



HONOLULU INTERNATIONAL FORUM

MIOP SPEECH

TUESDAY, 01 JULY 2014



GENERAL MARTIN E. DEMPSEY

~16 min
(2125 words)
Page 1 of 10
V 18

Good afternoon! I'm delighted to be here with you at the Honolulu International Forum.

For more than forty years this group has been taking the long view ... looking beyond the urgent ... and bringing together great minds to think through the intersection between ideas and policy for the benefit of the region.

As the Asia-Pacific continues its remarkable rise, it will only become more important for us to gather and discuss the security challenges that will shape this region's future ... and also that of the world.

I also took note that this forum was established in 1975, the year after I graduated from West Point. Looking around, I can't tell who's aged better, you or me ...

As you know, the Rim of the Pacific exercise is currently underway around the islands. RIMPAC is the world's largest maritime exercise with 22 participating nations to include China and Brunei for the first time. There are 47 ships, 6 submarines, more than 200 aircraft, and roughly 25,000 personnel involved in the exercise.

Over the next few weeks, these multi-national forces will build relationships, enhance interoperability, and increase proficiency across a broad mission set ... including everything from live-fire exercises to humanitarian assistance and disaster relief.

RIMPAC – with its full spectrum of operations – is a fitting backdrop for us to consider the greater implications of the global security environment ... and how it requires us to think broadly about the way we apply the military instrument of power.

The U.S. military today is the most powerful, versatile, and sophisticated in our history. It's one of the most flexible and adaptable tools available to our Nation's elected leaders. And it has to be – to address the complex world in which we live.

We shape behavior simply by our presence. We can bolster a diplomatic initiative, support a partner, or deter an adversary. We can share intelligence, sustain reconnaissance, and provide security. We can bring humanitarian support and medical care – as we did when Typhoon Haiyan struck the Philippines last year.

Our broad array of capabilities is necessary, because every situation, every region, and every crisis we face is different. Many are linked, but each one requires a unique and nuanced approach.

In my role as principle military advisor to the President and the Secretary of Defense, I must articulate how the military instrument can be used to provide options and to achieve outcomes that support and protect our national interests.

More specifically, I must be clear about what effects our military can or cannot achieve. And I must represent how fast we can do it, for how long, at what risk, and with what opportunity costs.

More abstractly, I must also consider how our military action or inaction contributes to – or detracts from – another important instrument of power ... America's power of emulation.

As you may recall, on this day 23 years ago in 1991, the Warsaw Pact was officially dissolved at a meeting in Prague. NATO's counter-weight was no more. Several members of the Pact turned to and became members of NATO ... some formed another collective security agreement with what is now the Russian Federation.

In any case, what was hailed as a triumph of the West actually turned a well-defined balance of power into something far more ambiguous. The security environment changed in ways we realized ... and in ways we did not. It was a first step into a more complex world.

Let me briefly review some of the challenges we now see across the globe ...

Starting here in the Pacific, we see a rising Tide of Nationalism. The power of nation-states is increasing as national sentiments coalesce. Assertive territorial disputes are sparking an increase in tension and creating greater chances for miscalculation.

The Asia-Pacific is poised to be the economic engine of the 21st Century. Traditional power-on-power relationships will shape the region and ultimately determine if it achieves its potential.

By contrast, in the Middle East and North Africa, the Tide of Nationalism is receding at a remarkable rate. We see the norms of state-hood being superseded by centuries-old religious, ethnic, and tribal tensions.

As the region wobbles along a fault line extending from Beirut to Damascus to Baghdad, state power continues to ebb. In this environment, the traditional use of military power rarely yields expected effects. Finding effective ways to deal with this paradox is one of the many challenges before us.

Europe appears to be at a slack-tide – with a desire for greater unity on one hand, and an instinct for national self-interest on the other.

As the European Union and NATO face transnational, extremist threats along their Southern flank, Russia flexes its might and stokes ethnic impulses along Europe's Eastern periphery.

Russia is employing a tactic of proximate coercion. They're using non-traditional military groups, cyber-space, and the threat of conventional force to subvert and misinform to achieve their objectives.

Indeed, Europe is approaching an inflection point where decisions to follow either collective or individual interests could transform the region into a very dangerous operational theater.

At the same time, power continues to diffuse below and beyond the state. Terrorist groups and other non-state actors possess unprecedented ability to inflict harm. Rogue regimes continue the pursuit of weapons of mass destruction. And cyber is the fastest growing, the least understood, and potentially the most perilous factor that connects us all. We must continue to aggressively learn and understand how it affects all of our instruments of power.

At the nexus of these complex and differing environments is the growing interconnectedness of all regions through technology and trade. It's almost impossible to isolate the turmoil in one region from creating effects on the others.

It's in this complicated context that the military provides options – in concert with the other instruments of power – to affect outcomes to secure our national interests. These outcomes can be thought of in two broad bins: *insurance* and *assurance*.

First and always, our military is America's *insurance* policy. Our most fundamental task is to protect the homeland and our citizens. We keep the nation immune from coercion.

