Chapter 18

CONCLUSION

Like the defeat of Germany and Japan in World War II, the victory over Iraq in 1991 proved to be a watershed in the history of American military policy and strategy. The biggest military operation mounted by the United States since the Vietnam War, *Desert Shield/Desert Storm* was also exceedingly complex and difficult to execute. One of the keys to its success was the coordinated planning and direction provided by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, General Colin Powell, and the officers of the Joint Staff, working in collaboration with the military Services; the theater commander, General Norman Schwarzkopf; and the allies who made up the anti-Iraq coalition. The result was not only an awesome display of American-led military power, but also a reaffirmation that joint planning and joint direction of components in the field were increasingly essential to success in modern warfare.

What may seem to have been a relatively easy victory was far from preordained. Rather, it was the product of a long and complicated process, with antecedents reaching back to the creation of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in World War II. Established in January 1942 to expedite wartime planning and strategic coordination with the British, the Joint Chiefs operated initially under the direct authority and supervision of the President, performing whatever duties he assigned in his capacity as Commander in Chief. After the war, as part of the 1947 reorganization of the Armed Services under the National Security Act, the JCS acquired statutory standing with a list of assigned duties and became a corporate advisory body to the President, the Secretary of Defense, and the National Security Council. The corporate nature of the Joint Chiefs' advisory role ended upon passage of the 1986 Goldwater-Nichols Act, which transferred the tasks and duties previously performed collectively by the JCS to the Chairman. But in retaining the Joint Chiefs of Staff as an organized entity, the new law affirmed that they should continue to hold "regular" meetings and act as "military advisors" to the Chairman.

Prior to Goldwater-Nichols, the role, influence, and reputation of the Joint Chiefs of Staff waxed and waned. World War II undoubtedly marked the high-water mark of JCS authority and influence. Operating without a formal charter, they exercised a virtual monopoly on national security, oversaw the formulation of strategy, maintained essential military liaison with America's allies, and provided general

direction for a broad array of key war-related activities. Despite their wide-ranging mandate, however, the JCS never became a fully functioning general staff. The greatest weakness of the JCS system, then as later, was its composition as a committee of coequal Service chiefs. Expected in theory to rise above their individual concerns, they were all too susceptible to inter-Service pressures and rivalries, a legacy of the separateness between the Services in years past and a harbinger of things to come. With the Army focused on the war in Europe and the Navy concentrating on the Pacific, two sets of interests invariably competed for manpower and industrial production, resulting in disagreements over strategy and the allocation of resources. With the emergence of the Army Air Forces as a de facto separate Service, reaching consensus decisions became even more difficult. Fortunately, the level-headed influence of Admiral William D. Leahy, Chief of Staff to the Commander in Chief, and President Franklin D. Roosevelt's imposing presence prevented these quarrels and rivalries from getting out of hand. Yet given the personalities involved and the entrenched institutional interests each JCS member represented, it was remarkable that they accomplished what they did.

As World War II drew to a close, the role and functions of the Joint Chiefs began to change. In addition to their planning and advisory duties, the JCS acquired oversight responsibilities for the various unified and specified commands that sprang from the 1946 Unified Command Plan (UCP). An extension of the World War II practice of creating "supreme commands," the UCP affirmed that joint planning and joint operational control should go hand in hand. However, the most far-reaching changes affecting the chiefs' functions were those arising from the postwar debate over unification of the Armed Services. Embracing a War Department proposal, President Harry S. Truman sought to abolish the JCS and replace them with a single chief of staff and a closely unified structure overseen by a civilian secretary of defense. Opponents of unification, led by the Navy, championed a less centralized system. Arguing the need for improved coordination in lieu of outright unification, they opposed the single chief of staff concept and urged a loosely knit committee-style system that included preserving the JCS more or less unchanged. The ensuing compromise under the National Security Act of 1947 leaned toward the Navy's model and kept the JCS intact, subject to the direction, authority, and control of the Secretary of Defense. The Joint Staff, which had been an integral part of JCS operations during the war, also acquired statutory standing, but with a ceiling of only one hundred officers it was a mere shadow of its former self and was soon swamped with more work than it could handle.

