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BRINGING INTO BALANCE THE MILITARY INSTRUMENT OF POWER

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BRINGING INTO BALANCE THE MILITARY INSTRUMENT OF POWER

MR. GERSON: Good evening -- and it is almost evening. I'm Elliot Gerson of the Aspen Institute. And it's my great privilege to welcome you to the last panel of the day, and I know it's going to be a terrific one. Lesley Stahl of CBS News is going to be interviewing General Martin Dempsey, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the topic, "Bringing into Balance the Military Instrument of Power." Lesley.

MS. STAHL: Thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you.

(Applause)

MS. STAHL: Well, it's a great pleasure to have General Dempsey with us. He is the 18th chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the highest ranking military officer, the principal military advisor of the President. Before this job the general served as Army Chief of Staff. He's been in the military for more than 39 years. General Dempsey, it is an honor to be up here with you, and I know we all thank you for being here with us today. My first comment is imagine, *60 Minutes*, and it's not even Sunday. And --

(Laughter)

GEN. DEMPSEY: If it were Sunday and it was you sitting here, I would be leaving.

(Laughter)

MS. STAHL: It's the story of my life. It's the story of my life.

GEN. DEMPSEY: Yeah.

MS. STAHL: This is the first time you've ever been to this conference, correct?

GEN. DEMPSEY: It is. Actually some of you in the audience have been kind enough to invite me 4 years in

a row, but I wanted to wait till things calmed down before I came, so.

(Laughter)

MS. STAHL: Well, that brings up the article in *The New York Times* yesterday that said that it is unprecedented -- speaking of things calming down -- to have so many crises going on at the same time that overlap and intertwine. A lot of the crises involve questions of U.S. military force.

GEN. DEMPSEY: Sure.

MS. STAHL: And several of them leave us without really viable partners to help us in these situations. So let's begin with ISIS as a topic. Eric Holder has said that ISIS is a deadly threat, its bomb makers are a clear and present danger. Let's start off by you giving us your assessment of the threat from ISIS.

GEN. DEMPSEY: Well, as you know, ISIS -- and I know we have some of our Arabic partners in the audience -- they probably refer to as DAISH and you'll hear it referred to as ISIL as well. I think it's important for us to understand that as we look at these groups, whether we call them Salafi-jihadist or religious extremists or violent extremists, it's important to both recognize the differences among them because there are -- they are different.

Some of them are opportunistic, some of them seek to establish a sense of political Islam and theocracies under Sharia law, and some of them are apocalyptic actually, meaning they have such a world view that it becomes of a magnitude that makes them I think especially dangerous. And ISIS -- and as you know I think -- the S, the last S -- it's the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham, and the ancient kingdom of al-Sham stretched from Lebanon to the current state of Israel, to Syria, to Jordan, to Iraq, and to Kuwait.

So this is a group that has aspirations and seeks a sense of religious legitimacy. And that sense of

religious legitimacy is as the heir to the Caliphate. They actually, at least the senior leaders of ISIS, believe themselves to be the heir to the Caliphate. They can only sustain that religious legitimacy if they continue to succeed. So this is not a group that can go halfway. It has to keep moving toward its ultimate end of day's apocalyptic narrative or it will lose support because it loses religious legitimacy.

They're extraordinarily exclusive. You are not part of them unless you believe exactly what they believe. They use brutality in a way that's quite remarkable even in the realm of terrorist organizations and they get away with it because they're succeeding. They have to be at the very least initially contained and then disrupted and then ultimately defeated. And what makes it very hard is that that ultimate defeat has to come from within the Sunni population. It can't --

MS. STAHL: It can't come from us?

GEN. DEMPSEY: Well, it can be enabled and assisted by us, but at the point when we will be able to consider them defeated it'll be because the moderate Sunnis of the world and the region reject them.

MS. STAHL: For your planning do you consider ISIS a terrorist organization or an army in that they have leadership, they control territory --

GEN. DEMPSEY: The --

MS. STAHL: -- and how does that consideration affect strategy?

GEN. DEMPSEY: You know, words count and -- how many lawyers in the room, by the way?

(Laughter)

MS. STAHL: I think a lot.

GEN. DEMPSEY: That's when words really count. But I'll tell you militarily I think the distinction is

probably somewhat meaningless to us, meaning that the tactics that they employ or whether it's the tactics or the conventional force and holding ground and seizing cities and -- or suicide bombers and the tactics of terror, they will employ whatever tactic they have to employ.

And the way they've been successful, by the way, is by initially infiltrating and then having their ideology through the use of misinformation, in our view, and the information space, and preying upon this youth bulge and disenfranchised populations in parts of the world that are not being governed inclusively. And then they just pop up one day and you have to deal with them. And you deal with them by either allowing them their way or suffering the consequence. They're very dangerous.

MS. STAHL: So we have put back some military personnel, their flying surveillance. You've just sent in more advisors. Is the mission to rehabilitate the Iraqi army or is our mission to destroy ISIS?

GEN. DEMPSEY: Well, look, ISIS is a -- I heard General Clark earlier talking about the need for us to take a long view of some of these issues. And boy, in the case of this particular group but also many of these organizations that have filled the void. You know, we talk about governed and ungoverned space, it's not ungoverned space, it's just not being governed in a way that we would like it to be governed. ISIS is governing in Northern and Western Iraq.

