

What's the Matter with Being a Strategist (Now)?

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American strategic competence is in decline. Twenty years after victory in the Cold War, a victory brought about by the shrewd use of state power and alliances while ably balancing international and domestic pressures, the United States now is struggling to find the right balance of military force and other forms of power in its current wars, while peering into an uncertain future. Commenting on American strategic competence, noted defense analyst Barry D. Watts argues, “US performance in Iraq provides ample evidence that it has been declining for some time.”¹ This line of thought typically asserts that American strategic competence reached its apex between the victory in World War II; implementation of NSC 68, a 1950 report advocating ends, ways, and means of countering communism; and President Dwight D. Eisenhower’s Solarium project, a 1953 evaluation of national security policy regarding the Soviet Union. Somewhere between the death of Josef Stalin and the rise of an era of limited war, the United States lost its strategic way.

Given the diverse nature of today’s threats, many observers look back with nostalgia on the clarity of the Soviet threat and the quality of the strategic thinking and planning that countered it. Rash comparisons between Cold War challenges—remembered as clearly identified, existential, and countered with bipartisan political support—and today’s stew of pandemics, loose nuclear weapons, hackers, and undergoverned territories deserve closer scrutiny. Despite stark differences between the eras, there may be merit to the rising claim of strategic incompetence. From the Bay of Pigs to Vietnam to the inconclusive ceasefire terms at the end of the 1991 Gulf War, there is evidence that the strategic skill of the United States has been found wanting.

If Watts is correct, that it is America’s strategic competence that demands repair, then perhaps the effort to slow the erosion has already begun. A reversal of that trend is taking place, one that has gone unnoticed and will likely remain underappreciated for years to come—the return of the Army strategist. It would be ideal if this progress could be announced with

the flamboyancy of a John Williams score in *Star Wars: Return of the Jedi*, but in reality this reversal is subtle, bureaucratic, and over a decade old.

The US Army currently has more than 400 military strategists serving in the grades of captain to colonel, diligently assisting commanders from division to combatant command level. Strategists occupy key positions within the broader defense community, serving on the National Security Council, Joint Staff, Army Staff, Office of the Secretary of Defense, and recently at the Treasury and State Departments. In a number of ways, these strategists owe their development, education, and assignments to a vision articulated more than 20 years ago.

In 1989, General John R. Galvin, the Supreme Allied Commander, Europe and Commander-in-Chief, US European Command at the time, argued for the return of uniformed strategists in his article, “What’s the Matter with Being a Strategist?” After succinctly defining the attributes of military strategists, General Galvin suggested that key elements of their development included advanced schooling, operational experience, and lifelong development.² His influential and timely argument helped stimulate a review of the requirement for military strategists conducted by the Army’s Officer Personnel Management System Task Force XXI/3 in the late 1990s. This review resulted in the creation of the functional specialty supporting Army strategists, technically recognized as Functional Area (FA) 59, Strategic Plans and Policy officers.

Despite the number of strategists and the breadth of their assignments, this functional specialty is still a relatively recent development. Since 1999, the Army has gradually formalized the development of the specialty and expanded the number of strategists. Portraying military strategists as a recent innovation is, however, to a degree inaccurate.

The Army has always produced strategic thinkers and planners. Historical precedents include General Winfield Scott’s early Anaconda Plan to strangle the Southern secessionists and ultimately the implementation of General Ulysses S. Grant’s strategic plan to restore the Union at the close of the Civil War.³ One might consider General John J. Pershing’s dogged insistence on creating and maintaining an autonomous American Expeditionary Force and committing that force as an independent entity during World War I, while at the same time balancing domestic and international concerns.⁴

A more recent example of strategic competency and expertise in the US Army was Winston Churchill’s characterization of General George

