Military U.S. Has A Personality Problem

By PAUL FINDLEY

Excerpts from a speech at the commencement of Lindenwood College, St. Charles, Missouri. The speaker is a Republican member of the House of Representatives for Illinois.

In one of his more moderate comments about our country Charles de Gaulle said, “The trouble with the United States is that it has no personality.” He was wrong, but his comment nevertheless acknowledged that nations have distinctive personalities.

The personality of the United States is undergoing some changes, some subtle, some not so subtle — and I fear, many of them disturbing.

Allow me a little reminiscing. When I entered college the United States had only a moderate appetite for military affairs. There was no military conscription. Our army and air force together numbered only 139,000 men.

The total military budget in 1939 was under $1.2 billion, and it represented only 13 percent of federal government spending. Our national interests, in the main, were peaceful.

America had a peaceful, noble image. It symbolized refuge, opportunity in a classless society, compassion, self-reliance, individualism.

The inscription on the Statue of Liberty really meant something. More than 40 million immigrants had come to these shores — not because their skills were needed here; rather, because the huddled masses yearned for opportunity and sought escape from oppression elsewhere. Our present immigration laws give preference to people whose skills we need.

Times have changed in other ways.

Today’s college students have never known a time without military conscription. Instead of an army of 139,000 men, today’s total is 3.5 million. Instead of $1.2 billion for military purposes, as was true when I was a high school senior in 1939, the annual outlay is about $50 billion.

In the 21 years since most of today’s seniors were born, the department of defence budget has grown from $10 billion to $80 billion. This is an eightfold increase while during that time the outlook for peace and national security — and for the advancement of human freedom, for that matter — has not grown apace, if at all.

Whereas, in my youth, America placed little emphasis on military affairs, the nation’s personality has shifted radically in the last 25 years. Now military life and planning and spending touch intimately and forcibly every family in the United States.

In my view, we place excessive reliance on military might. We have not exhibited the necessary restraint in using our power. Unfortunately, on occasions it has been used to support oppressive regimes, a support we have somehow justified in the name of national security and freedom.

Since the end of the Second World War, the United States has spent nearly a trillion dollars on military affairs, far more than on education, or anything else. The annual total keeps rising, not receding.

When talk in Washington centres on that happy day when the Vietnam war is over, military experts caution us that the outlay cannot be diminished much, if at all.

Our navy is becoming obsolete, falling behind the Soviet Union in important respects. The same is true in all ranges of armaments, from small arms, vehicles and automatic cannon to super weapons.
President Nixon talks optimistically about ending the draft but the forces for maintaining it are formidable.

Two years ago I joined a group of Congressmen in proposing an all-volunteer army, or end to the draft. The next day I received a telephone call from a vice-admiral I had never met, or heard of, for that matter.

That I had not heard of him should not be surprising, because the U.S. has about 1,000 generals and admirals on active duty.

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YOU WILL BE ASTONISHED, AS I WAS, to learn that the admiral called to congratulate me on my proposal.

He said, "The sooner we get rid of the draft the better. I've always believed a large standing army to be a mistake. If we keep a big one, we will always find something for it to do."

In my youth, America was the mecca of European young men who sought citizenship here partly to avoid military conscription. Now young men from America go to Canada for the same reason. In doing so they reject the argument that armed power and the drafting of young men to fight far away are essential to the maintenance of our free way of life.

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WHAT TROUBLES ME IS THIS: AS WE attempt to restrain the spread of totalitarianism abroad, what effect will this have on our democratic institutions?

I don't fear or object to the monetary outlay for military affairs, immense as it is. A society of 200 million people that yields a gross national product of nearly $800 billion a year can afford almost anything that is worthwhile. What I fear is the long-term impact of militarism on our national life and its institutions.

Think of it! A thousand generals and admirals trying to find something to do to justify their existence; giant industrial complexes which can survive only if the United States keeps pressing relentlessly on a militaristic course?

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ALL OF THIS CONSTITUTES A LOBBY- ing force beyond anything the world has previously known, whose impact upon Congress should never be overlooked or underestimated.

It is no wonder that unrest and uneasiness are widespread on campuses and elsewhere. It is no wonder that ROTC and local draft boards have come under attack as the most visible symbols of the threat of the military to our young people.

The bitter experience of Vietnam has proved beyond any doubt that the United States cannot and will not be the world policeman. Yet the emphasis on militarism continues undiminished.