The next few years were a period of painful adjustment for the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Promising "evolution, not revolution" to ease the transition, the first Secretary

of Defense, James Forrestal, took a go-slow approach to unification. Seeing himself as a coordinator, he looked to the Joint Chiefs for much-needed assistance and leadership in keeping the Services in line and in recommending the most effective and efficient allocation of resources. A daunting task, it tested the chiefs' patience with one another practically to the breaking point. Despite the menacing behavior of Moscow and several "war scares," the chiefs were often at odds over the assignment of Service functions and the choice of weapons and strategy for coping with the Soviet threat. As more and more of the disputes became public, they left the JCS with a tarnished image and a growing reputation as a committee of quarrelsome military bureaucrats intent on protecting vested interests at the expense of the common good.

Whether a more centralized system with stronger authority at the top could have avoided these early difficulties is open to question. While it might have helped, it would not have solved the underlying problem—a fundamental difference of opinion within the defense establishment on how to arm, train, and prepare for future wars. New technologies—the atomic bomb premier among them—and rapid advances in aviation, missiles, electronics, and other fields created fresh opportunities for the Services and new ways of looking at military strategy. But with money in short supply, inter-Service competition and friction displaced rational discussion. Treating one another as rivals rather than partners, the Services scrambled to lay claims to military functions that would guarantee them continuous future funding.

Early efforts to improve JCS performance met with mixed success. While Congress welcomed greater military efficiency and effectiveness, it refused to tamper with the basic JCS corporate structure lest it acquire the traits of a "Prussian-style general staff." Moving cautiously, Congress agreed in 1949 to add a full-time JCS Chairman who was without Service responsibilities and to double the size of the Joint Staff. While the Chairman's powers were initially narrowly defined, his designation as the Nation's senior military officer heightened his stature and prestige well beyond his legal authority. The first JCS Chairman, General Omar Bradley, USA, was initially guarded in exercising his authority and in offering advice. But as he became more familiar with what was expected of him, Bradley realized that he had no choice and had to become more actively involved. Adopting a procedure that other Presidents would copy, Truman directed that only the CJCS attend NSC meetings on a regular basis. As a result, it became almost routine for the Secretary of Defense, the President, and the National Security Council to work directly with or through the Chairman, a practice that further enhanced his de facto role as spokesman for the military. In dealing with the Service chiefs, however, the Chairman's powers to resolve disputes remained limited. He could coax and cajole and sometimes engineer compromises, but he could not compel cooperation. To preserve JCS

credibility, Chairmen often resorted to advancing their own interpretation of JCS advice rather than trying to compose differences and achieve a common view.

Meanwhile, the intensification of the Cold War, new U.S. commitments under the North Atlantic Treaty, and the emergence in the summer of 1949 of the Soviet Union as a nuclear power increased pressure on the United States to strengthen its defense posture. Driven by domestic budgetary considerations and recent breakthroughs in nuclear weapons design, the evolving U.S. strategy downplayed the role of conventional forces and stressed air-atomic retaliation by the Air Force's long-range bombers in case of Soviet aggression. Not everyone agreed that this was a sound course to follow, certainly not the Navy, which had its own competing view of national security built around a proposed fleet of flush-deck "super carriers." But as an all-around solution to the country's defense needs, the air-atomic strategy was irresistible. An intimidating threat, it was technologically feasible, commanded strong bipartisan support in Congress, and could be priced to fit practically any reasonable spending limit the White House might impose.

