

Event Backgrounder:

Defense Policy for an Era of Shifting Priorities and Constrained Resources

From time to time, MCFR will present extended discussions in preparation or follow-up to its programs. The following opens a discussion of national defense strategy and budget issues that will begin with the presentation of defense scholar Richard Kohn on May 20.

Defense Policy in Ferment: With the end of the Iraq and Afgan wars now in sight and the Cold War long behind, U.S. strategic thinkers see a new set of global priorities. These include meeting the strategic challenge of China as a military as well as economic force, sustaining containment of nuclear proliferation by Iran and elsewhere, and continuing defense of the high seas and “global economic commons.” The need to deter nuclear war, repel land invasions or engage in regime changing occupations seems to be long past. Most defense officials and analysts seem to accept that this more benign environment offers a respite from the need to maintain the 46% higher level of military expenditure since 2001. Moreover, the fierce budget stalemate budget has now put defense spending cuts on the table. Recent polls show the general public to favors even greater cuts than those under discussion in Washington, and a large majority supports less active international involvement.

Our speaker, defense expert Richard Kohn, will share his views on the future course at MCFR’s May 20 meeting. As he puts the situation: “[Defense leaders] face a challenge unseen in a generation or more: a cutback funding large enough to call into question policy, strategy and force structure—in effect the purpose—underlying the whole military establishment.”

Richard Kohn’s has shared with us his forthcoming article in Joint Forces Quarterly titled, “Improving National Defense in an Age of Austerity.” As student of military leadership and its relations to civilian leadership, he focused on the kind of military leadership that can look beyond current equipment and readiness to envision the needs for new challenges before the next crisis. He finds that the record has not been good, from between the great wars to Iraq. He major changes in preparing the human resources for the new military world ahead.

Read [Beyond Sequester: Improving National Defense in an Age of Austerity](http://mcf.wildapricot.org/Resources/Documents/2013-05-20%20Krepinevich%20FA%20Shift%20Strat%20for%20Austerity%201211.pdf)
(<http://mcf.wildapricot.org/Resources/Documents/2013-05-20 Krepinevich FA Shift Strat for Austerity 1211.pdf>)

Formulating a New National Security Model: Policy makers and defense analysts are intensely debating a revised national defense strategy. The key axis is whether to struggle to maintain current world-wide commitments, or pursue “politically feasible defense” which would narrow objectives to focus on new priority threats with real reductions in capability. We have shared two formulations of these alternatives:

- "Lean Forward: In Defense of American Engagement," by Brooks, Ikenberry and Wohlforth, from *Foreign Affairs*, argues that American commitments are sustainable even with somewhat reduced resources, and that engagement is essential to maintaining world as we know it.

Read [*Lean Forward: In Defense of American Engagement*](#)

([http://mcfcr.wildapricot.org/Resources/Documents/2013-05-20 Brooks Ikenberry FA Stay Engaged 1301.pdf](http://mcfcr.wildapricot.org/Resources/Documents/2013-05-20%20Brooks%20Ikenberry%20FA%20Stay%20Engaged%201301.pdf))

- "A Strategy for a Time of Austerity," by Andrew Krepinovich from *Foreign Affairs* argues that reduced force and ground deployments are needed to create resources for new challenges.

Read [*Strategy in a Time of Austerity: Why the Pentagon Should Focus on Assuring Access*](#)

([http://mcfcr.wildapricot.org/Resources/Documents/2013-05-20 Krepinevich FA Shift Strat for Austerity 1211.pdf](http://mcfcr.wildapricot.org/Resources/Documents/2013-05-20%20Krepinevich%20FA%20Shift%20Strat%20for%20Austerity%201211.pdf))

Defense Reduction Proposals: the Administration has already built in \$487 billion in cuts into its ten year budget plan and this year the military is scrambling to adjust to the \$42 billion "Sequester" of this year's expenditures. But analysts criticize the Administration's 2014 request for \$620 billion for failing to point the way for the large changes needed. The "usual suspects" for reduction include major weapons systems (over-budget F35 fighter, further tank production), strategic nuclear forces (a reduction from 1,833 deployed nuclear weapons and missile defense systems), and cuts in Army and Marine force levels from 12 to 30 percent. We share below some of the many authoritative suggestions for major reductions.

- The Center for American Progress Brief get specific about \$100 Billion "responsible" and quick cuts such as the F35 fighter to deployed nuclear missiles to the defense health care plan. .

<http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/military/report/2012/12/06/47106/hundred-billion-in-politically-feasible-defense-cuts-for-a-budget-deal/>

- MCFR speaker in 2011, T.X. Hemes of the National Defense University writes in *Infinity Journal* that the military needs to think realistically and creatively during periods of limited resources.

https://www.infinityjournal.com/article/19/Limited_means_strategy_What_to_do_when_the_cupboard_is_bare/

- Cuts in the Marine Corps seem to be part of every economy menu, but Marine officer Lloyd Freeman proposes a new mission statement to establish the Corps value in a radically changed military environment. He terms it, "a special operations force that functions in a sustained combat mode."

http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2013/03/26/can_the_marines_survive

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