FORWARD PRESENCE AND THE SEARCH FOR PEACETIME INFLUENCE

FULLENKAMP, BERNARD H., LT COL, U.S. AIR FORCE

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Abstract of
FORWARD PRESENCE AND THE SEARCH FOR PEACETIME INFLUENCE

Within the search for peacetime influence, forward presence has gained a new preeminence among the elements of U.S. National Defense Strategy. The proactive nature of forward presence makes it conceptually well suited to seize current opportunities and therefore influence the shape of the future international security environment. The shift in U.S. National Security Strategy, from containment to enlargement, will force a conceptual shift in what forward presence is asked to do and therefore, how forward presence is done. Promoting peace, democracy, and prosperity are new challenges that will force a departure from the "gunboat" diplomacy aspects of the Cold War. New methods of conducting forward presence feature engagement, prevention, and partnerships through programs such as nation assistance. The nontraditional aspects of these new methods will, in turn, raise issues which have implications for peacetime employment, force structure, and military training. The strategic importance of forward presence is its relationship to current and future U.S. interests. Currently the United States is in a unique position of trusted world leadership. The longevity of that role is dependent, in part, on how the issue of forward presence is handled. Ultimately, peacetime influence is gained through the totality of all elements of national power: economic, diplomatic, and military. Within the military element, forward presence offers much promise to gain long-term peacetime influence in the accomplishment of national objectives.
FORWARD PRESENCE AND THE SEARCH FOR PEACETIME INFLUENCE

by

Bernard H. Fullenkamp
Lieutenant Colonel, USAF

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Signature:  

16 May 1994

Paper directed by Captain D. Watson
Chairman, Department of Military Operations
Professor Roger W. Barnett, Senior SBCNAV Research Fellow

Approved by:

Faculty Research Advisor  Date
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objectives.
PREFACE

The intent of this paper is to discuss the new preeminence of forward presence as an element of U.S. National Security Strategy. Implications from issues raised within this paper could easily degenerate into a roles, missions, and resources fight between the U.S. military services. Different readers, who may agree with my thesis, may also draw different implications dependent upon their service perspective or bias. I for one, am excited about the implications for expanded use of aerospace power, especially the nonlethal power provided by the Air Force's Air Mobility Command. However, the intent of this paper is not to advocate buying more Navy equipment or using more Air Force assets, but rather to make a point about forward presence and influence in a post-Cold War world. I will leave to another time and paper which service should win the resource fight and hope that this paper serves as a catalyst for thought regardless of service perspective.
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FORWARD PRESENCE AND THE SEARCH FOR PEACETIME INFLUENCE

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Within the search for peacetime influence, forward presence has gained a new preeminence among the elements of U.S. National Defense Strategy. The proactive nature of forward presence makes it conceptually well suited to seize current opportunities and therefore influence the shape of the future international security environment.

The end of the Cold War saw a shift in U.S. national security strategy from containment to a strategy deemed more appropriate for the new post-Cold War world. This new world has both opportunities and challenges. The opportunities stem from possibilities to promote peace and democracy as well as pursue economic progress at home and abroad. Many of the challenges are centered in regional instabilities that threaten both peace and prosperity. The current National Security Strategy and complementary National Military Strategy present four fundamental elements: strategic deterrence and defense, forward presence, crisis response and reconstitution. All four elements are designed to deal with the challenges. However, by virtue of its proactive versus reactive nature, forward presence holds the preeminent peacetime role to seize opportunities and therefore influence the shape of the future international security environment.

To support this thesis, this paper will first discuss how the concept of presence has changed with the passing of the Cold War. This discussion will
note that recent historical attitudes and applications of forward presence were directly related to the U.S. strategy of containment. The strategy of containment spawned a "gunboat" diplomacy flavor to U.S. forward presence and literally saw force structure to support that strategy. The passing of the Cold War has seen a shift in National Security Strategy to one which is exploring ideas such as "enlargement". The shift in strategy will force a conceptual shift in what forward presence is asked to do and therefore how forward presence is done.

Following the conceptual discussion, the focus will shift to an examination of current issues related to how forward presence is done. This examination is intended to highlight or illustrate the various problems and discoveries as the United States transitions to post-Cold War forward presence. This section will look at questions such as: How is the success of forward presence measured? What military situations or movements create presence? Does presence need to be visible to be effective? If presence or the perception of presence is in the eye of the beholder, how does one read the mind of the beholder? And finally, Can forward presence be a trap, providing proximity when intervention might not be in the United States' best interest?

