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21st CENTURY NATIONAL SECURITY: A FEMINIST FUTURE By Anne Broderick Zill

If this were a logical world, men would ride side saddle. (Rita Mae Brown)

Be realistic. Plead for the Impossible. (Thomas Paine)

This Hyper-Power, this Hectoring Hegemon, this America entering the 21st century, deemed by even the most conservative analysts to be in need of a profound change and transforming reorganization of its military and economic assets, this self-declared unilateral Super Power -has a problem. The problem is called blindness. The United States is a spoiled brat in geopolitics -- we want it our way and we want it now while we whine and stomp our feet like a fretful child.

There is a myopic spirit in the U.S. Real values are eclipsed by power plays masquerading as noble intentions, with no clear-eyed vision about what the best interests might be for an America inexorably linked not only to Europe, and its own hemisphere, but to the whole rest of the world all at once.

Language matters. 'National Security' is an oxymoron. What can be merely 'national' in these global-everything days? And 'security?' Doesn't that word mean, ever so basically, the state of feeling safe in one's home and indeed, anywhere? Security can also mean a guarantee or a pledge of the safety of a country against espionage, terrorism or other danger. These simple definitions run counter to the language used by U.S. leaders at this moment in history -- that involves a lot of lofty posturing about the weighty obligations of the sole, remaining super power to protect us all from 'rogue states' and mindless aggression. Then there are also the unstated but and utterly powerful, bottom-line demands of the profit-driven military contractor corporations in our millennial world. It is as if the government were a puppet with strings pulled this way and that from a higher power, for which there is no language at all.

Oscar Wilde noted that, "America has never quite forgiven Europe for having been discovered somewhat earlier in history than itself." ¹ The term "National Security" was coined in the aftermath of World War II in conjunction with America's global inheritance of world leadership. It had no connection to the Constitution of the United States, which contains no reference to national security.

The language quickly came to embody the concepts of *secrecy*, *hierarchy* and *enemies*.

National security suddenly conveyed this nation state's worldly concern with dominance and primacy as opposed to the simple human definitional emphasis of old. This was all done by men, of course, using lofty language -- the sudden heavy responsibilities of the leader of the free world. There were *no* women in positions of political power in the United States, except for Eleanor Roosevelt whose hands were tied by marital convention. Certainly, there was no critical mass of women to push for a different construction of the term then -- even until today.

¹ Oscar Wilde, *The American Man*, in *Court & Society Review*, April 1887. 1

National Security was immediately equated with military might and the need for supremacy in a Cold War contest with the Soviet Union. That conception of a major enemy quickly translated into vast expenditures of money for armaments and more recently, massive arms sales around the globe. Secrecy surrounded all discussions of both intelligence operations and budget expenditures. There seemed to be no awareness of the tendency of secrecy to devalue democracy's most fundamental tenant - its accountability to the citizenry. All US. presidents since the forties have been photographed in the symbolic posture of entering or exiting airplanes with the proverbial, secret "black box" containing the nuclear trigger for all-out war close at hand. These pictures celebrate the symbolic essence of power in trappings of secrecy.

Over a couple of decades individual members of the Congress, in order to demonstrate unequivocal patriotism as well as to provide jobs for voting constituents in their respective districts, lobbied for various pieces of the military procurement budget to be spent in their home territories. This was called bringing home the bacon, and later, pork barrel politics. Over time, an unholy alliance developed between large corporations dependent upon government contracts for income, a national economy heavily dependent upon the manufacture of weaponry and delivery systems in virtually every corner of the country, as well as upon the sale of parts of this arsenal to big bidders around the world.

Now, in the much ballyhooed post-Cold War period of nearly a decade, the us. Government is spending just about as much on the "military" --or as it known in the national budget, "defense"-(when adjusted for inflation) as it did 20 years ago when the Soviet Union was characterized as the "evil empire" This amounts to approximately 50% of the discretionary portion of the annual federal budget, and more than most of the other major powers put together. The rhetoric of justification or moral imperative involves some of the following words:

- Readiness;
- Ability to fight two wars anywhere in the world simultaneously;
- Rogue States;
- Missile defense requirements.