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C. Marshall as “the organizer of victory” in World War II.⁵ Aside from Marshall’s singular strategic and organizational brilliance, he was a superb manager of talent. Marshall recognized General Dwight D. Eisenhower’s abilities and appointed him as Chief of the War Plans Division in the War Department, described by many as the command post for World War II.⁶ It was here that Eisenhower, with the aid of a number of highly talented subordinates such as Leonard T. Gerow and Albert C. Wedemeyer, devised the strategy for a global war encompassing the Pacific and European theaters and eventually providing Marshall with “the first specific plan for a cross-Channel invasion” of Europe.⁷ These officers played a critical role in developing and implementing military strategy in support of national objectives facilitating Presidents Franklin D. Roosevelt and Harry S. Truman’s ability to prosecute a successful global war. Army strategists were essential to Allied victory; their contributions reflected the zenith of American operational and strategic art during this critical period in world history. Unfortunately, this was an ascent that would too quickly decline.

Despite such a rich history, the role of military strategists diminished following World War II, and this crucial capability atrophied. During the Cold War, the role of civilian nuclear strategists increased; Congress reduced the service departments’ responsibilities from global command in 1946 to simply “organizing, training, and equipping” the force; and many senior uniformed leaders spent the majority of their careers in tactical troop-leading assignments. Little time and limited resources were devoted to developing military strategists. These factors and a number of others combined to diminish the military strategist and erode America’s strategic competence.

Watts’s assessment of declining American strategic competence is only one of many credible critiques. Colonel Harry G. Summers, Jr., explained that the significant contributions of military strategists, after their central role in strategy development and implementation during World War II, yielded to “a general feeling that strategy was budget-driven and was primarily a function of resource allocation. The task of the Army, in their view, was to design and procure material, arms, and equipment and to organize, train, and equip soldiers for the Defense Establishment.”⁸ A more recent example affirms Summers’s characterization.

In the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz assembled a team of scholars, Middle Eastern experts, and analysts to help identify the underlying problems that allowed the attacks and to develop a strategy to prevent others. Wolfowitz reportedly told an associate, “The US government, especially the Pentagon, is incapable of producing the kinds of ideas and strategy needed to deal with a crisis of the magnitude of 9/11.”⁹ He began by asking a Washington, D.C., think tank

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to organize a weekend-long “bull session” analyzing the roots of terrorism. The Deputy Secretary of Defense chose to outsource his strategy development, in stark contrast to the options available to Roosevelt and Truman.

While a full account of the decline of military strategists is beyond the scope of this article, ample evidence exists to support the assertion that the role of strategists has greatly diminished from the “organizers of victory” to Wolfowitz’s actions. Nonetheless, we are ten years into a reversal of this protracted trend. The reality is that Army strategists now serve in every major joint force and Army command. But what do these strategists actually do in support of these organizations? Indeed, what precisely is meant by the descriptor strategy?

Strategy and Strategist

A person could grow old collecting definitions of “strategy” and “strategic.” Theorists have made careers of trying to define these terms and explaining the inherent difficulties of matching strategy with political objectives. Definitions range from Colin Gray’s narrow view that strategy is “the use that is made of force and the threat of force for the ends of policy”¹⁰ to more inclusive definitions, such as Williamson Murray and Mark Grimmsley’s contention that strategy is “a process, a constant adaptation to shifting conditions and circumstances in a world where chance, uncertainty, and ambiguity dominate.”¹¹ Across this range of definitions is the recurring charge that strategists have to comprehend both the political and military exigencies of a situation and provide the “bridge that relates military power to political purpose.”¹² Given the dynamic and ambiguous nature of strategy and the volatility of the global strategic environment, hoping for an occasional strategic genius to arise is simply not an option. As Murray and Grimmsley suggest, a cadre of strategically educated and adept individuals capable of coping with this uncertain environment is a necessity. Despite the inherent difficulty in developing such a cadre, envisioning it is a bit easier.