The current issues section will conclude by summarizing some of the implications of a conceptual shift in how forward presence is done. At a minimum, force structure, peacetime employment, and training issues top the list of implications. It will not be the intent of this summary to follow each implication to its particular conclusion, but rather, to note that a conceptual change in forward presence can have significant implications for these areas.

The strategic importance of forward presence is its relationship to current and future U.S. interests. Currently the United States is in a unique position of
trusted world leadership. The longevity of that role is dependent, in part, on how the issue of forward presence is handled. Understanding the concepts and changes are a starting point to break the old paradigms and improve the effectiveness of U.S. forward presence at the strategic, operational, and tactical level. The closing lines of the "new" National Security Strategy emphasize the change in strategy, the rare opportunities available, and the unique role the United States can play.

In his farewell address in January, 1953, Harry Truman predicted the collapse of Communism. "I have a deep and abiding faith in the destiny of free men," he said. "With patience and courage, we shall some day move on into a new era."

Now that era is upon us. It is a moment of unparalleled opportunity. We have the blessing of living in the world's most powerful and respected nation at a time when the world is embracing our ideals as never before. We will not let this moment slip away. We must mobilize our nation in order to enlarge democracy, enlarge markets and enlarge our future. Ultimately, peacetime influence is gained through the totality of all elements of national power: economic, diplomatic, and military. Within the military element, forward presence offers much promise to gain long-term peacetime influence in the accomplishment of national objectives.
CHAPTER II

THE CHANGING CONCEPT OF PRESENCE

Containment and Gunboat Diplomacy. Historical attitudes and applications of forward presence were directly related to the U.S. strategy of containment. Initially, the strategy of containment sought to control or preferably halt the expansion of Soviet power into central and western Europe. In the bipolar world of the Cold War, virtually any Soviet move to expand influence warranted a U.S. response. This need to respond or counter each Soviet move was often answered by the forward presence and crisis response capability of the U.S. Navy.

Other than the U.S. ground forces based in or near Korea and Europe, the containment-driven forward presence generally became the responsibility of the U.S. Navy. The often quoted Blechman and Kaplan study certainly documents the use and predominant reliance on naval forces for both forward presence and crisis response. A paradigm prevalent within U.S. government and military circles is that when U.S. military forward presence is needed, the first question often asked is, "Where is the nearest carrier?" This perception has been forged by over 40 years of containment strategy.

The strategy of containment spawned a gunboat diplomacy flavor to U.S. forward presence and literally saw force structure to support that strategy. The carrier battle group (CVBG) is the modern equivalent to the gunboat envisioned by proponents of "gunboat" diplomacy. The carrier was also the centerpiece of the U.S. Maritime Strategy of the 1980's. The U.S. Maritime strategy was: Blue
water, Soviet focused, and it called for constant presence in the Mediterranean, Indian, and Pacific Oceans.

**A New National Security Strategy.** The end of the Cold War saw a shift in U.S. national security strategy from containment to a strategy deemed more appropriate for the new post-Cold War world. President Bush, in his 1993 version of the National Security Strategy, characterized this new world as one "that holds great opportunities ---- but also great dangers." He characterized the opportunities as historic possibilities to promote peace and democracy as well as pursue economic progress at home and abroad. President Bush framed the challenges to be centered in regional instabilities that potentially threatened both peace and prosperity. In his defense agenda, he asserted that the United States has a legacy and mandate to maintain security through strength, and relabeled U.S. military strategy from containment to a new regional defense strategy.

The current U.S. administration has yet to formally publish a new National Security Strategy. However, President Clinton has in general terms echoed the words of President Bush on this subject. Draft copies of the new National Security Strategy change some of the semantics, but the tone and tenor seem to reinforce the conceptual change from containment, to a strategy coined as "enlargement". The concept of enlargement embodies a comprehensive strategy of engagement, prevention, and partnership. To simply label current U.S. strategy as "enlargement", ignores the full blown process by which national security strategy takes form. However, so as not to digress into trying to label U.S. strategy with one word, the term "enlargement" within this paper intends
to communicate all those concepts partially described as engagement, prevention, and partnership.

