Naval War College Review

Volume 28
Number 4 *Summer*

Article 4

1975

The Challenges of Implementation of the National Security Policy

Charles M. Herzfeld

Perhaps the most difficult element in the complex development and implementation of national security policy is the necessary projection of future defense needs, often as much as 20 years hence. But by successfully integrating the key factors of policy in a disciplined step-by-step approach, the United States can make plans, albeit contingency plans, that clarify and define not only long-range objectives, but medium-range (with 10 years) and short-range (with 1 year) objectives as well.

THE CHALLENGES OF IMPLEMENTATION OF NATIONAL SECURITY POLICY

An address given at the Current Strategy Forum
at the Naval War College
by
Dr. Charles M. Herzfeld

There are many ways that one might address the topic of "The Challenges of Implementation." One that occurred to me early in thinking about the talk was to go through the role of science and technology in national security over the last 20 years by looking at the role of the DDR&E in the U.S. Defense Establishment. But this approach would be too one-dimensional and could ignore the more difficult and perhaps the more important problems that lay outside technology. Indeed, no adequate description of the subtle and complex elements of national security policy implementation can come only from the fairly clearly defined world of technology.

PLANNING IN A CHANGING WORLD

We live today in a rapidly changing world; we must cope with the problems of the resource crisis, the energy crisis, the food crisis, the population crisis, the environmental crisis, and others. These changes are accompanied by equally important political transformations well described in a recent article by Mr. Moynihan.[1] Another insight into these upheavals in international affairs can be found in a remarkable short note by Mr. Solzhenitsyn[2] in which he argues that World War III is already over and that *we* have *lost* it--a position that may not be as absurd as it first appears.

We observe, for example, a lessening of morale and a diminishing of nerve in the West, a lessening of discipline and morale in both government and industry. To be more specific, we see subordinates in large organizations who feel perfectly comfortable with ignoring or subverting the instructions they have from their superiors, undermining the policies of their chiefs, and carrying out their own actions in their own way. We frequently find confusion, a lack of

cohesion and direction, and a sense of floundering, often attributed to a lack of leadership. There are growing violations of the privacy of both individuals and organizations, and often for trivial or frivolous reasons. We see a great confusion and lack of precise definition in the language with which we have to work. Let me point out as an example the words "strategic" and "tactical," each of which is now used in at least three senses, none of which can be determined clearly from the context. Thus, quite incorrectly, "strategic" has become associated with "nuclear," and "military targets" only with missile silos.

There has been a loss of patience with complex problems, and we have gotten into a habit of oversimplifying even the most complicated issues. For example, the President of the United States has been expected to give in a press conference a fully satisfactory answer to a question about the "first use" of nuclear weapons and do so in *one sentence*. This strikes me as a rather absurd expectation. Let me, in contrast, remind you of the fact that when a Soviet political leader presents an address on national policy, that address is sometimes 6 or more hours long. If you are willing to work through the speech and the routine propaganda, and if you know something of the issues it addresses, you may find a very serious exposition in which a great many problems are fully discussed and fully explained. This detailed resolution of complex issues is something for which I feel we do not have the necessary patience.

Objectives and Planning. Moving on from this complex and relatively depressing background, let me talk about some strategies for the implementation of national security policy. First, we must be clear about the difference between *long-range objectives*, typically 10 to 20 years from now; *medium-range objectives*, within the next 10 years; and *short-range objectives*—the next minute or the rest of the year. These periods of time arise naturally. It takes approximately 10 years to conceive, develop, and bring into production a major new weapon system which should, in turn, provide at least 10 or 20 years of useful service. Therefore, we know rather well what the U.S. military inventory will be like in the eighties; most of it is now under development or has started production. Much is already in the inventory now.

Naturally, by 1995, which is at the end of this 20-year period, there will be some new things that we have not yet even thought of, but I submit they will be relatively few in number and that most of the hardware and much of the training will be with the things that are now under development or that are in the inventory now.

The medium-range planning—for 1 to 10 years from now—is likely to be dominated by changes in either national or military objectives, doctrine, strategy and tactics, or by major changes in logistics, training, and such.

The short-range planning is dominated by the need to set up and carry out correct medium-range and long-range policies (correct in terms of mid-range and long-range objectives) and to do so in spite of all the immediate pressures of budget balancing, of public and political pressures for "immediate results," and the like.