Following the outbreak of the Korean War, the brakes on military spending came off as the Truman administration launched a "peacetime" military buildup of unprecedented proportions. Under the guidelines laid down in NSC 68, defense planning pointed to a "year of maximum danger" in anticipation of which each Service received roughly an equal allocation of resources, an expensive but expeditious approach that allowed the JCS to go about their business amid reduced competition and rivalry. But as costs climbed and the expected showdown with the Soviets failed to materialize, attention shifted to developing a more stable defense posture for the "long haul." The process accelerated with the change of administrations in 1953. Finding the Joint Chiefs unable to agree on what should be done, President Dwight D. Eisenhower took matters into his own hands and gave defense policy a "new look." Convinced that atomic energy held the key, he developed a long-term deterrence posture resting on the threat of "massive retaliation" by the Air Force, backed by general purpose forces armed increasingly with tactical and battlefield nuclear weapons.

Eisenhower assumed that sooner or later the JCS would come around to his view that low-yield nuclear weapons represented the new "conventional" weapons and were suitable for limited warfare. Toward that end, both Admiral Arthur Radford and General Nathan Twining, the first two Chairmen he appointed, did what they could to elicit cooperation from the skeptical Service chiefs. Presented with repeated opportunities to test the President's theory during the Indochina and Formosa crises, they declined. For them as for others, crossing the nuclear threshold was becoming almost synonymous with all-out war. Since the objectives were invariably in Asia, there were awkward racial implications as well. Nonetheless, the

JCS accepted tactical nuclear weapons as an integral part of the American arsenal and encouraged NATO to follow suit as a means of offsetting the numerical Soviet advantage in conventional forces. NATO's "new approach" mirrored the new look on a lesser scale and relaxed pressures on the European allies to maintain sizable and expensive general purpose forces. But it also left NATO more dependent than ever on a nuclear response as its first line of defense, a problem that would dog the Alliance down to the dying days of the Cold War.

Despite strenuous efforts to hold down military spending, the Eisenhower administration achieved limited savings. Faced with unexpected increases in Soviet capabilities, it became involved in a steadily escalating strategic arms competition with the Soviet Union, first in long-range bombers and later in intercontinental ballistic missiles. Though the Air Force's monopoly on strategic bombers was well established, the missile field was wide open and soon produced a free-for-all competition among the Services that required direct intervention by the Secretary of Defense. Meanwhile, the Joint Chiefs continued to endorse across-the-board force proposals that exceeded available funding. Unable to overcome their "splits" and recommend an integrated statement of requirements, they eventually adopted a catch-all approach that lumped Service requirements together in no particular order of priority under the Joint Strategic Objectives Plan (renamed the Joint Strategic Planning Document in the late 1970s), which critics likened to a Christmas "wish list."

Frustrated by the disarray among his military advisors, Eisenhower sought further changes to the National Security Act aimed at improving JCS performance. Under revised legislation passed in the summer of 1958, the Chairman acquired about as much power and authority as he could reasonably exercise while still operating within the traditional JCS corporate structure and the consensus-based advisory system. At the same time, however, the new law bestowed additional responsibilities and authority on the Secretary of Defense that diminished the JCS role. From that point on, the Secretary of Defense and those around him—not the Chairman, the Service chiefs, or the Joint Staff—would be the center of military policy and decisionmaking, the galvanizing force, as it were, within the Department of Defense (DOD).

The nadir of JCS influence came during the 1960s as Secretary Robert S. McNamara took charge of the Pentagon and the Vietnam War. Given a free hand by Presidents Kennedy and Johnson to reform DOD, McNamara imposed a tight and highly sophisticated system of planning, programming, and budget management that gave the Office of the Secretary of Defense more control of the military than ever before. By the time he finished, the JCS had become a marginalized institution. Though McNamara insisted that he wanted the closest possible cooperation and collaboration with the Joint Chiefs, he did not hesitate to act unilaterally if it

