

## PAPER # 1: The Decline of American Power, Military Decrepitude and CIA Incompetence (Updated 2009)

### Introduction

The United States has been the strongest nation in history, militarily and economically. Perhaps Russia, with its Strategic Rocket Forces, can match the Americans in nuclear firepower; but in conventional warfare, especially at sea and in the air, American superiority is manifest. No power has ever enjoyed so many advantages. Many assume that the United States is an invincible, protected country that cannot be hurt. They forget that the events of Pearl Harbor and 9/11 could be repeated today, by smuggling weapons of mass destruction into major cities. They also forget that American military power depends on the country's economic vitality, which is currently threatened by an ongoing financial crash (and by the government's panicked response to the crash).

The financial crisis, along with the election of Barack Obama to the presidency in November 2008, signals a change in U.S. national priorities. Obama was elected because American voters are not as interested in building democracy abroad as securing prosperity at home. Given the difficulties confronting the American economy, resources will be diverted away from military programs and toward "economic stabilization." Government revenue will be used to purchase failing industries and create new jobs through infrastructure development. Already the United States has committed itself to a market intervention involving trillions of dollars. There can be no doubt that under these circumstances the Pentagon's budget will be drastically cut.

The new administration has already announced its intention to extend an olive branch to Iran and Russia. Arms control will be a priority, with an emphasis on scaling back U.S. conventional and nuclear arms. At the same time, the Department of Homeland Security and the intelligence community will continue unreformed and ineffective as before. The immaturity of these security organizations, plagued with turf wars and infighting, will continue.

### Military Decrepitude The Shrinking Defense Budget

In November 2008 a senior Pentagon advisory group warned President-elect Barack Obama that the current Pentagon budget is "not sustainable." According to the Defense Business Board, which oversees the Pentagon's management, defense cuts cannot be avoided as the economy worsens. *And the cuts will be large.*

Leading Democrats in Congress, including Rep. Barney Frank (D-Mass.), have

promised to cut the U.S. defense budget by 25 percent. “We don’t need all these fancy new weapons,” he said. The congressional majority wants to divert funds from defense to federal social spending. In addition, President Barack Obama has publicly committed himself to nuclear disarmament and the elimination of national missile defense. “I will cut investments in unproven missile defense systems,” said Obama during the election campaign. “I will not weaponize space. I will slow our development of future combat systems.”

What Obama wants is a new “civilian national security force” as well-funded as the regular armed services. “We cannot continue to rely only on our military,” said Obama. Although details are scant, it appears that the new administration plans to draft the country’s youth into a new “security” organization. It involves mandatory three months of training for all Americans between the ages of 18 and 25. Although the term “civil defense” is used in reference to this program, it will more likely to be used to socialize the youth, and for “compulsory community service” during an extended domestic emergency.

## Politicized Generals and the Failure of Leadership

America’s defense establishment has become a vast bureaucracy. There are many noteworthy definitions for “bureaucrat.” For example, “an official who is rigidly devoted to the details of administrative procedure,” or “an official who works by fixed routine without exercising intelligent judgment.” More and more, the American defense establishment is *managed* by bureaucrats; less and less, it is *led* by warriors. A warrior is defined as, “a person engaged or experienced in warfare; a soldier.” Another definition holds that a warrior is “a person who shows or has shown great vigor, courage, or aggressiveness....” Today’s generals have become bureaucrats in their own right. The political climate in Washington infects them. At the same time, the culture of modern bureaucracy no longer meshes with the warrior’s code of conduct. Rather than nurturing the warrior spirit, political correctness kills frank speech and honest appraisals. The bureaucracy favors mediocrity and conformity; but the profession of the warrior demands excellence, independent judgment and clarity. Throughout history, many of the best warriors have been non-conformists: From Julius Caesar and Frederick the Great, to Horatio Nelson and George Patton.

Too many of today’s generals are political. They know on what side their bread is buttered, and they avoid risks that may hurt their chances at promotion. This, in turn, promulgates a cultural climate of risk aversion in a profession that depends for success on taking calculated risks. At the same time, America’s generals tend to kill reforms, kill money-saving measures, and oppose truth-tellers. For many years the U.S. Army has needed reorganization and new ideas. For example, the system used in today’s chain of command was devised in the nineteenth century and needs to be shortened. There are too many generals. Each unnecessary link in the chain of command adds friction to the flow of vital information, which contaminates the decision-making process and forestalls timely action. Addressing the need for a more efficient command system, Army Chief of Staff Gen. Dennis Reimer initially supported organizational reforms proposed by Col.