So -- but to the point about this -- or this idea of the long view, the way, as I said earlier, that ISIS or ISIL will be defeated ultimately will be because pressure is placed on it from multiple directions and with multiple partners. So this isn't about us deciding that ISIL is the latest in a series of threats and taking it on unilaterally. This very much has to have the support of the government in Baghdad. And as you know, that whether we have a credible, reliable partner in Baghdad is -- remains to be seen as they form their government.

We have to find a way with partners to appeal to the moderate Sunni throughout the region to reject this ideology. We have to look to the Turks, look to the Kurds who can put pressure in different directions. This has to be a regional -- ISIS doesn't exist in one place, by the way. And in fact you might be interested to know that on this day in history 91 years ago, the Lausanne Treaty was signed, which was the last of the treaties to be signed to end World War I.

It was signed by the Turks and it recognized the border between what is modern-day Syria and Iraq. Ninety-one years later that border doesn't exist. And so you -- this is not a group where we can focus on it exclusively in one country. It has to be a partnership, a coalition, and we have to build partners who can reject it from inside out.

MS. STAHL: Let's talk about partners, then --

GEN. DEMPSEY: Okay.

MS. STAHL: -- because it seems that the available partners very often are adversaries. So can we start with Assad? And let me ask you if it's possible to have a strategy that defeats ISIS that does not include Assad. And at this point given all the dire warnings about ISIS isn't Assad the lesser of the two evils, and does it make sense to join up with him to defeat this enemy of ours now?

GEN. DEMPSEY: Well, let me look -- that's a policy question. But given the fact that in my role as chairman I actually participate in fora where policy decisions are made, I certainly wouldn't be one that would suggest that we find the lesser of two evils here. I think there's enough credible partners in the region in Europe -- I mean look, Europe ought to be excited about -- as excited about this as we are because --

MS. STAHL: Yeah, but they're not.

GEN. DEMPSEY: Well no, but they should be -- and you're going to ask me a question in a moment -- I

think about their eastern flank, but they ought to be concerned about their southern flank because much of the effect of this instability and violence is making its way into Europe's southern flank. I just believe that with the right effort we can find enough partners, both in the region and outside of it who are credible, in order to put the kind of pressure we need to on this organization.

MS. STAHL: But you've said that the local people have to defeat them in the end. Can they be defeated without Assad? Is that possible?

GEN. DEMPSEY: Without Assad?

MS. STAHL: Without cooperation from Assad that --

GEN. DEMPSEY: Yeah, I --

MS. STAHL: -- by joining up in some way.

GEN. DEMPSEY: Well, I mean one could argue I think persuasively that Assad has cleverly used one violent organization against another. I don't have any intels to corroborate that. But I mean if you're trying to -- if you want to think through a strategy that might work for Assad you could find a way to have him pit these opposition groups against each other and allow him to pick them off kind of one group at a time.

You could look at what he's doing and come to the conclusion that's what he's doing. But you know, Assad -- the Assad regime is isolated in every possible way except for the two countries that we know notably who are supporting them for their own reasons. But I don't think we have to make a decision that we should partner with Assad against ISIL.

MS. STAHL: Okay. What about Iran? It -- does it -- is it possible to defeat ISIS without involving Iran? And is it -- does it make sense to have a working arrangement with Iran? For example, we would agree that we would not interfere or thwart each other's actions when it comes to ISIS in Iraq --

GEN. DEMPSEY: Yeah.

MS. STAHL: -- because they're doing what we're doing. They have advisors, they are flying drones.

GEN. DEMPSEY: Yeah.

MS. STAHL: Does that make sense to partner with Iran?

GEN. DEMPSEY: No, doesn't make sense to me. I don't -- how many of you served in Iraq at any time in the near future? You know, there's a lot of blood on -- American blood on Iran's hands. And that's not to say that at some point in the future we don't all find a way to reconcile with each other, but we're not there yet. I can tell you that although we're making progress with Iran on their nuclear enterprise, you know, slow but steady progress, Iran is a challenge within the region with its proliferation weapons, with its surrogates and proxies.

The -- this thing we call the Iranian Threat Network is not just a regional network but a global network. And it is not -- it -- just to try to solve one problem it wouldn't make sense to me to embrace a country, a nation state that is creating so many other problems. Now that said, we're both operating at some level in the same space right now.

MS. STAHL: Right.

GEN. DEMPSEY: And that certainly requires a level of coordination and possibly deconfliction. But I think we're a long way from concluding that we should partner with Iran against the ISIL.

MS. STAHL: Well, maybe "partner" was an unfortunate word. What about cooperating?

GEN. DEMPSEY: I'm not there. I mean I think that -- again, you know, what happens regionally if all of a sudden we announce an initiative to collaborate,

cooperate with Iran? I mean how many of my Sunni brothers from the Sunni Arab states are in the audience? I mean --

MS. STAHL: Yeah, but a working arrangement is something you kind of do quietly. I was even going to ask you if we already have one.

GEN. DEMPSEY: Now, wait a minute. You work for *60 Minutes*. You're going to tell me about quietly in Washington, D.C.?

MS. STAHL: Yeah, but we didn't find out -- but we try to find out. So there is no tacit understanding, nothing?

GEN. DEMPSEY: No.

MS. STAHL: Okay. What about the Kurds? You mentioned the Kurds. In order to get that Peshmerga back in the fight against -- and get them fighting ISIS, should the United States help in their quest for autonomy and a right to sell their own oil? Because from what I've read, they are not -- they're going to sit back unless and until there's a new government or they get some of their own power.