Now let me elaborate some long-range planning problems. Many people, when confronted with the challenge of thinking 10 or 20 years ahead, say it cannot be done. It is difficult, but useful results can be obtained. First, the long-range context has to be clarified. One must think about the broad background and directions for a national security policy in the next 10 to 20 years. That, in turn, means that one has to think about the large human problems of the world and decide after study and evaluation what are the more likely

directions events might take. For example, I think a serious long-range national security planner must make up his mind whether he thinks that the Club of Rome is right about the future of mankind or is wrong about the future of mankind. Will the resource problem, the population problem, and the pollution problem get so serious that the average standard of living of the world will go down very seriously in the next 25 years or so? Or is the Club of Rome mistaken? Herman Kahn and his colleagues at the Hudson Institute believe that the Club of Rome has left out essential positive impacts of technology and believe that the world as a whole, on the average and with the exception of some local and short-time perturbations, is very likely to go into a strong expansionary mode. Still other possibilities exist.[3] Yet it is clearly impossible to conduct long-range security planning unless one has some concrete and explicit views on these questions. And while one cannot be absolutely sure about the right answers here, one has to sift through the evidence, look at the analyses, think about what is being said, and decide whether it makes sense or not.

Similarly, anyone involved in long-range security planning has to attempt some forecast of major trends in the Soviet Union, in China, in Japan, in Europe, and other parts of the world. Conclusions must be reached regarding who will be the dominant economic powers 20 years from now. One has to be pretty clear about that if one is to understand our U.S. national security problems of 20 years from now. The main challenge is to look at the large and growing amount of real information and analysis becoming available on these kinds of issues and to choose likely trends.

Plans and Roadmaps. One important psychological and logical difficulty concerning long-range plans (or even relatively short-range plans) is the misunderstanding that plans are like prisons. Many fear that "You make a plan and you live in it forever." Nothing could be more mistaken. Plans are more like a decision tree or a roadmap. You start with "a point here" and, depending on what either does or does not happen, you move on in one direction or in another. This decision tree forces you to decide in advance what you will take as decisive decision points, what you will consider as decisive forks in the road, and what action you will take once you get there. I like to think of plans as a roadmap with many alternatives ahead, a map in which you have had to give some prior consideration as to whether you really prefer to travel along this particular branch or that, because you cannot possibly have all alternatives open to you simultaneously.

Plans must be flexible, and they must be updated on a rolling forecast basis. One must think of them as a series of contingency plans, not because this or that contingency is likely to happen exactly as you predict it, but because working out contingency plans makes you do your homework in advance; it makes you go through many agonizing detailed decisions. As a consequence, you can take away from the plan a very good understanding of the general shape of the problems that are likely to arise and what kind of action would appear feasible. For example, logistics limitations for military contingencies will point up a host of constraints you may have never known you had. Needless to say, it is important to have a clear understanding of such constraints in advance.

Plans Clarify Objectives. This kind of planning also forces one to decide beforehand what one will accept as successful solutions to the various problems at hand. One of the great difficulties that we as a country often get into is that we do not have clear, publicly

understood objectives when going into a particular crisis and therefore are unclear as to our status at the end. This is a most serious problem. Let me use as an example the war in Korea in the 1950's. The United States objective at the very outset of the war was to *repel aggression*. By that criterion the United States and South Korea clearly won. But the initial objective, i.e., to repel aggression, was forgotten, and expectations were readjusted upward as the war was progressing well, to the point where we had later an objective that was not attainable. And so we wound up being very disappointed with the outcome and had tremendous internal arguments about the war. Perhaps the problem was a shortcoming of leadership, one of whose functions is to set objectives and to set them forth clearly. Yet often clear objectives have to be quite moderate, and then one has to convince people to accept moderate objectives. This explicit acceptance of limited objectives is one of the things which we in the United States must improve.