Douglas Macgregor. These reforms would have increased the army's combat effectiveness while reducing costs. General Reimer's four-star colleagues, however, barred the way. From that point on, Col. Macgregor's brilliant career was over.

In the higher management of the U.S. military, generals and admirals are not as accountable as they used to be. They do not lead from the front and are rarely at risk. During the entire Iraq War the highest-ranking officer killed in action was Col. William Wood, commanding the 1st Battalion, 184th Infantry Regiment. Too often the generals are micromanaging their troops from the rear – far from the realities faced by those they are “charged with leading.” Modern communications and computer processing have transformed command-and-control so much that generals can monitor real-time movements of troops and materials around the world. Military reliance on video teleconferencing has led to a glut of information. Generals sit in darkened conference rooms and watch irrelevant PowerPoint presentations from staff officers. Senior officers lecture combat leaders on what their immediate superiors should do next. Collaborative give-and-take is rare. Teleconferencing allows commanders to “lead” troops electronically from bunkers and command posts, far from the troops. All-too-often these “virtual” commanders second-guess combat leaders in the field, destroying morale.

Technology has become a two-edged sword. Few are concerned that over-reliance or misuse of new technologies may produce a false sense of security. In fact, security may be totally compromised when advanced systems fail. Soldiers who rely too heavily on electronic navigating systems may forget how to read a map. What if our nation's satellites are destroyed or made unavailable? Many believe this would undermine basic war-fighting capabilities, making U.S. forces vulnerable. (We will explore the nation's strategic technology risk, including its vulnerability to EMP attack, in a future white paper.)

An unrelated problem, involving conflict of interest, is the military leadership's relations with defense contractors. Retired General Officers promote the purchase of products, services and weapons that they would have shunned while in uniform. This has become so serious that the Strategic Studies Institute wants the Chief of Staff of the Army to create a registry of retired General Officers and their affiliations so as to minimize recurring conflicts of interest. As described by Members of Congress, the military's weapons acquisition process is broken and requires fundamental changes. When the United States Air Force needed an air-refueling tanker replacement, the Senate's senior defense lawmaker, Carl Levin (D-Mich.), noted: “The GAO's decision in the tanker protest reveals serious errors in the Air Force's handling of this critically important competition. We now need not only a new full, fair and open competition in compliance with the GAO recommendations, but also a thorough review of – and accountability for – the process that produced such a flawed result.”

While the United States seems powerful, even invincible, to many observers, the weaknesses of the U.S. military stem from shared societal pathologies and the phenomenon of widespread narcissism. This places an inordinate emphasis on the appearance of success rather than the reality. According to clinical psychologist and

former military officer Norman Dixon, the following are symptoms of a psychology of military incompetence: (1) sending a military force to a situation without a clear mission or objective; (2) sending a military force into a situation without the legal ability to defend itself or the mandate to fulfill its role effectively; (3) leaving a military force in a situation where it becomes progressively more committed, to the point where it is unable to withdraw safely, or when resources and lives have to be continually poured into a situation with no clear end; (4) the lack of political will to sustain losses, or an unrealistic political definition of “acceptable losses”; and (5) withdrawing a military force before the successful completion of objectives.

If any of this sounds remotely familiar, the reader will quickly realize that the United States is headed for a “time of troubles.” For many years the United States has sought security in monstrous defense expenditures. More and more money is spent for less and less capability. Many experts have argued that economic power does not always guarantee military power. Proper organization, good military culture, and the character of good soldiers matter more than large sums of money.

In *The Discourses*, written nearly 500 years ago by Niccolo Machiavelli, we read “that it is not gold ... that constitutes the sinews of war, but good soldiers; for gold does not find good soldiers, but good soldiers are quite capable of finding gold.” Pointing to the military achievements of ancient Rome, Machiavelli wrote that “not all the treasure in the world would have sufficed in view of the great enterprises they undertook and the difficulties they had to encounter in them.” Without the patriotic spirit and correct orientation that attends good strategic leadership, money can accomplish little.

The United States, as a consumer culture, has lost the patriotic orientation of previous generations. It is no wonder, then, that the U.S. military is becoming ideologically disoriented and politicized. The main enemy, more often than not, has been the President or Secretary of Defense or others in the chain of command. The nation’s *real enemy* is ignored. Instead, those leaders who make war are singled out for attack. Bureaucratic infighting represents a war within a war. This is unavoidable because the prevailing political culture refuses to accept the necessities of war, or longstanding war-fighting precepts, including unity of command, military discipline, and respect for the Commander-in-Chief’s authority.