What Forward Presence is Asked to Do. The conceptual shift in strategy will also force a conceptual shift in what forward presence is asked to do. Unlike some of the other elements of military strategy such as-- deterrence and defense or crisis response-- forward presence offers a wider range of possibilities to be proactive versus reactive. In this sense, proactive means preemptive, using the proverbial "ounce of prevention" vice the "pound of cure" needed, if prevention had not been attempted. Deterrence remains the primary and central motivating purpose underlying U.S. national military strategy. But, the changes in real threat coupled with the broadening of U.S. objectives make the forward presence element of military strategy the focal point for military actions to contribute to peacetime influence. The current opportunities to shape the world environment are very possibly unique to this point in history. The goal of forward presence is influence which can shape the future concept of conflict. If U.S. presence can exert the necessary influence it may be able to change how nations view conflict. The United States, with the passage of time, has the opportunity to change national behavior to produce a more stable international climate and thus decrease the possibility of a Major Regional Conflict (MRC). The focus on using the forward presence element of military strategy for peacetime influence is what separates future forward presence operations from those conducted during the Cold War. During the Cold War, military forward presence was tasked to do a variety of missions but all other missions were
subordinate to the task of containment. From a superficial perspective, many future forward presence operations will look very much like they did during the Cold War days. However, without the containment motive, the reasons for those operations will be very much different. Knowing why an operation is being conducted generally heightens the chances of accomplishing the desired objective. As the United States continues routine overseas operations or begins new non-traditional operations, the questions need to be asked, why is the operation being conducted and what is the objective. Without answers to these questions, the temptation will be to continue to do forward presence the way it has always been done.

Coercive "gunboat" diplomacy is generally outdated and does not match current U.S. goals and objectives. Particularly on the more peaceful side of the spectrum new methods are needed to transmit the message that the United States cares. Promoting peace, democracy, and prosperity are certainly easier said than done, but knowing what the United States wants forward presence to do is the first step toward answering how it should be done.
CHAPTER III

HOW FORWARD PRESENCE IS DONE

Forward presence falls within the general category of military operations labeled as Operations Other Than War (OOTW). Within the OOTW category, a full spectrum of conflict is represented short of actual war. The focus of this paper is forward presence and peacetime influence. For that reason, this discussion will restrict itself to the lower end (peaceful side) of the spectrum. It is generally recognized that toward the high end of the spectrum the nature of forward presence changes so as to facilitate crisis response.

Measuring the Effectiveness of Presence. The 1977 Blechman and Kaplan study was by its own admission, the first study to present a systematic compilation of where, when, and how the United States had used its armed forces for political objectives. The study is often quoted to demonstrate the extent naval forces were used in that role. The study observed that during the post-WWII period, the United States turned most often to the U.S. Navy, noting that naval units participated in more than four out of every five incidents. But Blechman’s and Kaplan’s intent went well beyond a simple numeric count and they had the question of utility or effectiveness at the heart of their study.

Blechman and Kaplan deduced that four main factors seemed to influence the relative success or failure of armed forces in pursuit of political objectives. Those factors were: the nature of the United States’ objectives, the context of the incident, activity by the Soviet Union, and the type and activity of the U.S.
military forces which became involved. Although the observations made relative to objectives, context, and Soviet activity are interesting, the passing of the Cold War and the subsequent change in U.S. strategy make some of those observations less relevant today. Those observations made relative to the type and activity of U.S. military forces involved, may however be able to bridge that gap, and serve to illustrate some aspects of how forward presence should be done.

Blechman and Kaplan made two major observations relative to the size, activity, and type of military forces used in forward presence operations. In the first observation they concluded:

> It is evident that the firmer the commitment implied by the military operation itself, the more likely that the outcome of the situation would be positive. Thus, for example, forces actually emplaced on foreign soil tended to be more frequently associated with positive outcomes than were naval forces. Naval forces, after all, could be withdrawn just as easily as they could be moved toward the disturbed area.

Within this first observation the study notes that land-based aircraft were frequently associated with positive outcomes and that the greater mobility of modern aircraft may allow more participation than had been the case historically. They also note that "Outcomes were more often favorable when the armed forces involved actually did something, rather than merely emphasized their potential capability to intervene by establishing a presence near the scene." 