In 1995, Major General Richard A. Chilcoat argued for an increased focus on developing masters of the strategic art—in his words, officers trained in the “orchestration of all the instruments of national power to yield specific, well-defined end-states . . . [by using] the skillful formulation, coordination, and application of ends (objectives), ways (courses of action),

and means (supporting resources) to promote and defend the national interests.”¹³ He envisioned a functional separation of strategists into strategic leaders, practitioners, and theoreticians. General Chilcoat further explained the competencies and roles encompassing the strategic art:

The Strategic Leader provides vision and focus, capitalizes on command and peer leadership skills, and inspires others to think and act. The Strategic Practitioner develops a deep understanding of all levels of war and strategy and their interrelationships, develops and executes strategic plans derived from interagency and joint guidance, employs force and other dimensions of military power, and unifies military and nonmilitary activities through command and peer leadership skills. The Strategic Theorist studies the history of warfare, develops strategic concepts and theories, integrates them with the elements of national power and with the National Security Strategy and National Military Strategy, and teaches or mentors the strategic art.¹⁴

Today’s strategists most closely resemble Chilcoat’s strategic practitioner, although some perform duties associated with the development of concepts and doctrine, or serve as teachers and mentors (Chilcoat’s strategic theorist). There is a key distinction between the visions of Galvin and Chilcoat, who envisioned officers capable of being strategists and commanders, and the role played by the modern strategists. Army strategists are specialty officers who will not aspire to becoming strategic leaders or commanding at the senior level. Rather, they serve as staff officers in support of commanders. Recurring educational opportunities and operational assignments will in all likelihood preclude them from commanding. Indeed, repeated strategic-level assignments provide the cornerstone of their development as strategists and set them apart from their contemporaries.

The Strategic Leader Division of the US Army Personnel Command defines “strategic leaders” as colonels and general officers. For the purpose of this article, military strategic leaders are limited to three- and four-star officers. These officers comprise the strategic advisers and commanders of major formations within the joint force. Army strategists, on the other hand, form a core of skilled practitioners who support those strategic leaders with a variety of activities.

The Strategist as Strategic Practitioner

Army strategists provide a strategic perspective on complex problems and help create national and regional strategic guidance. They are instrumental in the translation of that guidance into actionable plans at the theater-strategic and operational levels of war. The Army defines these specialty officers as “warfighters who provide the Army with a highly trained

cadre specializing in the development and implementation of national strategic plans and policies; theater strategy and campaign planning; and the evolution of concepts and doctrine for employing military forces at the operational and strategic levels of warfare.”¹⁵ These functions warrant the assignment of strategists to national military staffs (defined as the service staffs, Joint Staff, and Office of the Secretary of Defense) as well as the staffs of the combatant commands and subunified commands across the globe.

To satisfy General Chilcoat’s demand for strategists who acquire a “deep understanding of all levels of war and strategy and their interrelationships,” the Army is developing specific attributes in its strategists. These attributes are cited in Department of the Army Pamphlet 600-3, which specifies the strategists’ ability to apply critical thought in a historically informed and culturally perceptive manner. From such a strategic perspective, Army strategists exploit opportunities and overcome challenges in support of the joint force to achieve national objectives. According to the pamphlet, Army strategists employ interdisciplinary problem-solving and assessment techniques that complement senior leader decision-making and appraisal; are experts at integrating Army capabilities with other services; and understand the formal and informal processes for developing the national security strategy and national military strategy, to include planning and budgeting systems.¹⁶

Properly developed by educational and operational experience, these capabilities produce Army strategists with four specific competencies. They can conduct or facilitate:

- (1) Strategic Appraisal: Strategists build feedback mechanisms that enable iterative reassessment and adjustment of plans in response to adaptive adversaries . . . within the context of a coherent strategy.
- (2) Strategic Planning: Strategists create and sustain actionable plans or recommendations that translate operational and institutional means into desired end-states, with emphasis on campaign planning and integration of joint capabilities within national and theater-level plans.
- (3) Inter-service/Interagency Integration: Strategists provide nonpartisan approaches to develop synergistic and integrated solutions that maximize team capabilities.
- (4) Strategic Education: Strategists teach and develop curriculum to support education in military theory, the strategic arts, concept and doctrine development, and national security strategies and policies.¹⁷