From 1940 until 1998, the us. spent \$5.8 trillion on nuclear weapons and their infrastructure² Clean up costs of nuclear production sites are expected to equal that amount in the future. No one was able to ask if it all amounted to an "overkill" expenditure because this federal budget item was kept secret from the American people. During the same time period,

spending on education, the environment and international affairs all together added up to less than the nuclear program. In the name of national security the American people were cut out of the equation altogether, without any public debate about overall priorities.

No other country in the world spends anywhere near the U.s. amount on things military. Too few question the logic of this expenditure necessity for the world's sole remaining super power. For new F-22 fighter jets the U.s. has allotted \$35 billion last year, even though these jets have been dismissed by critics as unnecessarily 'high tech'. The internal justification was the need to keep our own copies of these fighters ahead of earlier models already being sold to countries

² Stephen L. Schwartz, *Atomic Audit*, Brookings Institution Press, 1998. 2

around the world. Where the military is concerned, this country bows in deep obeisance to the gods in the name of national security.

Some of the words used by national security experts, now interchangeably called military experts as well, to justify these steep expenditures, particularly in the nuclear arena, have been analyzed by Carolyn Cohn over the years³ "*Deterrence*," she notes, quoting writer Thomas Powers, possesses a paradoxical meaning -- "it is safe to have weapons of a kind and number it is not safe to use."

In general, the language tends to be abstract, dehumanized, techno strategic or specialized, with a chasm between image and reality. We hear discussion about nuclear holocaust, for example, without specifics, just words without graphic reality in human terms. The MX Missile got labeled a "*Peacekeeper*." Human death was referred to as "*collateral damage*." "*Clean bombs*" is another euphemism, suggesting that radiation is perhaps the only dirty part of killing people. The language has played both a cultural and a psychological role in distancing live human decision-makers from the real business at hand -- the use of tax dollars for the production of vast amounts of weapons and their delivery systems for the purpose of destroying human beings deemed enemies over time. Only certain cultural and psychological mindsets can embrace this behavior, but the words that have been chosen have aided the process.

The problem, then, is not only that the language is narrow but also that it is seen by its speakers as complete or whole unto itself -- as representing a body of truths that exist independently of any other truth or knowledge. The isolation of the technical knowledge from social or psychological or moral thought, or feelings, is all seen as legitimate and necessary'

When the Cold War was first declared over, and there was talk of redefining national security, the Pentagon leadership immediately began its own re-definition. Today we have social programs using such military language as a *war on drugs*, *information warfare*, and corporate *economic warfare*. Tax revenues today are routinely channeled into military support services such as day care facilities on military bases, and domestic training programs.

American writer William Greider writes that our existing Pentagon military institution is far too big to either adequately maintain or monitor. It is also backward in its design and excessive in its scale of preparation for future wars. 5

A Pentagon expert in the Office of Program Analysis and Evaluation, Franklin C. Spinney, who is sometimes also referred to as a leader of the "Pentagon Underground," depicts the Pentagon as "Versailles on the Potomac," and the current spending program for complicated and costly weapons as a "defense death spiral."

³ Carolyn Cohn, "Nuclear Language & How We Learned to Pat the Bomb", *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists*, 1987.

⁴ Carolyn Cohn, "Sex and Death in the Rational World of Defense Intellectuals," *Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 1987, (vol. 12, no 4,) University of Chicago.

⁵ William Greider, *Fortress America*, Public Affairs, 1998. 3

In the *Wall Street Journal*, Thomas E. Ricks wrote recently that even with an annual military expenditure of \$275 billion, the U.S. military is not preparing for the battles of tomorrow.⁶ There's a "continued focus on big-ticket armaments designed to confront the Soviet Union, including a huge nuclear arsenal of submarines, missiles and bombers. Several courses are being proposed but all proponents agree "that the terms of the current congressional debate, focused largely on incremental changes in the size of the defense budget, have become largely irrelevant."