The second major observation pertained to the size of the armed forces involved in each incident. Their findings showed a higher success rate with smaller sized operations. The finding, by their own admission is ambiguous because they were unable to correlate whether the larger forces simply had
more difficult objectives and thus less success, or whether the success rate for smaller operations could be attributed to other factors.

It would be inaccurate to superimpose Blechman’s and Kaplan’s findings directly on modern forward presence operations. As previously mentioned, the passing of the Cold War and subsequent changes do pose questions of relevance. A related additional inaccuracy may stem from the part of the OOTW spectrum which was addressed by the study. Due to the Cold War and associated U.S. objectives, the Blechman and Kaplan study worked the higher end of the spectrum nearer to crisis response. Most of the observations in this paper are intended to focus on the lower end (more peaceful) forward presence operations. Even with the above caveats, the Blechman and Kaplan findings do provide some insight. Their findings call into question some often held attitudes on forward presence such as: naval effectiveness in forward presence, bigger always being better, and the value of presence near the scene without doing something productive.

More current researchers beyond Blechman and Kaplan have struggled with attempts at measuring the success of presence. It is an understatement to say that to measure the effectiveness of forward presence is difficult. When the totality of all national elements of power are applied over the long-term to promote peace, democracy, and prosperity, it is hard to establish direct cause and effect. With the interdependence of the modern world it is difficult to separate which element—economic, political, or military—may have been responsible for a particular desired outcome. Some attempts to measure forward presence can result in an “attempt to prove the negative” wherein effort is spent trying to prove what didn’t cause the effect. Other attempts to
measure forward presence can result in a "null hypothesis" wherein research cannot prove a correlation between forward presence and success in reaching a desired objective.  

**Creating Presence.** Historically, beyond theater-specific forward basing, the majority of the forward presence mission has been relegated to the U.S. Navy. The Blechman and Kaplan study, which is often quoted by those wishing to validate naval effectiveness in the forward presence role, can be a double-edged sword. The study can be viewed to document the self-fulfilling prophecy on the frequency of naval use and conclude, on balance, that naval use was often ineffective relative to land-based ground or air forces. This is not to say that naval forces are not useful but rather that the pattern of use became habitual regardless of the effectiveness in achieving the desired objective.

Today, when the question is asked: What military situations or movements create presence?, the answer may be even more complex. With the changes in strategy that ask military forces to pursue the abstract objectives of promoting peace, democracy, and prosperity, how those forces do forward presence will change. The first general guidance is to view presence or the perception of presence from the eye of the beholder and to avoid the mirror imaging of looking at what would affect the United States. A country will generally act in its own best interest and therefore it will be necessary to view forward presence operations from the host country perspective.

There have been some innovations as to how forward presence is done. For example, the U.S. Army has begun a "nation assistance" program that is being successfully facilitated by the Air Force's mobility assets. The U.S. Navy is
transitioning from its Cold War mode of operation and is experimenting with various concepts such as adaptive force packages.

Ground forces, including U.S. Special Operations Forces (SOF), have a growing role in overseas forward presence. The U.S. Army has labeled its proactive element of peacetime engagement as "nation assistance". One Army author, Colonel Rice, defined nation assistance as:

>a methodical, coordinated interagency approach to enhancing security through mutually agreed-upon requirements for infrastructure and institutional development. It addresses the root causes of instability by focusing collective energies and capabilities toward the development of key host nation institutions, both public and private."15

Col. Rice stressed that nation assistance requires a new way of thinking about how we support the needs of other nations. He also advocated that this new way of thinking should pervade all interactions the United States has with a particular host nation. In the context of nation assistance Col. Rice argues that the U.S. Army can lead by example:

The Army can set the right example--actually the best example of what a military force should be in a democratic country. ... By working directly with a country via the ambassador, our Army will provide a very positive example of how the military serves the nation: how a military contributes beyond fighting by providing medical services, performing disaster relief, building infrastructure, and so forth; how a code of ethics and standards of conduct are fundamental to an effective force; and how we professionally carry out our responsibility of being the nation’s general military servant.16

What has been related about the U.S. Army is equally applicable to the joint SOF. A July 1993 Congressional Research Service report indicated that U.S. SOF are in high demand by U.S. regional commanders for peacetime political-
military missions and that there appears to be "too few SOF for too many tasks."17