These capabilities and associated competencies epitomize the Army’s expectations of experienced strategists. Cynics may assert that this set of specifications is just one more laundry list of ideal attributes, unlikely to be developed in officers in times of war. Yet the resources and opportunities to foster these skills have never been greater. Others argue that one cannot become “proficient” in so many varied competencies. This view has merit

but misses a central point: Strategists are not pursuing some idealized level of proficiency in any one competency or ability; their central requirement is to achieve sufficiency in multiple areas. In other words, Army strategists are specialty officers who concentrate in the general application of strategy. The theater strategist writing operational war plans will benefit from assignments in Washington, D.C., on a national staff. National staff officers conduct institutional planning with a focus on its effect in support of the combatant commands. Being sufficiently competent in both arenas is the goal, but there are others. If General Chilcoat successfully explains what strategic practitioners ought to be, then General Galvin is equally as successful in explaining how they should be developed.

From Vision to Reality

General Galvin asked, “How do we get as broad a leavening of strategic thinkers as possible?”¹⁸ He asserted that the Army needs an “agenda of action” to prepare uniformed strategists with appropriate schooling, experience, and lifelong self-development. His vision for how strategists should be developed is largely realized in the Army’s current model. A deliberate combination of military schooling, civilian education, and repeated operational assignments contributes to the formal development of Army strategists. Although each person develops uniquely, the functional area approach collectively develops officers with the skills necessary to perform the four specific competencies previously listed.

Formal Education

Army strategists are schooled and qualified through the US Army War College’s Basic Strategic Art Program (BSAP). This effort is the result of leveraging the best aspects of several different educational experiences as it formulated the BSAP curriculum. In September 2001, the Army War College and the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff of the Army for Operations and Plans (Strategic Leadership Division) convened a workshop to determine the competencies and educational requirements for Army strategists.¹⁹ The conference provided an opportunity to identify the skills, knowledge, and attributes of the functional area and to design a program of instruction that supported those requirements. These deliberations culminated with the implementation of the BSAP course.

The course introduces newly designated Army strategists to a strategic pedagogy and to the specific elements of the functional area that produce a foundation for progressive development. To this end, BSAP consists of the following modules: strategic theory, strategic art, joint and Army sys-

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tems, national security decision-making, contemporary security challenges, and joint and Army planning. By anticipating the long-term skills and attributes of strategists, BSAP establishes a foundation for continued learning.

Using the format of a graduate seminar, the course incorporates history, theory, exercises, guest lectures, and staff rides during its 14-week program to develop a “rich professional perspective on policy, strategy, and doctrine.”²⁰ The students capitalize on a guest speaker program that invites distinguished historians, political scientists, authors, and senior leaders to enhance the student learning in a seminar environment. The course expanded from a seven-student pilot program in 2003 to three 15-student sessions in 2008. It graduated its first civilian interagency participant in 2009; future classes are scheduled to include interagency members in an effort to broaden the group’s pedagogical base. But BSAP is only one of many educational opportunities available in the development of Army strategists.

Army strategists attend numerous service, joint, and international military schools to continue their development. Officers are required to meet the Intermediate Level Education requirement but may also attend individual command and staff colleges and other approved Joint Professional Military Education institutions. Approximately 15 percent of Army strategists have attended the School of Advanced Military Studies (SAMS) with follow-on assignments to division and corps planning staffs. A select few will attend senior service colleges. Despite the array of schooling available, the centerpiece of education for strategists is attendance at civilian universities.

Virtually all Army strategists have the opportunity to attend civilian institutions to acquire a master’s degree. These programs vary in length from 12 to 24 months depending on the degree being pursued. Funding for this program comes from various sources. No matter what program the officers may choose, degree completion is their only requirement while enrolled. To build a diverse cadre of strategists, the course of study ranges from political science and international affairs to history and economics. The Army also supports strategists attending the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University and the School of Advanced International Studies at Johns Hopkins University. A select number of Army strategists later return to various universities and pursue doctoral degrees. Nearly half of each co-

hort will graduate from an elite university, and every participant receives the opportunity for a broad, liberal education at a civilian university. The Army invests heavily in the education of its strategists. Strategic education, however, without practical application is of little value.