GEN. DEMPSEY: Well, those of us that have served there actually have gotten to know the Kurds quite well. It's -- they've been very clear about their long-term aspirations. I think, though, that for the time being if they can find a way to be convinced that the government in Baghdad will be truly a unity government, that their share of Iraq's larger resources will be guaranteed as this government forms going forward, I don't think they are necessarily -- you know, you'll hear that -- there'll be speeches made about this is our moment and now is the time.

Frankly I don't think that's actually a consensus opinion. Apparently they're going to run a referendum sometime soon. But I think it's in the best interest of the region and of Kurdistan at this point to see a unified government in Iraq that can hold Iraq together. But that's not discounting the fact that if the

unity government fails to form, or if the government even after it forms doesn't find a way to live up to the promises made by the previous government, never fulfilled, then I think that could be a moment in their history when they choose to go their own way.

MS. STAHL: By most accounts, the number of men in the ISIS force is 7,000. How are --

GEN. DEMPSEY: How many?

MS. STAHL: Seven thousand in Iraq, in Iraq --

GEN. DEMPSEY: I don't know. I mean they've been sweeping up -- you know, they've -- when they took over the prison in Mosul they turned, you know, another thousand or so -- they have another thousand or so join the ranks.

MS. STAHL: So it's --

GEN. DEMPSEY: I -- you're probably correct in the ballpark on those that are exclusively affiliated with ISIL. But there is a -- you know, there is a syndicate that has formed with disenfranchised Sunni opposition, you know, the Naqshbandia group, JRTN and others who are working with ISIL for the reason I mentioned earlier, because ISIL is winning. And so when you are disenfranchised and believing that the government in Baghdad will never be inclusive and never allow you to be part of the government, you'll back a winner until that winner is contained.

MS. STAHL: Well, it's in the thousands. And how do you explain that they were able to overrun the U.S.-trained Iraqi army? I mean it's mind-boggling.

GEN. DEMPSEY: Yeah. Well, let me put it this way. As I've watched this occur, I would suggest to you that they weren't overcome militarily because they didn't stand and fight. They were overcome because they had come to the conclusion -- with some help from ISIL with corruption and coercion and threats to their families they had been -- they had become convinced that their future

did not lie with the government in Baghdad and that this group called ISIL was -- had so much momentum and had -- and was such a brutal enemy that there was no -- look, why do any of us in uniform stand and fight?

You know, it's not just because we wear the uniform. We stand and fight because we believe in what we stand and fight for. And if that ever -- you know, if we're ever placed in a position where you didn't believe what you're fighting for, you know, you wouldn't see the kind of military you have in the United States today.

MS. STAHL: General Odierno told us day before -- yesterday? -- yesterday that the Iraqi forces saw their commanders flee from the battlefield in helicopters and that's when they -- the --

GEN. DEMPSEY: Well, I can't speak for the rank and file. I think the leadership did come to the conclusion that there was just no reason for them to defend the Maliki government.

MS. STAHL: You know, first we established that they are a clear and credible threat, ISIS. But I don't hear from you any sense of urgency. I get, you know, we're going to wait for the Kurds to come around --

GEN. DEMPSEY: Yeah.

MS. STAHL: -- we're going to sit back and see what happens. And meanwhile, they're taking more territory in Syria, they're still in Tikrit, they're still in Mosul, and they're moving forward even -- you say they're moving forward, they have to keep moving forward. And yet they are a threat even to us. So why no urgency?

GEN. DEMPSEY: Well, I wouldn't suggest to you that I don't feel some urgency about the, you know, the ISIL threat. But you know, as I mentioned to you, ISIL has some longer term objectives that we should acknowledge. And we should take the longer view on how to deny them those objectives. The immediate task is to determine whether Iraq has a political future, because if Iraq has a political future then we will work through Iraq

among others to deal with the ISIL threat. If Iraq does not have a political future as an inclusive unity government, then we're going to have to find other partners. To take -- yeah?

MS. STAHL: Are you talking militarily?

GEN. DEMPSEY: I'm talking -- well, I mean it's pretty hard to discuss military options devoid of policy decisions at this point. What I'm talking about is a strategy that initially assesses, tries to better understand the threat, assesses that which exists or remains, that can either contain it and degrade it, and what that force might need if it were to try to defeat ISIL to work on the periphery, to squeeze this thing from as many directions as possible.

And you know, to precipitously if you will, take military action might gain some tactical advantage frankly, but it wouldn't do much for us to build the kind of strategy that I think we need.

MS. STAHL: Is the United States government military totally committed to destroying ISIS?

GEN. DEMPSEY: Let me speak for the United States military. The United States military does consider ISIL a threat to -- initially to the region and our close allies, longer term to the United States of America. And therefore we are preparing a strategy that has a series of options to present to our elected leaders on how we can initially contain, eventually disrupt, and finally defeat ISIL over time.

MS. STAHL: Okay. Let's switch to Ukraine and Russia. There were reports today that the Russians were firing from Russian territory into Ukraine. How does that change the situation, if it does?

GEN. DEMPSEY: Well, I think it change -- I think it does change the situation. I mean you've got -- you know, you've got a Russian government that has made the conscious decision to use its military force inside of another sovereign nation to achieve its objectives --

first time I think, probably since 1939 or so that that's been the case. So you've got -- in my view you've got a very different security environment inside of Eastern Europe.