America stands in great need of a new quest for a worthy personality, because the one that we outwardly display today is strange and uncomfortable and ominous.
America's Changed Personality

Change Is From a Peaceful Mecca to World Policemen in 30 Years

Excerpts From an Address by
Rep. Paul Findley (Rep., Ill.)

(Representative Findley spoke at the Lindeman College commencement in St. Charles.)

In one of his more moderate comments about our country Charles de Gaulle said, "The trouble with the United States is that it has no personality." He was wrong, but his comment nevertheless acknowledges that nations have distinctive personalities.

The personality of the United States is undergoing some changes, some subtle, some not so subtle — and I fear, many of them disturbing.

Allow me a little reminiscing. When I entered college the United States had only a moderate appetite for military affairs. There was no military conscription. Our Army and Air Force together numbered only 130,000 men. The total military budget in 1939 was under $4.2 billion, and it represented only 10 per cent of the gross national product.

The Mirror of Public Opinion

Federal Government spending. Our national interests, in the main, were peaceful.

America had a peaceful, noble image. It symbolized a refuge, opportunity in a classless society, compassion, self-reliance, individualism. The inscription on the Statue of Liberty really meant something. More than 46 million immigrants had come to these shores — not because their skills were needed here; rather, because the huddled masses yearned for opportunity and sought escape from oppression elsewhere. Our present immigration laws give preference to people whose skills we need.

Times have changed in other ways. Today's college students have never known a time without military conscription. Instead of an army of 130,000 men, today's total is 3.5 million. Instead of $4.2 billion for military purposes, as was true when I was a high school senior in 1939, the annual outlay is about $59 billion. In the 21 years since most of today's seniors were born, the Department of Defense budget has grown from $1 billion to $59 billion. This is an eightfold increase while during that time the outlook for peace and national security — and for the advancement of human freedom, for that matter — has not grown sparse, if at all.

Whereas, in my youth, America placed little emphasis on military affairs, the nation's personality has shifted radically in the last 25 years. Now military life and planning and spending touch intimately a vast and formidable complex of energy that used to be the United States only in name.

In my view, we place excessive reliance on military might. We have not exhibited the necessary restraint in using our power. Unfortunately, on occasions it has been used to support oppression, a support we have somehow justified in the name of national security and freedom.

Since the end of World War II, the United States has spent nearly a trillion dollars on military affairs, far more than on education, or anything else. The annual total keeps rising, not receding. When talk in Washington centers on that happy day when the Vietnam war is over, military experts caution us that the outlaw cannot be diminished much, if at all, by anything the world has previously known, behind the Soviet Union in important respects. The same is true in all ranges of armaments, from small arms, vehicles and automatic canons to super weapons.

President Nixon talks optimistically about ending the war, but the force for military growth is formidable. Two years ago I joined a group of Congressmen in proposing an all-volunteer army, or end to the draft. The next day I received a telephone call from a Vice-President. I never heard of, or for that matter, that I had not heard of him should not be surprising, because the U.S. has about 1000 generals and admirals on active duty. You will be astonished, as I was, to learn that the Army is the most powerful man in the country.

He said, "The sooner we get rid of the draft the better. I've always believed a large standing army to be a mistake. If we keep a big one, we will always find something for it to do."

The world today, his answer, was the mecca of Europe — an young men who sought citizenship here partly to avoid military conscription. Now young men from America go to Canada for the same reason. In doing so they reject the argument that armed power and the drafting of young men to fight far away are essential to the maintenance of our free way of life.

What troubles me is this. As was stated, to restrain the spread of totalitarianism abroad, what effect will this have on our democratic institutions? I don't fear or object to the monopoly outlay for military affairs, immense as it is. A society of 200 million people that yields a gross national product of nearly $200 billion a year can afford almost anything that is worthwhile. What I fear is the long-term impact of militarism on our national life and its institutions. Think of it! A thousand generals and admirals trying to find something to do to justify their existence; giant industrial complexes which can survive only if the United States keeps pressing relentlessly on a militaristic course.

All of this constitutes a lobbying force beyond anything the world has previously known, whose impact upon Congress should never be overlooked or underestimated.

It is no wonder that unrest and uneasiness are widespread on campuses and elsewhere. It is wonder that ROTC and local draft-boards have come under attack as the most visible symbols of the threat of the military to our young people. The bitter experience of Vietnam has proved beyond any doubt the truth of these words, and it is not the world policeman. Yet the emphasis on militarism continues undiminished.

America stands in great need of a new quest for a worthy personality, because the one that we outwardly display today is strange and uncomfortable and ominous.

The World's Largest Standing Army