required to win the cold war and to plan a step-by-step strategy for taking the initiative in gaining peace. Were that done, by the sort of body I envision, I believe its recommendations would command the support of the public and Congress.

Without such a central peacemaking agency “total diplomacy” will remain a mere phrase.

If the American people are told what must be done, honestly and frankly, they will see the peace through. On the other hand, if the tactics adopted are to lure them into ever deeper involvement, bit by bit, without ever facing up to what the total peacemaking requires, then there will always be doubt of their willingness to drift down a road which has no end.

While this General Staff for Peace is our first need, it is not our only need. For such a body to function effectively, it must have the best possible intelligence. How are we to pace ourselves in relation to the Russians unless we know what they are up to?

It is not easy to figure the Russians out. Still, I am not prepared to accept the viewpoint of Russia as an unfathomable enigma behind an impenetrable iron curtain. Certain factors about the Soviet Government should make it quite predictable.

As Dictators, the Soviet leaders can act without consulting their people and are therefore capable of unloosing surprises. But the Soviet Union is also a planned economy. Everything that happens in Russia is supposed to measure up to a Five Year Plan, which, in turn, is broken down into yearly plans. The Plan doesn't always work out in practice. Still it must reflect the judgments, decisions—and motives—of the Soviet leaders.

The Kremlin's calculations as to when war is likely—twenty, ten, five, two years from now, or even sooner—must be embodied in Soviet planning, in how critically short materials are divided between immediate military needs and the expansion of Soviet industry, in the rate of purchases abroad of materials the Soviets lack at home and so on.

Russia being a dictatorship, none of these things can happen accidentally. Each action must reflect some decision taken in the Kremlin. Each action reflects some calculated risk which the Soviet government is taking. By putting together all of the bits and pieces, we should have an adequate basis for judging Russia's intentions as to war or peace.

Studying the Soviet economy in this way should also give us some means of checking the extravagant reports current as to Russia's military strength. One day these reports picture the Soviet

Union building a gigantic air force; then it is a terrific fleet of submarines; then it is tanks, and ground forces; then it is a navy. But Russia can hardly be a great land power, a great naval power, a great air power, a great atomic power, all at the same time. We know how difficult and expensive it is for this country to maintain our defense establishment and Russia has infinitely less resources at her command than we do.

In the course of "pacing ourselves" we are always likely to lag somewhat behind the Soviets in terms of readied military strength. In itself this is not necessarily alarming since our enormous potential for war also serves as a deterrent against aggression. If overt Soviet aggression has been prevented these last few years, it has not been solely because of our possession of the atomic bomb. The Soviet leaders have also been mindful of the fact that at the peak of the last war the United States produced nearly as many airplanes, tanks, guns and other war materiel as the rest of the world combined.

We can be sure that the Soviet leaders have not forgotten that fact. But we can also be sure that the Soviet leaders have not forgotten that it took us nearly two and a half years to convert our gigantic productive energies from peace to war.

This time gap in our mobilization is our gravest source of peril. It is the weakness around which any enemy must base its war plans. No nation in the world will attack a mobilized America. The only strategy any enemy can have is to attempt to overwhelm us during that "too little and too late" period while our military power is still "on order."

That is the reason why I have never ceased urging the prompt enactment of a stand-by mobilization plan, which would insure the swiftest possible marshalling of all our resources in case

of attack. A ready-to-go mobilization plan should be put into law now, to go into instant operation upon joint proclamation by Congress and the President. To wait until war has begun and bombs are actually falling before we begin to legislate is to invite disaster.

Nor is anything to be gained by delay. What needs to be done is as well known today as it ever will be. The question is not what should be done, but whether we will do what we know must be done, or wait until disaster is upon us.

Included in this stand-by mobilization law should be:

An impartial selective service law, with a work-or-fight clause.

A readied civilian defense.

The elimination of profiteering.

The power to shut down less essential production to give military needs priority.

Rationing of scarce essentials.

Much higher taxes.

A ceiling on all prices, rents, wages and other costs to prevent the inflation which could wreck any mobilization.

These laws would not specify the quantities of weapons to be produced—that must be kept secret and be constantly revised. Their objective would be to organize the nation so that if war came, no time would be lost in meeting any military demands. May I also emphasize that the whole program is needed, not merely parts of it. Under political temptation, some may seek to leave prices uncontrolled, or to soften other mobilization measures here and there. That was done in the last war, at what a terrible cost not alone in inflation but in lengthening the war and with it the slaughtering and the maiming!

To sum up there seem to me to be four major essentials of a successful cold war strategy:

1. A military establishment which includes not only an immediate available striking force of sufficient power to insure prompt retaliation and deter aggression, but one flexible enough to deal with possible civil war abroad.
2. A ready-to-go mobilization plan which will insure the swiftest mobilization of all our resources—men, money and materials—in case we or our allies are attacked.
3. An effective intelligence agency to provide the information needed to pace ourselves in relation to the Soviets and the threat of war.
4. A general staff for peace, to re-evaluate the whole of the peacewaging and to formulate a global strategy which will achieve a decision for peace.

One final thought, which I always like to leave with a group such as yours. In the past, the American people tended to deny the realities of power and to think that peace could be preserved by mere moral pronouncements, by “outlawing” war and so on. Today, there is general realization that peace is impossible unless supported by military strength. Still, although aware of this fact, many Americans are uneasy about it. They would like to forget their dependence on military power, and so there is much grumbling about the so-called “militarization of American life” and of the “military running the country”.

Don't let this grumbling disturb you. Yours is the right to be proud of your profession. You have brought imperishable glory to America. More important, you have never failed this country in your role as the guardian and protector of our liberties.

What makes a police state is not the existence of the police but the absence of law behind the police. What makes a military state is not the existence of the military but that the military constitute themselves the state. The American soldier—and by that I mean you naval men as well as the members of the other services—has never attempted to be a law unto himself. I resent any attempt to force you into a second-class citizenship. I, for one, want to acknowledge the great debt we all owe you.

I will close with a quotation from “England’s Answer” by Rudyard Kipling.

“Go to your work and be strong, halting not in your ways,
Baulking the end half-won for an instant dole of praise.
Stand to your work and be wise—certain of sword and pen,
Who are neither children nor Gods, but men in a world of men!”