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A Strategy for National Resilience Common Sense for the Common Good

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Resurrecting War Plan Blue with The Green New Deal

Nearly a century ago, in an era of great power competition, the United States developed a series of color-coded war plans to strategically explore hypothetical conflicts with a range of nations. Of these plans, the series of studies known as “Blue” examined the preparations the U.S. would need to make during peacetime in order to respond to, sustain and ultimately triumph in war, regardless of the adversary. Key to this plan was the ability to absorb initial contact, employ follow-on forces, sustain those forces, and, if necessary, mobilize the nation for an extended conflict.

A hundred years later, we find ourselves once again in an era of great power competition, encountering adversaries who may be approaching peer status with us, economically, technologically, or militarily. Unlike in WWII, the great ocean barriers no longer provide us the luxury of time and distance to organize once an extended major conflict begins. In the modern era of great power competition between technologically advanced nations, advance preparation is required - and may be the best deterrent to future war.

At the same time, we find ourselves beset by life-changing forces at home. COVID-19, the economic fissures it uncovered, a year of social unrest, and persistent evidence of climate change are challenging long-held assumptions behind our economic and civic structures.

So, what do the disruptions caused by COVID and the threats of near peer war have in common? Taken together, they constitute a **“Sputnik 2.0”** moment for America.

Sputnik 1.0 refers to 1957 Soviet Union launch of the first Sputnik satellite, a wake-up call that provoked an existential crisis. Ultimately, we responded with the Space Race – a large scale government, academic, and industry initiative which ushered in a generation of innovation, while promoting a renewed sense of civic pride and collective purpose, and sending a strong strategic deterrent message to our adversaries.

So, how might we respond to this new Sputnik moment? Participants in the Naval Postgraduate School’s recent innovation workshop *“Resurrecting War Plan Blue”* wrestled with this question and came up with a seemingly counter-intuitive response:

- What if the policies and investments we need to rebuild in the wake of COVID-19, to address economic and social tensions, and to get out in front of climate change, are not so different from the policies and investments we need to prepare for industrial, civic, and economic mobilization in the event of major war with a near-peer?
- What if the conventional wisdom – that social priorities and defense priorities are natural enemies in a zero-sum game – is wrong?
- Knowing this, what if partisan adherents on both sides of that debate could support the other side, while saving face with their own tribe?

Our working title for this approach is *“A Strategy for National Resilience – Common Sense for the Common Good”*. In the original Sputnik moment, we responded by mobilizing the nation’s science, engineering, and technology communities to launch the Space Race. And while the Space Race had a very public, civic minded purpose, it served a hidden, deterrent purpose as well. In a similar way, by strengthening the core values and policies already present in the Green New Deal with elements for national security, the *Strategy for National Resilience* addresses our peacetime need to rebuild in the aftermath Sputnik 2.0, while leveraging our recovery efforts to posture ourselves for any future large-scale mobilization in the event of war. Finally, the *Strategy for National Resilience* promises to stitch the fabric of our economy and society back together in a way that, should deterrence fail, we could pivot to mobilize in the event of war.

A Design Challenge for the Nation:

The *Strategy for National Resilience – Common Sense for the Common Good* is a whole-of-society and whole-of-government approach. It calls for imagination, collaboration and innovation in science, technology, civics, economics, and policy. It calls for engagement with stakeholders at every level, from individuals and communities, to small, medium and large enterprises. Finally, it calls for an approach based on the mindsets and skillsets of Design. While we are still in the framing phase of this design challenge, some early themes have emerged: nurturing the role of the citizen maker/producer, re-industrializing with agile and advanced manufacturing, bolstering the resilience and security of our infrastructure and utilities, fostering innovation at every level of education, and providing access to advanced skill acquisition for ages 17 through 77.

Call to Action:

Taking this concept to fruition requires mobilizing resources and gathering participants from every level of government, as well as from communities, academia, think tanks, non-profits, and industry, to continue the conversation and bring this strategy to life. We invite you to join us in this conversation, and we stand ready to engage when you accept the invitation.

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NOTE: This version was updated 2 March 2021 to include one of the five authors inadvertently omitted from the previously posted version.