When working out our strategy for policy implementation, we must be clear in our priorities about the short run, the medium run, and the long run. A national security policy, for example, requires that we think about alternatives which are forced on us: whether we wish to prepare for a war (and what kind of a war) and spend all of our resources on that problem or, alternatively, whether we prefer to be very effective in crisis management, or thirdly, whether we want to pay attention mostly to "steady-state management," the everyday problems of policymaking and execution. ("Steady-state management" is an expression I prefer to whatever it was that used to be called the "cold war" and whatever it is that some now call "détente.") This choice of emphasis affects the kind of forces you buy, what command and control arrangements are best, how much training you do, how much readiness is worth, and so on. In the Navy, in particular, the issue comes very quickly to the fore and was faced up to with a great deal of concern by the several recent Chiefs of Naval Operations. The issue can be put, overly simplified, as follows: What is to be given preeminence as an objective naval presence today or ocean control 10 years from now? A clear decision was made to reduce the number of ships in the active fleet now and for the next few years in return for a more modern and effective fleet 10 years from now. It was a clear-cut decision, made with eyes wide open, and was painful for all involved. I am personally convinced that it was the right answer. It is a gutsy way to behave--betting that nothing major in international affairs will come apart in the next 10 years

NEW MANAGEMENT METHODS

Integrating Policy Factors—Net Assessment. When discussing the strategies of implementation, some consideration must be given to the improvement of management apparatus and techniques for implementation. A *policy* is an integrated whole consisting of many separate factors. Very important among the *input* factors for national security policy are those from intelligence, from R. & D., from procurement, from doctrine development, from training, and from logistics. Unfortunately we tend to consider each of these factors independently, looking first at one, then at another, and not bringing these factors into close interaction with each other. We usually have specialists in each area who analyze these areas separately, and it is only at the level of a Chief of the Service or Secretary or Assistant Secretary that the separate parts are brought together into a policy.

I am convinced that one of the major reasons for some serious difficulties in this country's military posture arises because these different ways of analysis

do not become integrated earlier. They do not start out together and they do not really get together, except in a formal and mechanical way.

The problem is further aggravated by our ways of keeping some things secret, thus restricting access even to individuals who should see the information to achieve integration of the various factors. I am very much in favor of keeping secret those things that ought to be kept secret, but as we are moving into an era where it is getting increasingly difficult to keep things from "leaking," I think we ought to rethink our strategy for protecting and using classified material. Another obstacle that one faces in dealing with these five or six different policy factors has to do with a certain professional narrowness which has grown up and which (even if excessive) is usually defended as objectivity. There surely is nothing as valuable as having someone who has spent his professional life at one thing telling one "this is how it is," "this is how it is not." But if this approach is excessively narrow, it is likely to be wrong on the very big issues. What is required here is a degree of broad judgment which is uncommon.

However, over the last few years a technique of analysis has arisen which is quite good at integrating the key factors of policy, i.e., intelligence, R. & D., procurement problems, doctrinal problems, training, logistics, et cetera; it is usually called *Net Assessment*. It has a number of significant practitioners today, only one of whose names I must mention here: Andy Marshall, who is probably one of the principal creators of this new discipline.

Net Assessment, if it is done right, does require one to go through a disciplined step-by-step analysis, which may start anywhere in this very large universe, but which eventually works its way through a large number of areas, comparing the various portions of the "Red" and the "Blue" story. If we are talking about naval problems, for example, a good way to start is to compare ship against ship. If one starts with technology, one ought first to compare ship classes that are similar, in order to better grasp their comparative technologies. For example, it is quite instructive to compare Soviet ballistic missile submarines with United States ballistic missile submarines and get a good fix on how these two complex technologies compare. On the other hand, it is not very likely that those two kinds of submarines would ever fight *each other*. (If they do, somebody has made a terrible mistake somewhere.) In the next step in the analysis, one may compare the performance of Soviet SSN's used in an antisubmarine mode with the performance of a United States SSN against a Soviet SSBN. So you have to look at these comparisons: namely, "Blue system A" against "Red system A," then "Blue A" and the "Red counter" to "Blue A," and finally take the "Blue counter" to "Red system A." There are *three technology* comparisons that we must make. (In this example it is also important to make the fourth comparison, i.e., Blue SSN versus Red SSN technology.)

After one has reached reasonable conclusions comparing the technologies, i.e., performance of the systems and key subsystems, one must turn one's attention to the key *non*technological comparisons. These will include: How do each of these forces train? How are they used? What is the doctrine of employment? What tactics are they likely to use? What kind of logistics backup do they have? Only after you describe as clearly as you can, using all significant data, what all these comparisons and cross linkages are and have weighed the uncertainties (there will be many) and understand why various comparisons and conclusions are the most significant, only then will you have a real Net Assessment in hand.