suited his needs or he perceived the chiefs to be dragging their heels. Pushing the doctrine of "flexible response," he made reducing military dependence on nuclear weapons his first order of business, a goal popular with some in the military and with a growing number of civilian military theorists. But it was less appealing to planners on the Joint Staff and their counterparts in Europe who had to cope with limited resources to offset overwhelming Soviet superiority in conventional forces. Extending his writ into areas previously the exclusive domain of the JCS, he challenged prevailing assumptions about strategic requirements and established new targeting criteria, limiting them mainly to the needs of a retaliatory (second-strike) "assured destruction" capability. To curb future costs and growth in nuclear forces, McNamara capped the size of the U.S. strategic offensive arsenal (a ceiling which, in terms of launchers, remained more or less intact until the end of the Cold War) and practiced unilateral restraint in the acquisition and deployment of both anti-missile defense systems and of new weapons, especially those he deemed to have "first-strike" potential.

To the Joint Chiefs, the constraints McNamara imposed seemed almost certain to bring about parity if not inferiority in strategic forces vis-à-vis the Soviet Union as well as weakening deterrence and inviting Soviet aggression. But from Kennedy's Presidency on, JCS access to and influence within the Oval Office fell off sharply, limiting the chiefs' influence over defense policy and the weapons acquisition process. As a result of the Bay of Pigs debacle, Kennedy lost practically all trust in JCS advice and appointed his own in-house consultant on military affairs, retired Army Chief of Staff General Maxwell D. Taylor. A personal friend of Kennedy's, Taylor returned to active duty to become Chairman of the Joint Chiefs on the eve of the Cuban Missile Crisis and was the only JCS member who participated regularly in high-level meetings during that episode.

Taylor was the first Chairman to see himself almost exclusively as a "trusted agent" for the President and the Secretary of Defense. With the possible exception of Admiral Radford, previous Chairmen had adopted a middle-of-the-road approach, acting both as spokesmen for the "military viewpoint" (i.e., their Service colleagues) and as the administration's representative to the military. Once the Cuban Missile Crisis was behind him, however, Taylor devoted his time as Chairman to bringing the chiefs into line with White House and OSD preferences. A thankless task, it produced mixed results and diminished his stature and respect in the eyes of his JCS colleagues. The CJCS during Johnson's Presidency, General Earle G. Wheeler, USA, served both as a go-between for the JCS and the White House, and as an Oval Office advisor who eventually gained access to the President's inner circle. Subsequent Chairmen generally followed Wheeler's lead, though they

sometimes found it hard to tell where their responsibilities as JCS spokesmen ended and those of trusted agents of the President or Secretary began. Until Goldwater-Nichols redefined the CJCS's role and responsibilities, Chairmen customarily functioned as a little of both. None, however, came even close to matching the level of influence exercised collectively by the JCS in World War II.

The most trying times for the Joint Chiefs were during the Vietnam War. Finding their views and recommendations consistently rejected as too extreme, they gave in to a military strategy of graduated responses that they regarded as ineffectual and doomed to fail. That they dutifully went along with the Johnson administration's conduct of the war reflected not only their professionalism and dedication, but also their underlying belief that sooner or later the President, the Secretary of Defense, and the other civilians running the war would see the light, accept the JCS view, and initiate the necessary changes. But by the time that opportunity arose, public and congressional opinion had turned so strongly against the war that ramping up the conflict, as the JCS favored, was utterly unthinkable. In the wake of the Viet Cong's Tet offensive in early 1968, the JCS were about the only ones left in Washington who still rated the war as winnable.

As the Vietnam War wound down, the JCS struggled to adjust to the realities of a country that had lost confidence in its military and was increasingly skeptical of the anti-Communist containment policies of the past. Among the various consequences of the conflict, none was more profound than the breakdown of the bipartisan Cold War consensus that had governed and sustained American foreign policy since World War II. Opposition to Vietnam by a large and vocal sector of the American public had realigned the political landscape, while the emergence of the Great Society gave domestic programs a growing claim on resources in direct competition with the military's. The result was a greater-than-expected retrenchment in post-Vietnam military spending. During the 1950s and 1960s, the Defense Department had routinely consumed around 10 percent of the country's gross national product; from the early 1970s on, it was lucky to get half of that. Yet despite the severe cutbacks, competition among the Services for funds was less intense than after previous wars, thanks in large part to McNamara's programmatic and procedural changes, which now pre-allocated the bulk of the military budget around functional categories that changed little from year to year.