As the Army and joint SOF exercise their peacetime engagement in the form of nation assistance, their ability to touch the desired host country is dependent upon the global reach of Air Mobility Command (AMC). The nonlethal power of air mobility is not a new concept. One early example would be the Berlin airlift in 1948, where airlift provided an option other than direct combat for the execution of national policy. In current times, the use of such nonlethal power is a daily occurrence. Gen Fogleman, Commander AMC, when commenting on air power to carry out national policy objectives has often asked audiences to: "Remember two important numbers: 193 and seven. The first is the number of independent countries there are in the world; the second is the number of countries AMC did not visit last year."18 The demand for air mobility is not restricted to U.S. military services. Other U.S. non-defense agencies and non-U.S. organizations such as the United Nations all use the global reach capability of AMC. Regardless of who in particular is using AMC assets, the productive presence of U.S. military men and machines all help to extend U.S. influence through forward presence.

Lessons learned from the Blechman and Kaplan study would seem to indicate that many of the critical ingredients necessary to make forward presence effective are available in the combination of AMC's global capability and the talents of U.S. ground forces. The productive and engaged nature of the Army's new way of thinking about how to support the needs of other nations, coupled with the global reach of AMC, may prove to be a winning combination in the search for peacetime influence.
The U.S. Navy has given considerable thought to world changes and its strategic concept entitled "...From the Sea: Preparing the Naval Service for the 21st Century", brought naval strategy from the Cold War into the present. In the ongoing effort to produce effective forward presence, the Chief of Naval Operations has tasked his Strategic Studies Group (SSG) to focus their research efforts on the subject of overseas military presence. The SSG's, soon to be released report, will carry a number of specific recommendations to include: smaller, but still combat capable, alternatives to traditional CVBGs and Amphibious Readiness Groups; joint and combined adaptive force packages; and improved Department of Defense/Department of State cooperation and coordination. In general terms, the SSG is recommending that the strategic concepts embodied in "From the Sea" be updated with considerably more emphasis being placed on overseas military presence and OOTW.19

Do forward presence operations need to be physically visible to be effective? Blechman's and Kaplan's observations imply that the answer is generally yes. Their research implies that forward presence forces not only be visible but also physically present and engaged in a form that interacts with the host country. Nonvisible assets, like CONUS based strategic bombers, or for that matter an aircraft carrier, which is located out of sight, may have little to no effect in generating influence in this part of the conflict spectrum.

Can Presence be a Trap? Forward Presence can be a trap when it provides proximity to a situation where intervention might not be in the United States' best interest. Many would argue that the United States' involvement in Somalia offers a vivid example of such a case. If it were not for the global capabilities
embodied in current U.S. forward presence, the sense of obligation to respond to a case like Somalia would not be as strong. A country that cares buts does not have proximity or the resources to affect such a situation usually remains uninvolved. The general criteria for intervention is proximity and capability. The United States, by virtue of its overseas forward presence and economic superpower stature, has both proximity and capability.

Forward presence operations can also be successful in nurturing a relationship with a host country to the point that a sort of constituency develops. The U.S. relationship with Israel may be an example of such a constituency. The pull of a constituent country may not always be in the United States' best interest. Another area of potential discomfort relates to the placing of U.S. troops under other than U.S. command. The framework of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is occasionally put forth as a model for other future collective security arrangements. NATO type operations and the ever expanding mission base of the United Nations will keep the troop command issue a hot topic.

The United States will be forced to look for the silver lining in some forward presence situations. The United States should still pick and choose future interventions based on U.S. interests. But with global objectives as comprehensive as "enlargement", trying to discriminate between various U.S. interests is difficult at best. Being the sole superpower, the United States may have to endure the bad in hopes of a future good.

Implications. Answers to how forward presence should be done, to achieve real influence in the peacetime environment of the new world, are in an evolutionary phase. Certainly the quest for those answers is one reason for this
paper. Issues raised in reference to how forward presence should be done have implications for: force structure, peacetime employment, and training. No attempt will be made to take each implication to its particular conclusion. This section is intended as food for thought.

New innovations on employment of forward presence forces are being discovered daily. Recognition of the contributions made by Army training teams and the very important work done by special operations forces may develop an advocacy to increase those programs. The Navy is also on a path of reexamination for the best use of U.S. maritime forces. Demand for the nonlethal power of Air Mobility Command’s assets, to reach out and influence events throughout the world, is also expanding.

