

some 200 others. “Presidents seem to have embraced the notion that more leaders equals more leadership,” Light quips.

Extensive Federal Bureau of Investigation background investigations have added to the delays. Seeking to avoid embarrassment, the White House does early “preventive screening” that further bogs down the process. The ordeal puts off many talented recruits.

Failure is built in. To process 500 nominees at the average pace of 10 to 15 per week requires about 40 legislative weeks. “With recesses and vacations, the transition cannot be completed until a year into the

new term.” Frustrated cabinet secretaries have added new high-level staff positions such as chief of staff as a way of getting around the process, thus diluting the accountability that is the whole point of confirmation.

“Perhaps it is time,” Light says, “to ask whether we need so many layers of government.” Disclosure requirements, screening, and background checks could be scaled back. Some nominees could be spared Senate hearings. Does the nation really need the nominee for assistant secretary for public affairs at the Department of Housing and Urban Development to tell all?

FOREIGN POLICY & DEFENSE

Transforming the Pentagon

“A Tale of Two Secretaries” by Eliot A. Cohen, in *Foreign Affairs* (May–June 2002),
58 E. 68th St., New York, N.Y. 10021.

Will 9/11 finally compel the defense establishment to abandon its love affair with the heavy weapons and conventional doctrines of the Cold War?

The forces that stymied Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld’s plans for “defense transformation” before the war on terrorism are still in place, notes Cohen, a professor of strategic studies at John Hopkins University’s Nitze School of Advanced International Studies: entrenched services, recalcitrant bureaucracies, the many interests with a stake in the production of costly traditional weapons. Yet he sees some reasons for optimism. Buried in the Pentagon’s \$300 billion plus budget are funds for innovative weapons such as unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), not to mention the routine purchases of routers, servers, and global positioning systems that laid “the base for the networked war that U.S. forces ended up waging in Afghanistan.” (Military logisticians were shamed into embracing the latter by the stellar efficiencies of companies such as Wal-Mart and Federal Express.) Younger officers—now majors and lieutenant colonels, even sergeants—are eager for change, and the strong American cultural predilection

for innovation and experimentation inevitably affects the military over the long term.

Still, the old battles will have to be refought. For example, because the Pentagon would rather spend money on new “platforms” than on ammunition, U.S. forces ran short of satellite-guided bombs during the war in Afghanistan. And even as the Predator UAV was pressed into service in Afghanistan last fall with great success, the Pentagon’s perfection-oriented office of testing and evaluation was declaring it not “operationally effective or suitable.” Next year, the Pentagon will spend just over \$1 billion on UAVs—and \$7.5 billion on conventional fighter jets.

In this new era, the United States will need to be prepared to station troops in many places—it currently has forces in Bosnia, Kosovo, and the Sinai Peninsula, for example. It will need forces that are highly mobile, often without relying on local bases or prepositioned supplies. This calls for things such as “arsenal ships” and a new bomber, Cohen believes. The Pentagon will have to get better at mobilization for sudden conflicts and find new ways to make use of regular personnel,

reservists, and private contractors. “Above all, the 21st-century U.S. military will require an officer corps of unprecedented versatility and intelligence.” A key requirement: more emphasis on officer education in the social sciences and humanities

rather than technical disciplines.

For centuries, war was waged chiefly by states with roughly comparable armies and familiar purposes. But war itself is changing, Cohen argues, and so must the Pentagon.

The New Mercenaries

“Corporate Warriors: The Rise of the Privatized Military Industry and Its Ramifications for International Security” by P. W. Singer, in *International Security* (Winter 2001–02), MIT Press Journals, 5 Cambridge Ctr., 4th fl., Cambridge, Mass. 02142.

Need a commando unit? A fighter wing? A new breed of corporate mercenaries stands ready to provide them. Private military firms (PMFs) are in the business of selling the specialized services needed to fight today’s high-tech wars, from military training and logistical support to combat forces. “The emergence of PMFs,” declares Singer, a Brookings Institution researcher, “challenges one of the basic premises of international security: that states possess a monopoly over the use of force.”

The mercenary profession is as old as warfare itself—the Thirty Years’ War of 1618–48 was fought largely by hired hands—but with the rise of the modern state in the last century or so, hired guns slipped into the shadows. Now for-profit fighters are back, though better organized and disciplined than they were before. Much of the work is done far from the front lines. Firms such as MPRI, Armor-Group, and Vinnell are hierarchical, registered businesses that “compete openly on the international market” and even advertise on the World Wide Web. (“The greatest corporate assemblage of military expertise in the world,” is how MPRI describes itself.) Other firms, such as DynCorp., are “military oriented.”

PMFs do contract work in communications and computers at Cheyenne Mountain, the nerve center of the U.S. nuclear arsenal, and they provide Saudi Arabia with everything from air defense to naval training. Every major U.S. military operation in the post-Cold War era has involved significant PMF support, Singer notes.

The firms have been “determinate actors” in conflicts in Angola, Croatia, Eritrea and Ethiopia, and Sierra Leone.

The technology-oriented “revolution in military affairs” and large-scale demilitarization since the end of the Cold War have fed today’s rapid PMF growth. In the 1990s alone the world’s armies shrank by more than six million, creating a large pool of well-trained labor. Some former elite military units, such as the South African 32nd Reconnaissance Battalion, have simply opened up shop as companies. It is estimated that 70 percent of the KGB found work with PMFs once the Soviet spy agency went belly-up. At the same time, technological change in the world’s militaries has created strong demand for highly skilled people, even if they don’t wear uniforms.

The rise of PMFs has tremendous implications for international security, Singer argues. By providing sophisticated off-the-shelf military muscle, PMFs can empower weak states and “non-state actors,” such as guerilla and terrorist groups. Employed by civilian regimes in Third World states, they may help stave off military coups. By lowering the cost of obtaining sophisticated military force, they may increase the overall likelihood of war; by enabling weak states to buy a potent defense on the open market, they may diminish it. Ultimately, Singer speculates, we may be on the road back to the environment of old Europe, “where wealth and military capability went hand in hand: *Pecunia nervus belli* (Money nourishes war).”