The most serious military problem facing the Joint Chiefs in the aftermath of Vietnam was the surge in Soviet offensive strategic power. Given the limited support in Congress for new defense programs, the Nixon administration turned to adroit diplomacy—détente with the Soviet Union and the quasi-alliance with China—to shore up the precarious American position. Forced to adjust, the JCS

became reluctant converts to the virtues of arms control, a key pillar of détente, as a means of curbing the threat posed by Soviet strategic forces. While they had shown a fleeting interest in the Baruch Plan for international control of atomic energy immediately after World War II, the JCS had since been among the most consistent skeptics and critics of arms control and disarmament. But with the Soviets steadily gaining in strategic nuclear power, and with little prospect that the United States would take up the challenge, the chiefs were compelled to reassess their position.

Indeed, no issue caused the Joint Chiefs more headaches during the later decades of the Cold War than the strategic arms control negotiations with the Soviet Union. While the Joint Chiefs saw no choice but to go along, they were uneasy with the whole arms control process and found the initial results—a 1972 treaty severely restricting antimissile deployments and a temporary "freeze" on offensive strategic launchers—deeply disturbing and generally at odds with U.S. interests. Missile defense was an area where the United States had been technologically ahead of the Soviets all along, and with the cap on land-based missile deployments, the Soviets now enjoyed a 60-percent advantage over the United States in ICBM launchers. The United States remained ahead in the number of targetable strategic warheads, though even that advantage was slipping away as the Soviets (copying the United States) turned increasingly to arming their long-range missiles with multiple independently targetable reentry vehicles. In debating the SALT I agreements before Congress in 1972, the Joint Chiefs made their endorsement of the accords conditional upon significant improvements in the U.S. strategic posture, including a new manned strategic bomber (the B–1), a more powerful ICBM (the MX), and a fleet of Trident submarines carrying more missiles with bigger payloads. Yet even with those enhancements, the JCS knew that the strategic balance was likely to remain about the same. The days of American strategic superiority were past, and whatever advantages that position may have conferred were long gone.

A curious anomaly of the post-Vietnam period was the extent to which the country's political leaders played down the role of military power in American foreign policy while trying to find new ways of making the Department of Defense and the JCS appear more efficient and effective. The explanation for this apparent paradox lies in the obvious desire of senior policymakers to avoid complications abroad like those that led to involvement in Vietnam, while shoring up the public's weakened confidence in its Armed Forces. One means of doing so was to revive JCS participation in the policy process on something other than the ad hoc basis of the Kennedy-Johnson years when military advice was practically ignored. Starting with the revival of the NSC system under President Richard M. Nixon and his assistant for national security affairs, Henry A. Kissinger, the JCS steadily regained

a regular voice in interagency deliberations that allowed them to make inputs to decisions and to have their ideas at least heard at practically every level.

Larger, more fundamental changes in the JCS system seemed inevitable but were slow in coming due to a lack of agreement on what they should entail. President Jimmy Carter leaned toward a more streamlined system that would do away with consensus-based advice. But he gave JCS reform low priority and became preoccupied with other matters—making peace between Israel and Egypt, transferring U.S. control of the Panama Canal, and, above all, negotiating a SALT II Treaty with the Soviet Union—that required JCS acquiescence if not outright support to get through Congress. In those circumstances, Carter could ill afford to engage in a reorganization battle with the chiefs and still expect them to endorse his policies enthusiastically. Letting the reorganization issue drift, he expected to return to it in his second term but never had the opportunity.