But the price of global domination is about to go up sharply according to a number of analysts he interviewed. By 2020 the era of tank primacy and mass armies will be over. It isn't easy for a successful military to remake itself. But the US. military will be increasingly ineffective if it stays as is. Change must be profound and transforming, a massive reorganization. Confronting entrenched interests will be very expensive.

Ricks notes that Army Major General James Dubik (who has been part of the peacekeeping mission in Bosnia and has just been promoted to commanding general for 'transformation') prescribes a new military focus with four components:

~ for general prevention and war-fighting, a conventional high-intensity warfare; ~ an engagement force for peacekeeping & other overseas operations;

~ experimental force to keep the US one step ahead in figuring out how to fight in the future;

~ and a support force to recruit, train and manage the others.

Coupled with this kind of military strategizing for the 21st century, are *three* other controversial policies with potentially significant repercussions for the future of US. supremacy and our current construction of national security. *The first* is the failure of the U.S. Senate to ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. The President's efforts to promote ratification got started late and were badly managed. For Dr. Richard L. Garwin, a prominent US. physicist and test ban advocate, the Senate result was "terrible a lost opportunity to bind other states into forgoing nuclear blasts ... Administrations have increasingly focused on politics and public relations rather than on reality, and that's true whether it's national security or anything else. „⁷

The *second* is the Clinton Administration's decision to keep and strengthen NATO. The notion that a World War II era military alliance could be shaped to fit a new century's post-Cold War requirements required a certain leap of faith, especially with the exclusion of Russia and certain other eastern European and former Soviet Republics. Common sense suggests that such policy represent at best a red flag in the proverbial bullpen. NATO is an example of the perpetuation of "Cold War think." Not until the Kosovo exercise did a truer purpose become evident for NATO's continued existence, namely the opportunity for a unilateral action that sidestepped United Nations authority. The US. used the opportunity to test some new weapons, and to act in alliance with its British and other European powers, at least on the surface. In fact, the U.S.

⁶ Thomas E. Ricks, "Military Must Change for the 21st Century -- The Question is How", *Wall Street Journal*, November 12, 1999.

¹ William I. Broad, "Physicist and Rebel Is Bruised, Not Beaten", *The New York Times*, November 16, 1999. ⁴

called most of the shots unilaterally and definitively, on matters ranging from overall bombing strategy, to the ground war 'go' or 'no-go'.

The *third* policy development to be mentioned is the U.S. government's nearly certain decision to endorse a missile defense system that will require an abrogation of the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty of 1972. This version of Star Wars, first promulgated by Ronald Reagan more than 15 years ago during a major military build-up phase, has involved several billion dollars a year for research and development with almost no success in operational tests. Great empires, noted Arnold Toynbee, do not die by murder, but suicide.

Where are the visionaries willing to lie down in the middle of the road to block this self-declared unilateral Hyper Power's march toward self-destruction? Where is our collective sense of wonder for deeds well done that promise of wellbeing for all, causing military supremacy as a national goal in the name of national security to pale by comparison? Where in these matters do we demonstrate any understanding of human nature sufficient to nurture long-term health for ourselves or others?

More prosaically, what is the rationale for projects such as an expanded NATO run by the U.S. that calls so many of the shots in a Kosovo adventure that even its allies are offended? How is it that there has been no examination of the corporate push for engagement in that region or the value of the region's rich reserves of coal and minerals? Why allow a rejection of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty by the U.S. Senate that sends such a conflicted message to the India, Pakistan and Chinas of this world? And what logic could there be in a foot-stomping insistence upon pursuing a missile defense system that violates a nearly 30-year old ABM treaty, which has been faithfully providing stability in our relations?