But we also I think probably should recognize that our -- it -- our concerns are not just about Eastern Ukraine. I mean this is a change in the relationship of Europe and Russia and a change in the relationship of the United States and Russia. And I can't define for you today as I sit here what that change means, but I can certainly tell you that it's -- it -- there is a change in -- there must be now a change in that relationship.

Look, since 2008 the Russian military has increased its capability, it's increased its proficiency, and it has increased the level of its activities -- long-range aviation, air-launched cruise missile testing. They clearly are on a path to assert themselves differently not just in Eastern Europe but in Europe in the main and toward the United States. Now, I don't know where that takes us right now. But if you're asking me do I think there's been a change in the relationship, I would have to say absolutely.

MS. STAHL: Well, he's clearly expanding. He's not in any way withdrawing, he's not even sitting in place; he's expanding. And what is the appropriate military or diplomatic or both response from us for that -- for what he's doing?

GEN. DEMPSEY: Well, first of all, when you say "us" and I sit here wearing the uniform of the United States armed forces, I want to make sure you know that I think our first instinct correctly should be to define what it means to NATO. I mean that's why NATO was created -- the North Atlantic Treaty Organization -- was to increase stability, offset Soviet aggression at the time, but maintain a stable Europe. And we've been successful at it for 60 years.

So the first step here is to have that conversation in the halls of NATO while recognizing the change and taking stock in ourselves, in our capability,

in our readiness, in our deterrent capabilities. But the first step should be to ask NATO what does this mean. And by the way there's a summit coming up in September, and that seems to me to be fortuitous.

MS. STAHL: Well, how much do you think our withdrawing from Iraq and Afghanistan and the clear signals we sent about a reluctance to use force is playing into this? Is he reading the United States and Europe and saying, hey, I can do whatever I want? And so he is doing whatever he wants.

GEN. DEMPSEY: Look, I'm not one to -- first of all, the United States military is not war-weary. The country may be, that's for the country to decide. The United States military stands ready to do what the nation asks it to do. I can tell you for a fact that my military counterparts around the globe recognize that we are still the military, the partner of choice everywhere we go. So the Russian military, to the extent that it would have a voice with Putin, would not suggest that just because we've taken some decisions to either use force or not over the past couple of years that in any way it provides them an opportunity to be expansionist.

I think this is very clearly Putin the man himself with a vision for Europe as he sees it for -- to what he considers to be an effort to redress grievances that were burdened upon Russia after the fall of the Soviet Union, and also to appeal to ethnic Russian enclaves across Eastern Europe with both in a foreign policy objective but also a domestic policy objective. And he's very aggressive about it. And he's got a playbook that has worked for him now two or three times. And he will continue to --

MS. STAHL: Yeah, because no one's saying, hey, you can't -- tell us about the Russian army. You said that they're bulking up. How do they -- how do we stick up against them in terms of military capability?

GEN. DEMPSEY: Russia has -- yeah --

MS. STAHL: Are we so far ahead of them?

GEN. DEMPSEY: Sorry?

MS. STAHL: Are we miles ahead of them?

GEN. DEMPSEY: Well, conventionally for sure, the -- although the Russian conventional force has become more professional -- more professional -- it's not a professional force in the sense that we talk about ourselves and some of our closest allies. But they've become more professional. As I said, they've added capability, they've -- they even increased their readiness pretty significantly.

There was a moment in time probably between 1995 and 2005 when they didn't exercise or -- '95 and 2005 when they didn't exercise or train or do any of the things that actually make a military force agile and responsive. But they've come a long way since then in terms of their conventional capability. But make no mistake about it, they've invested mostly in their strategic capabilities. They've invested in technology dramatically. Technology is intended to offset our advantages.

MS. STAHL: When they start shooting from their territory into Ukraine what do we do? What kind of meetings take place? What kind of elevation of concern happens with NATO, with us, with you, with the White House? Has a level of concern been hiked up --

GEN. DEMPSEY: Yeah -- well, first thing I'm going to do is send my -- couple of my lawyers over there and they'll get that straight because they -- I'm sure they don't have a legal basis to do that, so.

(Laughter)

MS. STAHL: Yeah. All right, we'll go to court.

GEN. DEMPSEY: Right. But in point of fact when Russia has made a decision of that magnitude to change the -- what has been the accepted order, you know, the sanctity of sovereign nations, my fear is actually -- you know, if I have a fear about this, it's that Putin may

actually light a fire that he loses control of. In other words, you know, I -- these ethnic enclaves -- there's a rising tide of nationalism, and nationalism is -- it can be a very dangerous instinct and impulse.

MS. STAHL: Yeah, I know.

GEN. DEMPSEY: There's a rising tide of nationalism in Europe right now that has been created by -- in many ways by these Russian activities that I find to be quite dangerous.

MS. STAHL: Well, you -- the idea that he was changing the order started when he went into Crimea and then sending the -- these missile launchers and missiles into Ukraine. So this is the next step. This isn't the beginning. We're into it.

GEN. DEMPSEY: Yeah, the -- I --

MS. STAHL: I mean it's escalating, right?

GEN. DEMPSEY: Yeah. No -- that's right. I mean at a time when -- you know, when I think there may be some folks who could convince themselves that Putin would be looking for a reason to deescalate, he's actually taking a decision to escalate.

MS. STAHL: And what? We're just sitting around having phone conversations?