A new political awareness has taken root in America’s generals, especially after the Clinton years. According to *Washington Times* defense and national security reporter Bill Gertz, “The politicization of the military mushroomed in 2006 after a group of former high-ranking military officers took the extraordinary step of going public to criticize the Pentagon leadership in the middle of a war.” The effort, noted Gertz, eventually forced the resignation of Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld. “The so-called revolt of the generals was an ugly episode,” wrote Gertz, “...remembered for lowering the apolitical stature of the American military leadership....”

How can the politicization of American generals be explained? For decades American universities have tilted far to the left. Not surprisingly, the leaders in many institutions

(including the Pentagon and CIA) now adhere to ideas learned in college – like internationalism and pacifism. They have been indoctrinated, disoriented and demoralized. In many instances, their education exemplifies the widespread and systematic sabotage of national thought.

To understand the extent of the subversion that has already occurred, consider the case of retired Air Force Gen. George Lee Butler. As chief of the Strategic Air Command from 1991-92 (and its successor, the U.S. Strategic Command from 1992-93), Butler did not believe in nuclear deterrence. In fact, he ultimately proved to be a “nuclear pacifist,” opposed to the development and maintenance of American nuclear weapons. In retirement Gen. Butler wrote that America’s nuclear program was dangerous, representing the “messianic pursuit of a demonized enemy.” Instead of believing in the defense of his country, Gen. Butler believed that his country was the primary source of danger. According to Butler, “I did what I could to cancel all of the strategic nuclear modernization programs in my jurisdiction, which totaled \$40 billion. I canceled every single one of them. I recommended to the president that we take bombers off nuclear alert for the first time in thirty years, and we did. I recommended that we accelerate the retirement of all systems designed to be terminated in present and future arms control agreements, and we did. We accelerated the retirement of the Minuteman II force. We shrank the nuclear [capable] warplanes of the United States by 75 percent.”

Thanks to Gen. Butler’s efforts (and the “political correctness” of others) the U.S. nuclear arsenal is nearing obsolescence. During an October 2008 speech, Defense Secretary Robert Gates said: “To be blunt, there is absolutely no way we can maintain a credible deterrent and reduce the number of weapons in our stockpile without resorting to testing our stockpile or pursuing a modernization program.” According to Lt. Gen. Robert Elder (Commander of the 8th Air Force), America has lost nuclear expertise and bomber efficiency. “It took us 15 years to get ourselves into this [mess],” he explained, “and it’s going to take another 15 years to get us out of it.” But given future budget constraints and the prevalence of *politically correct* generals, the next 15 years will bring more of the same. In a shocking summary of the problem, *Washington Times* reporter Bill Gertz wrote: “Butler is typical of a U.S. officer corps that has remained disdainful of the concepts of patriotism, love of country, and the idea that liberty and freedom and the American way of life are worth fighting for and ultimately dying for.”

A general officer in the United States military is now a political person. He follows his own conscience, his own policies, and his own political agenda. He is not necessarily a defender of the nation, the Constitution or the American people. He is the servant of new political ideals that have nothing to do with national defense or the art of war. Retired generals now engage in partisan politics *on behalf of the left*. This fact has serious implications for the nation’s political stability and future security. Unless something is done, Russia will acquire strategic nuclear superiority within two years. As of December 2008 Russia is building new warheads and new ICBMs. Some of these are road mobile missiles, which can be moved from underground production sites to caves or tunnels – undetected and uncouned in terms of the overall balance of military

power. Meanwhile, the U.S. arsenal continues to deteriorate; underfunded, without the test of a live warhead in nearly two decades.

## America's Zero-Defect Military

In accordance with the prevailing mentality of “risk aversion,” the American military has developed a “zero-defect culture,” which contradicts classic war-fighting philosophies affirmed since Clausewitz. In practice, a zero-defect military culture results in the micromanagement of subordinates, the demoralization of junior officers, and the elimination of military talent. Promising careers are brought to an end because aggressive officers who win battles are more likely to err than career-minded officers who lack military character. “In today’s military,” wrote Major Claire E. Steele, “[Great commanders like] Nimitz, Lejeune, Patton and Arnold would probably not have attained flag officer rank because the U.S. military has no room at the top for officers found guilty at a court-martial, relieved from duty, or having derogatory evaluation reports.” According to Steele, zero-defect is a “cancer.”