A hundred years ago the visionary Mark Twain declared himself an "anti-imperialist. I am opposed to having the eagle put its talons on any other land." But Teddy Roosevelt won out then, and still, though long gone, rules the roost for this super power, with his admonition, "*Speak softly and carry a big stick.*"

Christopher Lane, of the University of California's Center for International Studies recently wrote: "the foundations of America's post-Cold War grand strategy are showing signs of wear and tear. ... In the real world, however, this unilateral dominance -what political scientists call hegemony-is self-defeating." He quotes Hubert Vedrine, France's Foreign Minister, declaring recently that "We cannot accept either a politically unipolar world, nor a culturally uniform world, not the unilateralism of a single hyper-power. „⁸

Within the last few weeks the Iranian President, Mohammed Khatami has been quoted by the Associated Press while visiting the Pantheon in Paris as saying, "the new world order and globalization that some powers are trying to make us accept ... in which the culture of the entire world is ignored, looks like a kind of neocolonialism. This imperialism threatens mutual understanding between nations, and communication and dialogue between cultures." The global

⁸ Christopher Lane, "What's Built Up Must Come Down," *The Washington Post*, November 14, 1999. ⁵

mutterings about America's arrogance of power may become deafening. But we may not have the time to wait for the court of world opinion to force the U.S. to alter its strong arm tactics.

So what next? Is it all hopeless? Will the American 19th century conception of national security drag on through another century becoming ever more out of date, out of sync?

""I believe it is up to the ladies (as Abigail Adams once said to her husband), however.

The male-oriented, testosterone feel to the language and practice of national security seems a tad embarrassing these days, a

relic of Cold War era when women were not at the tables in

- o government or industry. Women would be emboldened to speak out today if some Pentagon hack came up with the term "missile erectus" to describe an MX missile rising from its flatbed silo at the flick of a switch. The connection between masculine sexual performance and aggression of all types is a whole lot easier to put right out on the table, in plain view so to speak, in this post- Victorian, not to mention post-Cold War era.

While the values underlying the current rationale for national security and military preparedness involve enormous hypocrisy, they are also increasingly and obviously out of date. Timing does matter. This is a much more propitious moment in history to declare metaphorically that the emperor has no clothes than say 100, or even 50 or just 20 years ago. The disparities between what our country's leaders have proclaimed as its global national security imperative, and what the policies have actually achieved, should begin to become glaringly obvious in a post-Clinton period. Except for Britain, the U.S. is an increasingly isolated giant, forcing Europe even more together, and China, India and Russia to form their own alliances. Whereas in the Reagan years, it was impossible to counter the belief that enormous sums had to be spent to control the threat of the "evil empire," the rogue states of North Korea and Iraq do not cause realpolitik militarists to lose much sleep from fear of imminent attack. Hypocrisy on the part of our leaders, whether it has to do with inhaling medicinal herbs or more weighty decisions such as taking on the Kosovo problem with air strikes and a NATO cover, is an increasingly popular target. Peoples' respect for politicians who cannot say what they mean and do what they say, has been replaced by disgust.

The power of feminists (both men and women) speaking out together may have a better chance of influencing public policy change today than ever before, thanks to a number of developments.

- There are more of us in all kinds of work forces, including public life.
- The present-day leaders' failure of imagination presents a convenient vacuum to be filled.
- 'Global' as opposed to 'national' security now has a certain cache beyond free trade and weapon sales.
- Information technologies are causing all kinds of changes across nation states and other boundaries - from e-mail and e-commerce to web cultures.
- New management techniques are encouraging different behavioral paradigms in social/professional settings -- non-hierarchical, empowered workers, for example, in life-long learning situations, with a concentration upon communication skills.

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The American poet Edna St. Vincent Millay declared once, "Oh World, I cannot hold thee close enough! 9 What she was expressing, it seems to me, is a passionate love for this world of ours. A poet, she was leading with love -- an interesting approach for achieving felicitous results, perhaps even in the realm of security. What if an American foreign policy embraced a whole series of positive "carrot" incentives? The "big sticks" are not about to disappear altogether, but a whole series of encouraging lessons could be taught to children everywhere about such subjects as respect for life, celebration of diversity, and the need to care for the least among the nation states on the biblical premise that one day the meek just might inherit a big chunk of earth.

Some of the other values that would help shape a compassionate "global security" are attention to the long-term consequences of our actions, way beyond the eye-for-an-eye maxim, or tit-for-tat, or any other schoolyard delinquent-kid lingo. We have to reward open and collaborative behaviors, not because it is easy or always characteristic of our human natures, but because being honest, transparent and inclusive breeds trust. To get beyond the big-stick, military might, excessively muscular postures, we will need a lot more trust and reliability among partners all over the globe.