GEN. DEMPSEY: Who me?

(Laughter)

MS. STAHL: What -- I mean the United States is letting this happen. It's kind of stunning, isn't it?

GEN. DEMPSEY: Well, look, I mean again --

MS. STAHL: Talk about a crisis, huh?

GEN. DEMPSEY: Yeah. Well, I wouldn't misinterpret my presence here today sitting with you in a --

(Laughter)

GEN. DEMPSEY: I missed half of the conference today --

MS. STAHL: Yes, you did.

GEN. DEMPSEY: -- for reasons that I won't share with you. But I mean, we have a very active ongoing process to think through what support we may provide to Ukraine. That debate is ongoing. We have conversations with our NATO allies about increasing their capability and readiness. We're looking inside of our own readiness models to look at things we haven't had to look at for 20 years frankly, about basing and lines of communication and sea lanes.

And you know -- I mean, what with the military does in -- when faced with these crises is -- our job is preparedness, deterrence, and readiness. And I can assure you that we are providing our NATO allies with forces to help them deter. We are looking at our own readiness models. And I know you're going to ask me a question later about whether our current budget status is helpful or hurtful in that regard. But we're not sitting still, even though I'm literally sitting still right now.

(Laughter)

MS. STAHL: Well, you brought up the budget and you have issued dire warnings about the budget because you're still operating under the spending caps --

GEN. DEMPSEY: Yeah, the budget control and --

MS. STAHL: -- the sequestration.

GEN. DEMPSEY: Yeah.

MS. STAHL: So tell us what's going on with

that. Are you -- I know you're pushing to get more money.

GEN. DEMPSEY: Well, you know, it's funny you used that phrase "pushing." I mean, one of the things we try to do, those of us in uniform, is not, you know, simply be seen as another special interest group arguing for additional budget share. And we do that by talking about risk and readiness. Now, I will tell you that risk and readiness are really illusive terms. I mean, we live it every day. You know, we live the balancing of risks around the globe and we work on readiness every day, but when you try to articulate that, it sometimes is not as persuasive as I certainly would like it to be.

But that said, let me give you the -- you know, I've tried -- you know, I'm an English major from Duke University as you know, and I've tried on every -- I've tried every adjective I can think of in the English language to describe the effect that this is having and will have to no avail. I mean, and you know, Secretary Panetta and others have even made up words I think to try to describe it.

(Laughter)

GEN. DEMPSEY: But it's just not resonating. So here's -- let's try this out. Sequestration limits strategic options. We have never in my history -- I'm 40 years in the Army by the way, we have never ever had a point in my 40 years in the military where someone would say go do this and where I could say, okay, I'll do it, but if I go over there, I can't be over here. Never happened. We're approaching that point right now.

We got a little relief in '14 and '15; '16 goes off the cliff again and down to the BCA level. We have a near-term readiness crisis. We have a force that I can't train at that size. And then eventually we shrink the force and now it's back in balance, but in my view it's too small to meet our global obligations.

MS. STAHL: Right now?

GEN. DEMPSEY: No, right now it's sized -- it's

properly-sized, but we're not supporting it with readiness dollars because that's the only place we can go to meet these cuts. Eventually the force shrinks, and I can keep it ready, but it's too small. So the Budget Control Act will have the following effect on the security of the United States; we will no longer be immune from coercion.

Creighton Abrams said that by the way in 1974. He said the job of the United States military is to keep the country immune from coercion, and if we stay on this path, we will no longer be as immune to coercion as you think we should be.

MS. STAHL: Wow. What happened to the two-war strategy? Is that our model anymore or we just can't afford that anymore?

GEN. DEMPSEY: Well, you know, you mentioned earlier that you -- that -- actually I think it was the narrator that introduced us that said that this topic of this was about looking at the military in, you know, assessing and rebalancing it. Rebalancing the military after --

MS. STAHL: Right.

GEN. DEMPSEY: -- 12 years of war. I would suggest here that the use of military -- we are at one of those points in our history where the use of military -- it's -- that's it's a very healthy thing to have a conversation about the use of military power. So as I look across the globe, if I look at the Pacific, the Pacific is a -- is an understandable, traditional nation state power-on-power environment; the use of military power in the traditional sense, power-on-power deterrence, you know, contingency planning, force deterrent options, presence models that deter and assure allies.

Clean as a whistle. I completely understand it because I've lived with it. I've lived with it for 40 years. When I look at the Middle East, the Middle East is actually characterized as inherent weakness. So if in the Pacific you've got this kind of rising tide of nation states and nationalism in which the use of the military

instrument is kind of coherent, the Middle East is exactly the opposite. It's the complete collapse of nation states and institutions and governance structures and the relationship of the governed and the governing.

It's collapsing in the Middle East. Use of the military instrument of power there is far more subtle, far more complex, and if you're not careful, far more likely to have an opposite of your intended effect. And so -- and then if I go to Europe, I find Europe to be kind of almost some place halfway between where you've got this rising tide of nationalism in response to some of the Russian assertiveness, but you've also got the kind of counter-instinct of forming large organizations like the European Union where you actually ask nations to suppress their sense of nationhood.

So I've got three completely different challenges in trying to decide how to use the military instrument of power. You asked me what happened to the two major contingency operation or the two-war strategy. I just think that it became somewhat incoherent given the nature of the threats around us. If you're asking me can we do more than one thing or two things or three things at a time, absolutely.