We must stand ready to take *direct combat action* when asked – at any time, in any place, against any adversary. This is what the American people expect. We will continue to organize, train, and equip our forces principally to serve this purpose.

Our adversaries rightly fear our dominance in the air, on the ground, and from the sea. When all of our military options are on the table, our ability to change the course of events is indisputably superior to any other.

Even as our force gets smaller, we will ensure it maintains our most vital capabilities ... and that it stays the best trained, the best equipped, and the most versatile in world.

Our military instrument is also used to *assure* our allies and partners—to reinforce an international order characterized by the free flow of commerce, open access to the global commons, and absence of great-power conflict. The U.S. military largely underwrites this order through our ability to sustain sufficient, credible combat power – forward ... and through our ability to project power.

Today's security environment presents more *assurance* than *insurance* challenges. We don't face an imminent or likely existential threat—our ability to *insure* America is not at risk.

However, our allies and partners are seeking *assurances* ... *our* assurances.

I've spent the better part of the past several weeks in engagements around the world ...Afghanistan, NATO, UAE and Saudi Arabia, Singapore, and the UK. In every case, in every theater, there's a growing demand for our assurances against an increasing number of threats. There's an increasing appetite for our leadership to help maintain the international order.

Frankly, our ability to provide this assurance is at risk due to a growing deficit between supply and demand. It's necessary that we make wise decisions about where and how we apply our military power.

Each action now comes with greater opportunity cost ... that is, the trade-off of another action somewhere else due to constrained resources. Each choice requires us to assess – and accept – increasing degrees of risk with eyes wide open.

The supply-demand imbalance demands that we bring our military instrument of power back into balance. We must seize more efficient and innovative ways to use military force to appropriate effect. How we lead at this strategic inflection point is just as important as the military capabilities we provide.

First, we must become more *agile* in how we employ our forces. A smaller force needs to move more quickly and be able to aggregate and disaggregate more efficiently in order to shape and deter.

We're working to become more joint and more interdependent both within our own Services and with our closest allies. We're adapting our Global Force Management process – the way we distribute the force and manage readiness – to become more predictable for our allies and more confusing to our potential adversaries. Our presence across the globe will be dynamic and purpose built.

Second, we must expand our understanding of and approach to *building partner capacity* beyond the current norm of bi-lateral operations. The security environment demands greater emphasis on regional and multi-lateral approaches. This will create not only a higher degree of legitimacy, but also allow us to leverage the skills and knowledge of partners to our collective advantage.

At the same time, an important lesson of our recent wars is that building partnership capacity requires time and a *credible partner*.

Our partners must demonstrate leadership with legitimate ambitions and goals for sustaining economic development, building institutions, and fostering inclusiveness. When time, patience, and investment come together *and* stay together, we do make a difference.

Partnering is a hallmark of the U.S. military ... and it will be even more important tomorrow than it is today. It enhances our allies' and partners' strength as it reduces our own risk. It also increases the net contributors to our collective international security and shapes outcomes toward our shared future.

Our relationships in the Asia-Pacific are a prime example. For more than 60 years, our alliances with Japan and South Korea have been the foundation of peace and prosperity in the region.

Earlier today, I met with my Japanese and South Korean counterparts to discuss the common threat of North Korea. This was the first time in history that the Chiefs of Defense from our three countries have met together in this context.

This sort of trilateral engagement reflects our commitment to come together and leverage converging interests. And it illuminates a future path, a path where partnerships can evolve through persistent engagement ... from building capacity to sharing responsibility.

Third, and underpinning everything we do, we must continue to build *trust* as the most important and most powerful component of the military instrument of power.

Gaining trust takes time, and losing it can happen almost in an instant. Sustaining trust may be the most difficult, yet the most important objective ... and it's a two-way street.

Fostering trust belongs to all-hands, from our most senior leaders to our newest recruits. Trust is the foundation of the military profession. It's the glue of our partnerships. And it shapes the security environment.

No matter whether we're fighting together or training together, we're building relationships. Every day, in big and small ways, we're building trust. And we do it exceptionally well.

Relationships of trust remain paramount to the Asia-Pacific. That's why sustained mil-to-mil engagements and exercises like RIMPAC – to bring it back where I started – are important to strengthen the bonds for our shared future.

To close, I want to be clear what the military instrument of power is and what it isn't.

The military instrument of power is the *insurance* policy which underwrites our freedoms and safeguards America's interests. It will continue to *assure* an international order which values security and prosperity.

Our military is one instrument of American power, but it is *not* the only one. The military instrument of power must be used in concert with our other instruments in order to achieve our goals.

The decisions on whether, how, and when to use military power are some of the most important and the most fateful we can make.

When called – our military stands ready to preserve and promote the Nation's interests. Our men and women in uniform will ensure we stay the most powerful military in history.

Our people are – and always will be – our greatest strength. I'm fully confident that our future leaders will think and innovate as we seek to turn today's challenges into tomorrow's opportunities.

Our men and women in uniform continue to amaze me ... and they represent our Nation in an exceptional manner. I'm enormously proud to serve with them.