We women are supposed to be more relationally-oriented than men. If so, this talent ought to be used to benefit our security. It requires us to be leaders, not just enablers. This is a calling beyond striving for equality or other basic rights. It involves taking the reigns of leadership as feminists, with some rich combination of spiritual, environmental, human rights, aid and development advocacy as well. The vision includes men equally of course, especially those who comprehend the feminist construction of power and security. The formidable feminist leader, Bella Abzug used to declare that men and women have been doing everything in pairs since Noah's Ark - except lead!

The old style alliances are already crumbling. Balance of power politics was a Mettenichian, 19th century deal after all, propped up more recently by the Henry Kissingers of this world. If the European Union represents one new model, others in Asia, South America and Africa will be forming as well. Common sense dictates that we join in some ventures involving all these regions for programs like universal education, health care and economic development -- *social programs* -- with funds and know-how way beyond the current token levels. Exporting life-giving rather than death-delivering mechanisms will look a lot better on future report cards.

Being practical is not inconsistent with big thinking, though it must be out of the mold of the last war or the present political gestalt. Calling some of these precepts 'naIve' is like dredging up Chamberlain and his infamous appeasement policy. Whether the big stick was what ended the Cold War or not, that period of history ought to be behind us. Clinging to the past, whether it's NATO in a 21st century world, simplistic explanations for World War II, or preparing for wars with the weapons of the last war is, just now, the ultimate naivete.

Global security means seeing the interconnections between people, countries, policies with all the possible repercussions. If this requires "relational" talent, all the better for women to help lead in this process. Emphasizing a different set of values in the teaching of our children will

'Edna St. Vincent Millay, God's World, 1917.

have long-term repercussions. Founder Gloria Steinem wrote recently in MS. Magazine about the "white male factor." ¹⁰ In noting that a patriarchal code of honor generates male violence, she suggests that sons be raised "more like daughters, to value empathy, and to measure success by other peoples' welfare as well as their own."

In the same issue, writer Cynthia Enloe (*Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics*) and Vivian Stromberg, the Executive Director of MADRE, discussed additional leadership tactics women should promote. ¹¹

- No peace negotiations should be conducted in secrecy;
- The press needs to call upon a wider universe of security & war/peace experts;
- The U.S. Senate should ratify the International Criminal Court Treaty (ICC).
- Wars are not inevitable in a world in which justice is honored;
- Differences between us are valued as powerfully enriching;
- Schools are where a militarized culture can be rolled back with feminist ideas.

If, as Maya Angelou has written, "the needs of society determine its ethics," it is for women to change our society's belief that wars are inevitable. Our *real* needs are antithetical to wars, violence and giant economies built upon mass weapons of destruction. This big job requires all of us working together, taking advantage of this propitious moment in history, and all the tools we can muster: the educational system, the media, and political leadership. *A Culture of Peace* is what we must envision, one that can keep going because it is logical, visionary, interconnected, practical, long-term, honoring of all diversity.

So much of life is routine, or even painful. Envisioning a world beyond war requires us to imagine pleasure -- to grasp that one essential point of life is to embrace what delights us. After all, why should a few have all the fun, and too many have none? Let's laugh 200 times a day like babies do, while we change the nature of what makes us all feel good and safe at the same time. After all, isn't this the essence of *human* nature – and even security?

The challenge is to reinvent politics, to make it joyous, hugely rewarding for everybody, centrally engaging, useful and absent of toxins like hypocrisy, power for its own sake, and the fallacy that 'military might' ever makes right.

¹⁰ MS. August-September, "Supremacy Crimes," 1999.

¹¹ MS. August-September, ""Women Activists on Preventing War and Making Peace," 1999

Note: Although this paper was presented at Leeds University pre- 9/11 it contains a woman leader's prescription for a more felicitous approach to the subject of security in a 21st world in which terrorism is viewed as a major threat.