But I think we've got to be a little more thoughtful about what we're trying to accomplish and how to use the military instrument to do it.

MS. STAHL: If one of the aims is to deter, it seems with all these crises that are bundling up, bubbling up, that we're not deterring. And it probably isn't because we don't have our military strength, it must be because the world is reading our reluctance to use that military strength. Do you think that's why we have these proliferating crises right now because of the message we're sending we're not deterring?

GEN. DEMPSEY: Well, there's almost too many ideas in that question --

MS. STAHL: Okay.

GEN. DEMPSEY: -- to be answered.

MS. STAHL: Tick them off.

GEN. DEMPSEY: No, seriously. So here's what I would say; I'm in an awkward position. I know that -- I'm not looking for sympathy by the way, but I'm in an awkward position --

(Laughter)

GEN. DEMPSEY: -- because on the one hand I've got to articulate the effect of sequestration. You know, I didn't go out looking -- sequestration by the way was handed to me the day after I became the chairman, just by happenstance.

MS. STAHL: Wow. Wow.

GEN. DEMPSEY: So I have this obligation to advise both the administration and the Congress of the United States on the effect of the Budget Control Act. And in so doing I have to be candid with them about the effect it's having on the force. And when I do that, I'm contributing to a message of decline.

Now, let me tell you, I am not -- and I do not ascribe to the notion that either America or the United States Military is in decline. I just don't buy it. We have the resources we need today. We may not in the future, but we have the resources we need today to maintain the security interests of the United States of America and keep ourselves and our allies safe.

It doesn't mean I can go every place in the world that somebody might suggest I should go. But it does mean that if we're deliberate and thoughtful about our priorities and our interests, we can manage the security interests of the nation. But the narrative is pulling apart -- the narrative of budget decline is pulling apart from what I find to be a narrative that we should be having which is, okay, we've got a military that's extraordinarily capable, combat-tested, proud of what it's done, flexible and agile, can do almost anything

you need it to do. But you shouldn't let that waste away. Whether we use it or not is not my decision.

MS. STAHL: Understand, but I guess the -- answer the second part of that question.

GEN. DEMPSEY: What was it?

(Laughter)

MS. STAHL: It was about the aim of the military is to deter, and yet because of our reluctance to use the force that is capable and ready, we are not deterring it.

GEN. DEMPSEY: Well, look, I'm not sure that's - - I don't know that I would agree with that. I mean, you know, that we're not -- deterrence is hard to measure by the way. But I think our deterrent value is sound against nation states. I'm not -- I don't know how you --

MS. STAHL: What about China? Look what they're doing. They're --

GEN. DEMPSEY: Well, look, I mean --

MS. STAHL: -- ignoring us too. They're saying we can do what we want here.

GEN. DEMPSEY: Really? I wouldn't suggest that --

MS. STAHL: Well, those islands in the Japanese --

GEN. DEMPSEY: -- that China is ignoring us. China has a long term -- speaking of long term, you know, long term is good when you're talking about security in military operations. China has a -- it's a transparent strategy actually to assert its territorial claims in the East China Sea and the South China Sea. I will tell you that our mil-to-mil relationship in China is the best that it's been in the 40 years that I've been in the military.

I think we have to keep it that way. I think

one thing China actually appreciates, as we do, is candor, and you know, we're very candid with each other. As for whether our deterrent value is as great as it should be in the Pacific, I think it is. Doesn't mean that China is not going to continue to push towards its objectives any more than it means that we won't try to build multinational, you know, cooperation and institutions so that China can't pick off our allies one at a time.

I mean, we've actually got a pretty coherent strategy. It may not -- that may not appear to be that based on this conversation. But I think --

(Laughter)

GEN. DEMPSEY: -- I think our deterrent value in the Pacific is sound. But you know, there is just some things that exist in today's environment, security environment that are not -- that may not be -- you may not be able to deter them. You know, we talked about an organization like ISIL that -- they're not going to be deterred by conventional military power. They will be deterred when we and partners are successful turning -- separating them from the populations in which they breed.

MS. STAHL: Okay. It's almost time to turn you over to the toughies out there.

GEN. DEMPSEY: Okay.

MS. STAHL: But first, just getting away from everything we've been discussing to ask you one personal question.

GEN. DEMPSEY: Yeah.

MS. STAHL: You went to West Point, and then you went to get your master's which you alluded to at Duke --

GEN. DEMPSEY: Right.

MS. STAHL: -- in English, and very specifically in 19th century Irish literature?

GEN. DEMPSEY: The Irish Renaissance. You didn't even know they had one of those, did you?

(Laughter)

MS. STAHL: You know, it leads me to wonder, you know, here you go and you get a master's in English. I'm thinking he wanted to be an English teacher, but no one would hire him, so he went back to the military.

GEN. DEMPSEY: No, nothing that simple.

MS. STAHL: No. No, no, no.

GEN. DEMPSEY: Yeah. I --

MS. STAHL: But why English? Tell us why you went back to get the master's.

GEN. DEMPSEY: You know, I wanted to challenge myself to do something -- I wanted to challenge myself to do something with which I was completely unfamiliar. I was about 8 years or so into my military career, and I got an offer to go back to teach at West Point. And the offer came from both the history department and the English department. And I thought to myself that either one of those would have been a reasonably sound path for me.