One Net Assessment that was done

which was useful, even though it was somewhat limited in subject matter, was done by the Defense Science Board in 1969-71 and concentrated on Ocean Surveillance, a rather narrow subject but an extremely significant one. We looked at Ocean Surveillance first from the point of view of U.S. assets used against a particular foreign navy and its assets, and during the second year we looked at how that other navy's surveillance assets would do against the U.S. Navy. The technologies were compared in detail, as were tactics and doctrines of both navies. Out of all that came some very useful insights and also some key recommendations which are presently being implemented. This type of analysis can be done, but it takes discipline, time, and the right combination of talent. But the results should be important; they are readily accepted by experts, by practitioners, and particularly by the operators because one has had to learn what their real problems are about and what can realistically be done about them.

Integrating Policy Factors—Organizational Complexities. A quite different management technique which deals with an entirely different problem is that which has to do with large, complex organizations and how to stimulate creative but disciplined actions in them. This is a quite general problem, whether we are talking about the U.S. Government, the U.S. Navy, or a large corporation or even smaller organizations. Here we are faced with several new key features that are not adequately recognized in general and that are not adequately dealt with by many managers. Indeed, I know of only one readily accessible and systematic discussion of what I have in mind, the book *The Future Executive* by Harlan Cleveland.[4] We are concerned here with a complex of problems, issues, and ideas that are closely related—a complex that does not yet have a definite name and which lacks well-developed terminology describing the problem and the possible solutions. The origins of the modern management problems lie, first, in the sheer size of some modern organizations, second, in the incredible complexity and variety of tasks large modern organizations attempt to carry out, and in the relative novelty of many of these problems of size and complexity. One major point is that the standard organization chart describes a large organization only very imperfectly and very inadequately. In fact, it has almost nothing to do with the way the organization *really behaves* and how one can deal with the organization. Thus, in very large organizations many things are, in fact, decided in meetings where each of the participants comes from a different branch of that organization and brings quite different kinds of expertise to the meeting. The group usually has a chairman who has and feels personal responsibility for getting a decision made in some useful form, but often no one in the group is the boss of anybody else—there is not anybody that can tell everybody else in this particular group what to do. As a consequence, the members are all quite independent actors and they do not *have* to compromise if they do not wish. In this kind of a situation there are a number of unproductive, but common, responses: One is to do nothing, perhaps the usual bureaucratic answer. Another is to seek the lowest common denominator. Is there any minimum action all can agree on? This is a fast way to get something, and perhaps it is better than nothing. In the long run, it tends to be a very unsatisfactory answer. However, the diversity of interests and backgrounds just described, which in one sense is the source of the problem, in another sense is also the source of the solution. Here it helps to think of the organization looking more like a grid or a matrix rather than like a pyramid, and to recognize that the great variety of

backgrounds and interests of the people involved reflect the realities of the problems to be solved. Thus, one has to find ways of utilizing the expertise and the special viewpoints that the different individuals bring to that kind of a meeting. And one must draw out of such a group the best possible answers to the problems in front of it. That is a considerable challenge to the manager. The group can produce, with good leadership (which can come from any or all members of the group), a superior understanding of the problems and also a better set of decision options or, even, a simple, clear-cut policy which can be executed by the whole organization, using all its varied capabilities and talents.

Generally speaking most high-level decisions also tend to be group decisions or conclusions, with higher level groups "working the problem." Even the clear responsibilities of top-line managers in large organizations tend to be increasingly shared with others inside and outside these organizations.

Thus, there are very few exceptions to the general situation that I described. Some Presidential decisions may be exceptions, but probably very few because, in fact, the options that the President deals with are generally prepared for him by groups whose makeup is rather like the ones I have just described. In these, Defense will be represented, State will be represented, CIA will be represented, Treasury, et cetera, depending on what the problem is. These "working level groups," which can consist of Cabinet or sub-Cabinet officers from different departments, come together and hardly ever do many of the members report directly to one of the other members of that group. They all report to the President, but he does not normally attend such meetings, or does so only intermittently.