The dysfunctions of a zero-defect military are legion. According to a 1995 Army survey of 24,000 soldiers, the “zero-defect” culture means that truth-telling quickly ends your career. The dishonest get promoted and the honest get booted. Defense Secretary William Perry noted the problem: “A successful military leader will have a certain amount of daring in his character. We should find ways of encouraging that daring instead of stomping on a person every time his daring has led him to a mistake.”

While there are many fine officers and dedicated Pentagon employees, the United States military costs too much and carries too much political baggage. This is not to say that America’s armed forces aren’t the finest in the world. The amount of money spent, and the degree of expertise available, has produced the finest war machine in the world. But with inevitable budgetary cutbacks, the cult of political correctness, and the anti-nuclear agenda of the Congressional majority, America may soon find its defense hobbled. Without proper reforms, there will not be proper savings. Combat effectiveness will be sacrificed, enemies will be tempted and the country will enter upon an era of vulnerability and retreat.

## The Failure of U.S. Intelligence

### Security in a permissive culture

Since the 1960s the United States has become a “permissive” society. Standards in all areas of national life have fallen. Could this occur without a corollary degeneration of the country’s security and intelligence services? If the tragedy of 9/11 cannot be taken as evidence, then consider the fact that no U.S. security official was ever held responsible for the fiasco of *the Pentagon on fire* and *the World Trade Center leveled*.

Even a casual observer can see that America’s highest political leadership has no

concept of its enemy. According to President Bush, Islam is a “religion of peace,” the Russians are “allies in the war against terror,” and China is America’s “trading partner.” Such statements are generally approved by the culture, but when this same president dares to mention the existence of an “axis of evil,” he is roundly mocked and derided as an ignoramus. It has become, in fact, a faux pas to publicly recognize an enemy or to discuss the existence of enemies at all.

In terms of the routine activities of today’s intelligence agencies, what does cultural permissiveness and slackness signify? A recent book by former CIA officer Lindsay Moran, titled *Blowing My Cover*, describes American intelligence as a system in which inconvenient security rules are routinely ignored, sex with foreign nationals is rampant, and agents insubordinately slip out of countries they are assigned to watch. In terms of intelligence work, when Moran began talking to someone with access to al Qaeda, she was told to break off contact because the subject was affiliated with dangerous terrorists.

### When bureaucracy embraces self-deception

According to CIA Director Allen Dulles, “Americans are usually proud ... of the fact that the ‘conspiratorial’ tendencies which seem natural and inbred in many other peoples tend to be missing from their characters and from the surroundings in which they live.” What Dulles should have said, is that Americans are proud of their naïveté. In Russia they know better. They have lived for decades in the bureaucratic labyrinth of the Soviet and post-Soviet states, barred from the truth by an impenetrable wall of official lies. In America, everything seems to be exposed. Even state secrets cannot be kept off the front pages of the newspapers. Americans do not believe in secrets because *Americans cannot keep them*. Americans do not possess that feeling of insecurity that fuels a disciplined state security apparatus. Therefore, it should come as no surprise that American intelligence was frequently bested by the KGB – as the Aldrich Ames and Robert Hanssen cases suggest. (*Ames and Hanssen were highly placed KGB moles within the CIA and FBI respectively. Hanssen spied for Russia over a period of 22 years; Ames worked for the KGB from 1985 until his arrest in 1994.*)

It is only natural, as well, that the history of the CIA during the Cold War has been mythologized and falsified as a salve to incompetence. In the officially accepted history, the falsifiers have made themselves into heroes. They have slandered good men, elevated incompetent ones, and covered the tracks of the enemy within. Those who knew better, like the CIA’s James Angleton or his British MI5 counterpart, Peter Wright, have been maligned as “paranoids” or champions of “sick think” – their characters assassinated, their writings banned. This falsification of history has been popularized in books like David C. Martin’s *Wilderness of Mirrors*, Tom Mangold’s *Cold Warrior*, and David Wise’s *Molehunt*.