But I actually chose English because it was the one I probably felt least confident in. I knew that if I was to be a future senior officer that the ability to express yourself in -- orally and in writing becomes a more important credential. And I actually wanted to go and immerse myself inside of a culture. I mean, there's nothing that sticks out like a 30-year-old Irish kid from Bayonne, New Jersey, who's done nothing but wear a uniform in catholic school and then at West Point, and then in the Army to go someplace like Duke University into the English department.

So it was -- it just -- I just wanted to be out of my comfort zone, and I pulled it off.

(Laughter)

GEN. DEMPSEY: But actually I do think it was -- as I look back at my career, it was one of those times when I learned not only a lot about myself, but I gained an appreciation for other cultures, other people, other viewpoints, other ways of expressing yourself, you know. It was just a fantastic experience.

MS. STAHL: Well, you do express yourself very well, General.

GEN. DEMPSEY: Thank you.

MS. STAHL: All right, questions?

GEN. DEMPSEY: All right, don't you tell me we're not deterring anybody for God's sake.

(Laughter)

MS. STAHL: Oops. Help me, come on, let's have some questions.

GEN. DEMPSEY: I've got -- we've got 260,000 men and women out in doing forward presence, and I'm not deterring anybody. Goodness gracious. Yeah.

MS. STAHL: This is going to be a theme.

GEN. DEMPSEY: Yeah. Yeah.

MS. STAHL: Help me people. Raise your hands.

GEN. DEMPSEY: Yeah.

MS. STAHL: Go ahead.

MR. BARON: Hi, Kevin Baron from Defense One. How are you?

GEN. DEMPSEY: Good to see you.

MR. BARON: On Russia again, can you tell us how much do you -- from your knowledge, how much of this is a

total support of the Russian military, the entire machine for the participation in Ukraine, or how much of this is leadership, people close to Putin, some sort of fractured element --

GEN. DEMPSEY: Yeah.

MR. BARON: -- and how that matters given how -- there really was a lot of progress between U.S. and Russian military --

GEN. DEMPSEY: Yeah.

MR. BARON: -- in military relations over the years.

GEN. DEMPSEY: Yeah.

MR. BARON: And you know, is that broken down? Is that something out there to help unravel all of this and find a way back eventually?

GEN. DEMPSEY: Yeah, I -- look, I always believe that -- the Irish think keeping an open line of communication is important. So I haven't talked to my counterpart for probably 2 months. It's about that time again. I hope -- by the way I don't know the answer to your question, but I do know the man, and I've known his predecessor and we have had through the United States Army, Europe, and other components in Europe over the past 20 years a pretty healthy mil-to-mil relationship.

And our experience is that -- I think that the Russian military is probably reluctant -- you know, this is risky for me to say this and 10 of them could end up in a gulag tomorrow, but I think that the Russian military and its leaders that I know are probably somewhat reluctant participants in this form of warfare which I would describe to you as proximate coercion and subversion. You know, the stationing or the positioning of conventional military force on the border to coerce sending in surrogates and proxies to stir up ethnic populations, dramatic use of the information space to subvert. And as I said, my real concern is that having

lit this fire in an isolated part of Eastern Europe, it may not stay in Eastern Europe. And I think that's a real risk.

So I am maintaining an open line of communication with my counterpart and so far he's doing the same with me.

MS. STAHL: Way in the back there. Way -- you, yes. Can you wait for the mic? There you go.

MR. ASAY: Alan Asay (phonetic), retired (inaudible). Sir, General Odierno yesterday described as part of his presentation something that sounded very much like an old-fashioned reforger, and it's the return of the units to Germany. You mentioned one of the things that we're discussing is possible basing. Are we considering as a deterrent option to Russian revanchism the return of major military formations to Europe and farther east in NATO?

GEN. DEMPSEY: Well, we've already -- our first response to the issue in Crimea and in Eastern Ukraine was in fact to focus on NATO, focus on assuring our allies that -- some of whom have considerable ethnic Russian populations and who sit on the border with Russia, to assure them that we would be true to our Article 5 responsibility which is to say the defense of one is the defense of all. And I think that was actually quite effective.

Your question is now how to normalize that, will there be a new normal if you will. Having done these assurance measures, what's next? And that's a conversation we're having with my NATO counterparts. We have a meeting in Vilnius in Lithuania in September and the topic is how do we -- what is it that we should do differently now as an alliance in response to this provocation. And it could run the gamut of things like increasing the readiness and the capability of the NATO Response Force.

There is a NATO Response Force that has a certain timeline for -- to be available and we might

shorten that timeline. We might add capabilities to this. We may in fact decide to position forces differently in Europe. And we're looking at all of that. My instinct is that you won't see a return of forces to Europe on a permanent basis, but that you will see I hope a -- what you will see is a recognition that we've been a little complacent about Europe for probably the last 10 or 15 years, and we can no longer afford to be complacent about Europe, and we need to increase the tempo, the quality of the training, and the readiness that we provide to our European allies.

MS. STAHL: This woman. Yes?

MS. SABIN: Hi, Ellen Sabin. As you know, I'm very interested in the children of our military leaders. And I have two questions for you. One is how do you think we're doing with the mental health and the wounds of our soldiers? And the second is, going forward in the future with the success of our military, do you think we'll maintain an all-volunteer force?

GEN. DEMPSEY: Well, that last one especially is a very profound question. First of all on the -- on how we're doing with issues related to mental health and the invisible wounds of war, better than we were doing, you know, for the first half of the last decade, you know, frankly I think we kept staring at a problem and the more we stared at it, the less we knew about it.