With the advent of the Reagan administration in 1981, attention turned to rebuilding the country's military power, a task begun cautiously in the dying days of the Carter administration as relations with the Soviet Union again deteriorated. Under Reagan, bolstering the Armed Forces mushroomed into the longest and largest peacetime military expansion in American history. Still, in terms of GNP, annual military spending during the Reagan years never came close to what it was between the Korean and Vietnam wars. By now, Soviet troops were heavily engaged in Afghanistan, Communist-backed insurgencies were gaining ground from southern Africa to Central America, and the Soviets were threatening NATO with the deployment of a new generation of highly accurate and more usable intermediate-range missiles known as the SS–20. With détente dead, the Cold War was again front and center.

Despite his high regard and lavish praise for the military, President Ronald Reagan used the Joint Chiefs sparingly to help orchestrate his administration's rearmament program. The chiefs' desires for improvements in the force posture were well known and were not much different from the agenda the President and his advisors brought with them into office. Like the expansion under NSC 68, the Reagan buildup was an all-Service affair, with a slight tilt toward the Navy for power-projection purposes. Once underway, it acquired a momentum of its own under spending guidelines negotiated between OSD and the Office of Management and Budget, a practice dating from McNamara's time. The chiefs' most lasting and innovative contribution came in February 1983 when, during a routine meeting with the President, they proposed a stepped-up research and development program for ballistic missile defense to explore new space-based technologies, thus planting the seeds of the Strategic Defense Initiative. The chiefs assumed that as the progenitors of the project they would play a major role in its development and act

as coordinators with the Services. But after giving SDI an enthusiastic endorsement, the President looked to Secretary of Defense Caspar W. Weinberger rather than the JCS to carry it forward.

Being well aware of the flaws and limitations of the JCS system, Reagan and Weinberger were content to work around the Joint Chiefs. Indeed, they saw nothing fundamentally wrong with the existing setup despite the ingrained culture of inter-Service rivalry and competition. By the early 1980s, power and control within the Defense Department were concentrated more than ever in the hands of the Secretary of Defense and his immediate staff. The Joint Chiefs, with their influence dimmed by Vietnam, were a relatively weak and pliable organization. Weinberger liked it that way and saw no need for changes that might dilute his authority. His critics in Congress, however, had other ideas, and with defense expenditures soaring they wanted more checks and balances within DOD. Pointing to a lengthy list of lapses in joint operations (the *Mayaguez* incident, the abortive Iran hostage rescue, the Grenada intervention, and the terrorist bombing of the Marine barracks in Beirut), they seized on proposals for improvements from a former CJCS, General David C. Jones, USAF, and revived the dormant campaign to reform the JCS. Out of the legislative action that followed emerged the Goldwater-Nichols Act in 1986.

A sharp departure from the pattern of previous defense reform measures, Goldwater-Nichols marked the triumph of congressional preferences over those of the Executive. During the debate leading to passage of the legislation, consultation between the administration and the reformers on Capitol Hill was perfunctory, strained, and limited. Many of the objections the administration raised had to do with the enormous amount of prescriptive detail that Congress wanted included to institutionalize "jointness" and root out alleged Service parochialism, much of it dealing with officer promotion and other personnel matters. Once the law was passed, there was little enthusiasm for it at OSD or the White House and even less among serving senior military officers. Realizing that it would take time to bring the Services around, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, Admiral William J. Crowe, Jr., adopted "evolution, not revolution" as his motto, an echo of Forrestal's sentiments toward unification four decades earlier.