To understand what went wrong with American intelligence there is no better source than the firsthand account of Tennent H. Bagley, former CIA chief of Soviet bloc counterintelligence. His recent memoir is titled *Spy Wars: Moles, mysteries and Deadly Games*. What Bagley describes is the CIA’s fall, which occurred in the 1960s when the

investigation of a KGB defector named Yuri Nosenko went awry. The officers assigned to investigate Nosenko had caught him lying. But the CIA management wanted to believe Nosenko, so they gave the matter to non-experts who were tasked with rehabilitating a false defector.

To believe Nosenko's authenticity, noted Bagley, the CIA would have to accept that the "KGB actually operated under procedures different than those reported by all earlier (and subsequent) defectors, [they would also have to believe] what Nosenko told ... about his life was the final truth – even though it was a fourth or fifth version..." The CIA's managers buried reality, wrote Bagley, "under layers of lies so often repeated that they have become conventional wisdom." And so it happened that KGB-originated falsehoods became the official mythology of the CIA. As historian Paul Veyne wrote in an essay on mythology, "Daily life itself, far from being rooted in immediacy, is the crossroads of the imagination.... Empiricism and experimentation are negligible quantities." What we find in the CIA, is a large and powerful organization where the intricacies of truth have been uprooted by the imaginative prerogatives of bureaucratic self-aggrandizement. In this situation, existence finds itself mediated by successive "dream palaces" all of which pass for truth. According to Veyne, "When one does not see what one does not see, one does not even see that one is blind." This sentence describes the CIA as it swallowed the KGB's baited hook.

It was a clever piece of strategy to tell the CIA what its managers wanted to hear while the rest of humanity wrestles with unpleasant truths. The intelligence bureaucrat can ignore expert opinion, consigning fact to the dustbin while elevating fiction in its place. The CIA's bosses wanted good news from defectors, not bad news. Nosenko said the Soviets had failed to recruit moles inside U.S. intelligence. According to the chief of the CIA's counterintelligence staff this was *demonstrably* untrue. But the management believed what it wanted to believe.

According to Bagley's account, "The American intelligence community had so unequivocally supported falsehood – and lost so much by doing so – that if any CIA people still remembered, they would probably prefer to let *this* sleeping dog lie." Here was the Waterloo of American intelligence. No defeat could be greater than embracing the enemy's lies. And this is significant *today* because the KGB did not disappear when the Soviet Union collapsed.

## Concluding Points

While the core values of the CIA include "service, integrity and excellence," the agency nonetheless carries a legacy of institutionalized self-deception and questionable analysis. While the intelligence community includes many patriotic servants and brilliant individuals, the whole is not always the sum of its parts.

The stated mission of the CIA is to collect "information that reveals the plans, intentions and capabilities of our adversaries and provides the basis for decision and action." What we find is an agency that failed to reveal the plans, intentions and capabilities of al Qaeda prior to 9/11/01; an agency that failed to find weapons of mass destruction in

Iraq and an agency that does not have the ability to counter foreign espionage efforts. Like the other sixteen agencies partaking of the government's bureaucratic intelligence culture, the CIA has failed for reasons misunderstood by politicians and inaccessible to casual observers. In decades past, the agency was penetrated by hostile agents and the penetrations were never *fully* dealt with; good information was eliminated in favor of bad information; the wrong lessons were learned and the truth remained buried. "When one does not see what one does not see, one does not even see that one is blind."

## Summary

The United States spends hundreds of billions for its armed forces and intelligence agencies. The expense is huge, often wasteful, and encumbered by bureaucratic politics. The present economic crisis makes cuts to defense spending and the intelligence budget inevitable. Too many generals oppose the right balance of cuts. As a result, structural problems in the world's finest military force will result in reduced combat efficiency and increased vulnerability for the American people. In terms of defense and intelligence, the United States will justify cuts by emphasizing the necessity of fighting "the last war." Major combat capabilities will be compromised as expensive war-making items are removed from the budget. Even more significant, America's nuclear deterrent is already suffering from neglect. This is especially dangerous at a time when U.S. foreign intelligence is blind, resistant to reform, and politicized.

The United States is facing a dangerous future. Nuclear weapons are proliferating, enemies are multiplying and defenses are weakening. While terrorists remain at work, a resurgent Russia and a rapidly modernizing China gather new allies in a coordinated international strategy. Americans will be at risk as the era of American dominance comes to an end.

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*Our papers are not intended to predict the future, but rather to offer a thought process and perspective unavailable from mainstream media outlets (although we note that, in 2006, we did predict the current financial downturn). We hope to avoid repetition of history's darker moments, and to that end we spotlight the dangers of our nation's current path.*

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