To successfully manage organizations in the ways described here requires patience for detail, for people, for dissent, and, above all, patience with complexity. To quote Mr. Moynihan again, "We need complicators; we have had too many simplifiers around."[5] He is right. Everybody is proud of being a simplifier—"I can make this complex problem look so simple you wouldn't believe it"—well, maybe one can, but the real problems today are not simple, they are complex. They take time to understand; they take time to explain; they take time to fix. And we had all better understand that, because if we do not, we will be mistaken and frustrated most of the time. These complex problems require more patience in the use of language and more care in the precise use of language. They require follow-up of actions and of understanding, and, in particular, we must spend enough time working out and thinking through our strategies of implementation.

Equally important is another new trend. Today, people will not follow or support a policy in whose formulation they did not participate. I think that is a rule of thumb that is almost universally valid. It is true for middle-level executives, and it is true for infantrymen. Everyone today insists on understanding why.

I see nothing wrong with that, it makes for a much more human existence than would otherwise be the case. Blind obedience will not work anymore except under very special circumstances, when there is a very clearly perceived crisis, a very clear emergency at hand, and when everybody agrees that everything must be delegated to a few heads in order that a quick decision can be made. We heard at this forum about the support for the administration during the *Mayaguez* incident, how the President was able to act with dispatch. We must get used to operating in two different modes; in a crisis mode and in a steady-state mode, and they are going to be very different. We have to understand this, and the new leadership that is needed must recognize these trends

because only by doing so is it going to get better results out of the process.

We see then two major trends, increasing bigness and complexity of organizations and tasks, and increasing independence of individuals within these organizations. One calls for a view of management which can be called matrix—or horizontal management (as distinct from pyramidal management), and the other calls for participatory (as distinct from authoritarian) management. We need a new term to describe both trends and attributes, perhaps something called "Multiplexed Management."

BETTER USE OF RESOURCES

In discussing the resource problem, I want to concentrate on three key aspects: the overall budgetary resources for national security, problems related to efficient use of R. & D. resources, and the issue of getting support from outside the national security establishment. Let me first comment on the overall budgetary resources for national security. The problem is one that we all know: budgets are getting incredibly tight. My own conviction is that the budget is already so tight that a great many poor decisions have to be made because of this, decisions which are intrinsically wasteful. One example which is so outstandingly obvious that it is painful relates to the production of hardware. It becomes very obvious that in almost every instance we produce the hardware not at the optimum rate in terms of cost per unit equipment, but at the rate that fits the budget, which is invariably a lower rate, fewer unit equipments per year, and which adds to the costs something like 20 percent to 50 percent per unit equipment.

The Unlearning Curve. We are not only not using the learning curve, we are on an *unlearning* curve. We have a forgetting curve built into the system, and we are paying for it in terms of considerable cost escalation. Because of the extremely tight budgets, it is very difficult to get realistic program cost projections. Everyone tries to shoehorn all the things he has to do into an inadequate budget. As a consequence, nearly all the estimates are understatements. This should not be surprising.

Another contributing factor, and it is a big one, is gold plating, the lack of austerity in the way in which we do things, in the way in which we build things, and the way in which we design things. And that is so in spite of all good intentions of the top management of the defense community to get away from gold plating. We are having great difficulty in doing this. One reason is probably that the people who, in fact, buy, order, set the specs, do not have real budgets, they do not really have to face up to the budget crunch. Their incentive system is still wrong. It still produces "the next stripe" even if the people come in with the fanciest technical solution rather than the cheapest.

Many of the students at the Naval War College are going to positions where they can do something about improving that process. It would help greatly to correct the incentive system of the procurement process. Look at every new program of your new organization, and if it is overly complicated or overly expensive, send it back with a very careful explanation to the people who proposed it. This explanation should consist of the following parts: (1) Explain what has gone wrong. (2) Explain why it is wrong. (We can't afford it.) (3) Make it very clear to the individual who is most responsible for the gold plating that if he ever does it again, that you will see to it that he will not be successful in his career. You may have to prove that you mean it; I hope you will.

The whole philosophy of "design to cost" is an attempt to cope with the gold plating problem, and I think it is

largely successful. There is one specific shortcoming in the way the policy is utilized, however, which I think must be fixed. There are two key elements in the design to cost. One is the acquisition cost and the other is the life cycle cost. Unless the buyer makes very clear which is more important to him, there is still too much maneuvering room in which to "play games." There is no precut answer as to which element is, in fact, the most important. In the real world it may not even matter very much which is picked, but better buys for the Government will undoubtedly result if you find a way to let all the potential suppliers know which you care most about.