Unit Experience

As General Galvin suggested, it is experience at the unit level that provides for the critical development of the officer. According to Galvin, “Rarely can the strategist in uniform gain a complete understanding of military force in some theoretical way; an officer absorbs much of what he knows in the practical, daily world of military units [in] the field.”²¹ The experience gained at the operational level may not be readily recognizable to most soldiers. It may consist of assignments to national strategic staffs, geographic and functional combatant commands, and theater armies, as well as duty with Army corps and divisions. It also includes assignments to other agencies of the US government, multinational staffs, and institutions of higher learning. In other words, strategists function at every level of defense policy formulation and joint military planning.

It is critical to understand that by design the Army strategist does not progress along a set or standardized path. Many may have an initial assignment at Army-level headquarters, but a number begin their careers in the joint arena. Others progress along more nontraditional career paths, such as teaching and interagency assignments. They serve as speechwriters, members of commanders’ internal think tanks, or as military assistants to senior defense officials. Still others will graduate from SAMS and go directly to positions as division planners. In any number of ways, strategists continue their professional development, acquiring a broad base of knowledge, while simultaneously gaining a deep understanding of national defense issues and processes. Strategists proceed along no set path; rather, they benefit from a range of experiences that provide a balance of military schools, civilian education, and developmental jobs as they mature.

Common to all developmental career patterns, Army strategists acquire a broad expertise regarding the Army and its enabling systems in support of the joint force. Currently, strategists serve as lead authors for the Army Campaign Plan, division chiefs of war plans and strategy on the Army Staff, and chiefs of planning at divisions, corps, theater armies, and Army service component commands. Strategists typically serve three-year assignments, whether in the joint or Army assignment. This provides ample time to acquire genuine expertise in a particular region or function and ensures a semblance of continuity on these ever-changing staffs.

This expertise underpins the principal contribution these strategists provide the joint force: They arrive imbued with a culture of planning and are equipped to apply critical, creative thinking, in addition to leading major planning efforts. Army strategists serve as joint planning leads in combatant commands and are responsible for the development of theater strategies, theater campaign plans, and contingency planning on behalf of the combatant commander or subunified commanders. These capabilities and responsibilities are also true for multinational staffs such as NATO, Multi-National Force-Iraq, Combined Forces Command Korea, or Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan.

Finally, expert knowledge of the Army and a sophisticated understanding of joint and multinational arenas strengthen the strategist's ability to provide major contributions to the success of the interagency process and national staffs. Strategists contribute directly to the formulation of the *National Defense Strategy*, *National Military Strategy*, and numerous classified and unclassified reports for the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff. They also serve in a broad range of government agencies. Repeated strategic-level assignments over the course of a career differentiate the strategist from other officers who may also have experienced an opportunity for advanced schooling and education. Beyond the expansive military schooling, education, and experiential learning opportunities, one final phase of General Galvin's developmental model remains: lifelong self-development.

Lifelong Self-Development

Lifelong self-development is the ultimate piece of a strategist's professional development. Some observers have asserted that good strategists have innate qualities that cannot be developed through formal learning, asserting that "individuals either have the cognitive skills for strategy or they do not."²² Fortunately, this disjunctive simplification misses the mark. The life of General Albert C. Wedemeyer, one of Eisenhower's key war planners and author of the comprehensive Victory Plan of 1941, suggests that the cumulative effect of education, experience, and a curious mind placed him on firm strategic ground at the outset of World War II. Typical of an interwar officer, General Wedemeyer attended multiple staff colleges and overseas assignments, even graduating from Germany's *Kriegsakademie* in 1938. Equally as important, he "continued the reading habits established in his youth It is to his reading, rather than to external influences, that one must turn to understand the intellectual preparation that Albert Wedemeyer brought with him to his job on the General Staff in 1941."²³ His career ex-

emphasizes how education and experience, complemented by lifelong learning, can produce a masterful strategist.