The employment of gunboat diplomacy as embodied in the movement of aircraft carriers is not completely dead. However, on the more peaceful side of the OOTW spectrum, the movement of aircraft carriers may be further down in the sequence of possible alternative actions than they had been during the Cold War. On the naval side, the Bottom Up Review provides forces for two MRCs but can't cover peacetime forward presence using the three traditional hubs of the Mediterranean, Indian and Pacific Oceans. Trying to maintain the Cold War operations tempo may be the only thing that justifies the current carrier force structure of 12 carriers. It has been suggested that if the numbers were reworked, based on a crisis response leading to a two MRC scenario, the number of carriers needed could possibly be reduced from twelve. This naval illustration begs the question of whether the United States wants to incorporate force structure requirements specific to the forward presence mission.
It is also possible that the synergistic effects of some joint operations are overlooked as each service scrambles to justify a larger piece of the shrinking defense budget. The U.S. Navy is restructuring its overseas operations to incorporate the use of Naval Expeditionary Forces (NEF) which don't always incorporate an aircraft carrier as their centerpiece. The NEF concept provides opportunities to explore possible force enhancements available by combining U.S. Air Force land-based support for the NEF. The opportunities range from land-based tanker support of a NEF with a carrier, to a U.S. Air Force support team for a NEF without a carrier. This hypothetical support team might include a composition of AWACS, fighters and other necessary land-based elements.

The last implication that will be discussed refers to training issues. Concern has been raised over the possibility of the so called "non-traditional" military roles overtaking the training demand required for more intense combat operations. As the United States looks more to forward presence to achieve national objectives, it is possible that non-traditional roles will become the peacetime backbone of overseas military operations. Innovations beyond how forward presence is done will be required to avoid an adverse effect on combat readiness in the lethal areas of combat capability.
CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSIONS

Forward presence holds the preeminent role among the elements of U.S. National Defense Strategy to seize opportunities and therefore influence the shape of the future international security environment. The new preeminence stems from the relative contribution forward presence can make toward reaching U.S. national objectives. During the Cold War military elements such as defense and deterrence, forward presence, crisis response, and reconstitution were on a more or less equal footing. Each made significant contributions to the national objective of Soviet containment. With the passing of the Cold War, there has been a conceptual shift in national security strategy which translates into a conceptual shift as to what the military strategy is asked to do. Unlike some of the other elements of military strategy, forward presence offers a wider range of possibilities to be proactive versus reactive.

Once acknowledging the change in what the United States needs forward presence to do, the next step is to fight the temptation to simply do forward presence the old way. Those authorities making force employment decisions must continually ask themselves why and in what manner forces are being used. Closer coordination between the Department of Defense and Department of State may allow for better local or regional assessments and therefore better estimates on the effectiveness of employment methods. The forward presence "tool box" is filled with a variety of tools from the "tweezers" of the SOF to the "big hammer" of a CVBG. There are situations toward the crisis response portion
of the spectrum which certainly justify the "big hammer", but the United States must avoid the temptation of reaching for this tool out of habit or apparent convenience.

The strategic importance of forward presence is its relationship to current and future US. interests. The current opportunities to shape the world environment are very possibly unique to this point in history. The goal of forward presence is influence which can shape the future concept of conflict. If U.S. presence can exert the necessary influence it may be able to change how nations view conflict. The United States, with the passage of time, has the opportunity to change national behavior to produce a more stable international climate and thus decrease the possibility of a MRC.

Currently the United States is in a unique position of trusted world leadership. The longevity of that role is dependent, in part, on how the issue of forward presence is handled. These sentiments are echoed by the author of the containment strategy, and also by former President Nixon. George Kennan implores the United States to seize current opportunities to influence by example not precept.22 President Nixon advised President Clinton not to squander America's leadership in the world.23

Ultimately, peacetime influence is gained through the totality of all elements of national power: economic, diplomatic and military. Within the military element, forward presence offers much promise to gain long term peacetime influence in the accomplishment of national objectives.
NOTES


5. Ibid., p. 13.


8. Interview with Col Ross J. Hieb, USMC, fellow on the Chief of Naval Operation’s Strategic Studies Group, Newport, RI: 29 April 1994.


10. Ibid., p. 8.

11. Ibid., p. 12.

12. Ibid., p. 13.

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