The "R. & D. Cop-Out." I am sure you have heard about the national technology base and the problem of getting and keeping a strong base. I think that argument is essentially correct, the technology base does need strengthening. The problem, I wish to stress here, comes about later in the development cycle, just before production. At this stage it often happens that there is not enough money available for production, and it is decided to do a little bit more R. & D. because: "We can improve the product." The product may be ready, it would be usable if it were produced in its present form, but we cannot face up to a budget decision to buy large quantities, so back to the R. & D. we go. Of course, the problem is never articulated quite this way, but it seems to happen regularly. The gradual change in the ratio of procurement to R. & D., toward less and less procurement, shows how serious this problem has become.

A related issue is the great importance to buy hardware that is just good enough. Everyone would like to buy what is best, but the fact of the matter is that the country cannot afford it now nor in the foreseeable future. By the same token, however, we should be careful to never buy anything that is not good enough. We should also buy some things that are superb. I very much believe in the high/low mix, in almost everything, just as one does in normal life in terms of how one eats, what one drinks, et cetera.

Exploiting Leading Technologies. I would like to close the R. & D. discussion with the comment that we have not thought enough about what technologies we lead in, vis-a-vis, for example, the Soviet Union, and how best to exploit these. It is clear to me, for example, that currently we have a very strong lead in aerodynamics. Look at the current modern fighter aircraft that are available to us as options, the F14, F15, F16, the F17, and F18. All of those airplanes are really very splendid machines. The F16, 17, and 18 have provided very modern, quite economical machines that are probably unequaled right now. I think we ought to realize that we have advantages like this and exploit them. Another advantage which is very large and is likely to remain for at least 10 or 20 years that we have perhaps not exploited adequately is our computer technology, particularly the technology for small, hand-held computers. Another such "leading" technology is precision guidance for ordnance.

GETTING SUPPORT OUTSIDE THE DEFENSE COMMUNITY

Another major challenge has to do with getting support from outside the national security establishment. I think we all know now that we must get this kind of support or else the national security establishment will not be able to do its job. That calls for clearer objectives on our part, clearer policies, better articulated all the time, more professionalism, a national dialog which must be started about national security and which is in the process of being

started, new management styles which are brought to bear, and certainly more involvement of "outsiders" in the process of thinking through national security problems.

THE CHALLENGE FOR THE NAVAL WAR COLLEGE

The Naval War College can make outstanding contributions in some of the areas that have been described. Here you have a continuity of effort, and you have the quality and the style needed. You have professionalism here, which makes it possible to bring a wide variety of talent together in a variety of ways such as at this meeting, and in many other ways that you have found, to study the problems of management, to study the problems of technology and how to use it, to study Net Assessment and to learn how to do it and to use it, and to learn how to use war gaming as a tool. There is a tremendously exciting and challenging time ahead for all of us, and in particular for the Naval War College.

BIOGRAPHIC SUMMARY

Dr. Charles M. Herzfeld was born in Vienna, Austria, did his undergraduate work at the Catholic University of America, and received his Ph.D. in chemical physics from the University of Chicago. His long career in Government has included: Associate Director, U.S. Bureau of Standards; Director of the Ballistic Missile Defense, Advanced Research Projects Agency, Department of Defense; and Director of the Advanced Research Project Agency. Dr. Herzfeld left Government service in 1967 to become Technical Director, ITT Defense-Space Group, and in 1975 assumed his present position as Technical Director of ITT Aerospace, Electronics, Components and Energy Group. He is a member of several advisory groups, including the CNO Executive Paneal and the Defense Science Board.

NOTES

1. Daniel P. Moynihan, "The United States in Opposition," *Commentary*, March 1975, pp. 31-44.
2. A.I. Solzhenitsyn, "The Big Loser in the Third World War," *The New York Times*, 22 June 1975, p. E15-2.
3. A more detailed analysis, with a fairly well-balanced result, is given by M. Mesarovic and E. Pestel, *Mankind at the Turning Point* (New York: Dutton, 1974).
4. Harlan Cleveland, *The Future Executive* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972).
5. Moynihan.