Aside from reading a challenging volume now and then, Army strategists have a number of tools to support lifelong development. Online collaborative Web sites, forums, associations, and conferences all have the potential to contribute to a strategic education. Formal opportunities are also available, such as the US Army War College's Defense Strategy Course, an online collaborative learning experience and a prerequisite for BSAP. Army strategists also participate in Seminar XXI, a Washington, D.C., seminar hosted by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology that explores security-related issues for defense professionals. Strategists serve as fellows in various think tanks and publish in professional journals.

Where Do Strategists Come From?

Army strategists come from varied backgrounds and educational experiences. They share one common distinction; they are all volunteers. Whether the decision to become a strategist is made at the year seven Career Field Designation Board or later in their careers, strategists volunteer to become a part of the functional specialty. Approximately 20 to 25 officers each year are required to meet operational demands and continue the sustainment of a robust professional developmental program. It then becomes the task of the selection board to discriminate among applicants. Board members analyze the volunteers' performance in tactical and operational-level assignments. The board may also recognize unique educational experiences. It is also interested in candidates who have performed duties reflecting an aptitude for strategy, for example, division planners; Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff Fellows; or instructors at the US Military Academy. Other candidates compete for the Harvard Strategist Fellowship Program. This program selects four officers annually to attend Harvard University; upon graduation, they will serve the remainder of their careers as Army strategists.

Many observers may be surprised to find self-selection as the mechanism for attracting strategic practitioners from the Army's officer population. This method capitalizes on a vital characteristic of strategic practitioners—lifelong self-development and an intellectual fervor that fosters long-term learning. This is not a foolproof methodology. Some volunteers find that they have made the wrong decision. These individuals have the option of returning to their original branches and continuing their service. An effective self-selection process is only the initial challenge in a strategist's career development.

Challenges

Officers volunteering as strategists face unique challenges within the institution. They are required to acknowledge an organizational ethos that values tactical success and command, while at the same time entering a specialty that initially offered less than assured success for early inductees. Additionally, the functional area has no dedicated “home.” Indeed, these volunteers may encounter prejudice and a cultural bias in the tactically focused Army.

The Army is a command-centric organization; its core task is to provide sustained landpower to joint force commanders in pursuit of the nation’s interests. Its credentials are its soldiers. Its leaders are selected on the basis of demonstrated tactical and operational success, and rightly so. Incorporating strategists into this institution who have not successfully commanded at battalion or higher is a challenging proposition.

Even as individual strategists establish personal relationships with senior leaders, there are still those who remain resistant to the abilities of noncommand-track specialty officers. Recalling General Chilcoat’s model, the Army seeks strategic leaders, but the FA59 functional area provides strategic practitioners. Indeed, creating expert practitioners requires time. The long road of repeated strategic assignments, combined with multiple educational opportunities, leads to officers imbued with a strategic perspective. Yet some view opportunities vital in the education of strategists as squandered resources for an officer who will not command at the senior level or rise to general officer. Such controversy only serves to weaken the institution. We are fortunate to foster and recognize both command excellence and staff expertise in our Army. One would anticipate that this tension would recede in time as senior leaders come to appreciate, interact with, and mentor strategic practitioners. Building a new functional expertise in a 234-year-old institution has many challenges.

As one of the most recent additions to the Army officer career fields, it should not be surprising that the initial development of strategists was ill-defined. Creating a recognized functional area meant some officers became strategists as colonels, lieutenant colonels, and majors, often without the benefit of transition courses that candidates enjoy today. So the new functional area is enduring dissimilar development for inductees, causing a degraded sense of identity and commonality. This problem has been alleviated to a degree by the expansion of the BSAP course, which can now accommodate each new cohort during this transition. It will take time, however, to incorporate the strategists who became 59As early in the process and missed this course. As evidence of the area’s newness, not one of the 180 graduates of the six-year-old BSAP course has yet risen to the rank of

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colonel in the Regular Army, despite the fact FA59 has nearly 50 colonels serving today. These early-transfer officers bring special skills and experience but often lack a common identity with other strategists. Likewise, 2009 was the first year that BSAP graduates attended senior service colleges and fellowships. In time, all strategists will share a common BSAP experience, strengthening their commonality and collective identity as individuals rise to senior positions. But BSAP alone cannot establish the functional area's collective identity.