Like the 1947 National Security Act, Goldwater-Nichols was a product of its times. While the earlier law drew its inspiration from the experiences of World War II, Goldwater-Nichols reflected a distinctly Cold War outlook. Addressing threats associated with the missile age, when rapid decisions based on prior planning could make all the difference, it stressed more streamlined command and control and crisp, clear-cut military planning and advice in lieu of the ponderous deliberations and sometimes ambiguous recommendations inherent in the traditional JCS corporate

system. By the time Goldwater-Nichols became law, however, the Cold War was already in the initial stages of winding down, rendering the need for such reforms less acute. With the advent of new, more moderate leadership in Moscow, the conclusion of the INF Treaty, the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, and the disintegration of Communist power in Eastern Europe, Washington and Moscow were on track toward a more durable modus vivendi. Increasingly, as the Cold War receded into the history books, the threats facing American military planners became less obvious and the requirements of national security more complex and subtle than coping with a heavily armed adversary like the Soviet Union.

Early tests of the Goldwater-Nichols reforms seemed to pass with flying colors, helped along by the pursuit of narrowly defined objectives—assuring the safe passage of oil tankers through the Persian Gulf for one, and overthrowing the brutish Panamanian dictator Manuel Noriega for another. Neither of those operations required more than a fraction of the enormous military power the United States amassed during the Cold War and both probably could have been carried out with equally effective results under the old JCS system. But with the benefits of the Goldwater-Nichols reforms gradually coming into play, their execution appeared to go more smoothly and efficiently.

Iraq's invasion and annexation of Kuwait in the summer of 1990 posed a bigger challenge. Yet from all outward appearances, the JCS seemed to take the matter in stride. Citing an uncommonly high level of cross-Service collaboration and integrated effort, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, General Colin L. Powell, USA, decreed *Desert Shield/Desert Storm* to be a model of joint operational art. Even so, there was a heavy dependence on the Services' planning staffs in shaping the air and ground campaigns and numerous instances of inter-Service friction stemming from continuing differences over doctrine and operating procedures. At the same time, Secretary of Defense Richard B. Cheney sometimes bypassed Powell and the Joint Staff and sought alternative recommendations outside the normal chain of command. Yet even if the first Gulf War was not the unqualified endorsement of Goldwater-Nichols principles that the law's proponents hoped, it amply demonstrated that the system was sound and likely to stay.

The rapid eviction of Iraqi forces from Kuwait also erased the remaining stains of Vietnam and restored the American public's confidence in its Armed Forces. One untoward consequence of the campaign, however, was that it fostered the erroneous and rather naïve belief that modern military technology could achieve wonders and that future wars could be fought quickly and successfully at limited cost and sacrifice. Underlying the American success against Iraq was the availability of overwhelming military power augmented by the Reagan buildup. Yet even before *Desert*

Shield/Desert Storm began, plans were well advanced to dismantle the Nation's huge Cold War defense establishment and replace it with a smaller, more efficient "base force." Recalling the debilitating effects of previous build-downs, the architect of the base force plan, General Powell, sought to preserve residual capabilities that would avoid the harsh and disruptive cutbacks of the past. But after the collapse of the Soviet Union in the summer of 1991, the lure of further "peace dividends" became irresistible. While the United States emerged from the Cold War as the only remaining "superpower," it was a title won by default that was soon to be accompanied by a significantly less robust military establishment.

The demise of the Cold War did not, of course, bring a cessation to threats from abroad. Likened sometimes to a marathon rather than a sprint, the challenge of preserving national security remained an ongoing problem. As the focal point of the Nation's military planning, the Joint Chiefs of Staff organization continues to play an active and prominent role in national policy. Because of the changes mandated under the Goldwater-Nichols Act, JCS participation increasingly reflects the judgments, preferences, and recommendations of the Chairman and the Joint Staff, rather than the corporate assessments of the past. All the same, the JCS remains a unique organization whose individual members can still approach the Secretary of Defense directly to discuss contentious issues. Over time JCS contributions have profoundly helped to shape the role and impact of the United States in world affairs. To be sure, the JCS system as it emerged and evolved from World War II on was hardly perfect. Yet without it, military planning would have been far different and more haphazard, and the outcomes would have been both less certain and less favorable to the protection of U.S. interests.