The Army has long maintained general and specialty branch developers to oversee the training, development, and critical skills necessary to perform key functions. The current sponsor or proponent for FA59 is the Army Deputy Chief of Staff, G-3/5/7. Despite the generous efforts and support of key general officers, it is easy to understand how the long-term development of 400 officers can be lost in the din of an army of 1.1 million soldiers fighting a global war. Some have suggested that co-locating the development and proponent of the branch with other strategic centers of excellence, such as the US Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute, and Center for Strategic Leadership at Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, would provide a more appropriate and attentive environment for development and management of the career field. These issues are presently under review. In the meantime, a number of strategists have expressed regret at not having a strategic home dedicated to their development. Despite these challenges, the value of the Army's investment in FA59 personnel, education, and training is beginning to bear fruit.

Opportunities

The demand for Army strategists continues to increase. Along with the addition of strategists at division level and increased authorizations at theater armies and combatant commands, other government agencies have realized the value of these strategists. Interagency demand for strategists currently exceeds Army supply; the Departments of State, Treasury, and Homeland Security are actively seeking strategists to enhance their planning capabilities. As it matures, the career field is conducting a continual assessment to recognize and support these emerging opportunities, while validating which of these billets should be supported.

Another important milestone recently occurred. The August 2009 brigadier general board selected an Army strategist for the first time. This general officer has been designated for a key position on the Joint Staff. It appears that both the Army and the joint force are recognizing the value of strategic practitioners. This officer performed multiple assignments in the Army and joint force at echelons above corps. He is a graduate of several military schools and served as a senior service college fellow. His development exemplifies General Galvin's model.

Conclusion

If Barry Watts is correct in his assertion that the United States has experienced a long decline in strategic competence since the late 1960s, then we are ten years into a reversal of that trend.²⁴ Creating military strategists and providing the education and operational experience necessary to gain credibility and acceptance will surely benefit the nation, as strategists increasingly serve in direct support of strategic leaders. The Army has already dedicated significant resources to develop this capability. As the first BSAP graduates attend senior service colleges, as the first Army strategist is promoted to brigadier general, and as more than 400 other Army strategists serve the joint force in an array of assignments, we should recall General Galvin's model for creating strategists. The key to success is balanced military and civilian educational opportunities, complemented with increasingly important strategic experiences throughout the officer's career. This process yields officers uniquely capable of understanding and operating in the military and policy domains and capable of better serving uniformed and civilian strategic leaders; in other words, strategically competent defense professionals. Few would advocate creating an accelerated path to division command, which typically requires 25 years. Why would we suggest or expect any less for our military strategists? General Galvin's poignant advice still resonates:

We can never predict who will be in the key positions of strategy formulation and execution in a time of crisis, and we cannot expect to be able to create "instant military strategists" in time of war. In order to have the ability to expand, we need a structure . . . in which at any one time there are officers at all levels experiencing a maturation of their talents as strategists. We need young strategists because we need senior strategists, and we need a lot because when the time comes we need enough.²⁵

The unique skills and competencies of Army strategists enable officers to apply fully developed strategic perspectives in support of national and unified staffs and commanders. That Generals Galvin and Chilcoat's initial attempts at describing and creating strategists have finally been rec-

ognized and resourced is testimony to their foresight and vision. Now, the responsibility to capitalize on that vision and rebuild America's strategic competence is ours.

NOTES

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12. Gray, 17.
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14. *Ibid.*, 8-9.
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16. *Ibid.*, paragraph 29-2.
17. *Ibid.*, paragraph 29-1.
18. Galvin, 162.
19. The participants included defense and strategic education experts from the US Military Academy, US Army War College, National Defense University, Joint Force Staff College, Army Command and General Staff College, US 3d Army, and several Army Staff directorates. The participants reviewed educational programs from the Naval Postgraduate School, Syracuse University, University of Maryland, and the Command and General Staff College to assess current trends in the education and development of civilian and uniformed strategic planners.
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25. Galvin, 163.