We've made some significant progress over the last 4 or 5 years, not enough. And of course, we're now trying to decide as we complete the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan and have, you know, another generation of war veterans, we've got to make sure that as we absorb these budget cuts that affect not just the active side, but also the veteran side, that we don't under-invest.

And to this point, I can speak with confidence that we are maintaining our commitment to investing in that, but you can't take it for granted as this thing gets harder and harder to balance. I suspect we will find that there's things we don't realize we've done and that worries me a great deal.

Now, the all-volunteer force, someone said to me, you know, you're going to be known when people look back at this period in history as the chairman that was faced with this incredible budget change, the change in the fiscal environment over the course of my tenure. And they said what is that you will have valued, or what guidepost will you have used for yourself to get from, you know, one place to the next so you don't violate the first rule of wing walking, you know, which is never let go with both hands at the same time.

And I actually have the answer to that question. There's five things that we cannot lose internal to the Armed Forces of the United States. The first in my view is the all-volunteer force. I think the nation needs an all-volunteer force. I think it's the right answer for who we are and provides the right quality at the right time, when you need it, in order to meet the kind of threats that Lesley just managed to walk me through over the last 45 minutes.

So number one, all-volunteer force. Second is jointness. You know, one of the manifestations of budget constraints is that their services can, if we're not careful, kind of close in on themselves and start to think more about what's important for their service than what's important for the joint force. Now, fortunately, I'm blessed with service chiefs who have agreed with me that we can't let that happen. But the second one is jointness.

The third one is the Defense Industrial Base. We're doing some serious damage, especially to small business. The big businesses can generally absorb it. The small businesses can not. And so we're doing some serious damage to the Defense Industrial Base. But one of the things I watch frequently and try to watch it constantly is whether we're affecting the DIB, the Defense Industrial Base to the point where if we need to -- you know, if something happens and we need to expand again, do we have the industrial base to do so?

The fourth one is allies -- alliances. I mean,

look, you know, there's -- again, back to the tour de nightmare here that we just experienced --

(Laughter)

GEN. DEMPSEY: -- we -- you know, people say what are you going to do about that, and I'll say, well, I'm going to talk to NATO. And well, why aren't you going to do it yourself? Because we can't do everything ourselves. More important, we shouldn't do everything ourselves, honestly. We are far more effective when we have partners around us, in particular if we can keep capable partners around us. And that's whatever part of the globe you're talking about.

So we've got to stay true to our alliances, and we can't let this budget constraint begin to erode our alliances. And the fourth one is our profession. We value the fact that we live an uncommon life. We live to a certain ethos that we have a commitment to continuing education and self-development. You know, that we -- I'll just leave it at that. I don't need to, you know, pound my chest about what it means to be a profession.

But we can't allow ourselves in the face of these pressures to lose those five things. If we can keep those five things, then even if we get something wrong, a weapons system, a policy, you know, an organizational design, if I've got those five things, we're going to be okay.

MS. STAHL: Let's go over here. Anybody over here? Right there. You?

GEN. DEMPSEY: Phil (phonetic), I think it's you.

MS. STAHL: Yeah.

SPEAKER: Thanks, chairman. A quick follow-up first on your comments about nationalism in Europe. What are your concerns about -- you said there might be -- Putin's lit the fire of nationalism in Europe. What -- take that to its logical end. What does that -- what's

the real risk there? And --

GEN. DEMPSEY: Well --

SPEAKER: -- then on Iraq, if you could talk a bit about your recommendations that are you preparing based on the assessments on the ground. Thanks.

GEN. DEMPSEY: You're kidding me, right?

(Laughter)

MS. STAHL: The nightmare goes on.

GEN. DEMPSEY: No, yeah, no. No, I'm going to tell Phil before I tell the President.

(Laughter)

GEN. DEMPSEY: Yeah. Anyway, okay, so why am I worried about nationalism. So look, for about the last -- you know, certainly the last 20 years, Europe has made a concerted effort to try to unify itself, you know, to be bigger than the sum of its parts, right? You know, the European Union, the eurozone, all of these things that were an impulse toward greater European unity.

And what's happened I think, not just because of the Russian assertiveness, but also because of some disagreements within Europe that, you know, if you are a Southern European nation, particularly a Mediterranean nation, and you see these kind of -- these security issues that are migrating literally towards you from Middle East and North Africa, and you take note of the fact that the rest of your European partners actually don't care very much, you know, that's your problem.

You're on the southern flank, you know, just don't let it come north. That's beginning -- that has had an effect on the way Europe sees itself as an entity. So you've got -- that's why I say you've got Europe that's kind of in my view a little schizophrenic right now. They still have the impulse toward greater economic unity and other things, but their security interests are beginning

to diverge.

And I think that's going to put them in a pretty awkward place and we're going to have to help them through that because we have a close connection to Europe and its alliances. Iraq, there's -- look, we can -- if we get a credible partner, then I -- meaning in the Iraqi government that commits to trying to become much more inclusive than they have been up till now, then I think we can do any number of things. We can try to help restore the capability and readiness of the Iraqi security forces so that at some point they can begin to regain some lost territory. We can -- in that process, we could put advisory teams forward with them.

We know how to do that. We do it in Africa frequently. We do it in Yemen. We've done it in Somalia where we can put advisories on the ground who know how to go far enough forward to provide intelligence, to provide planning expertise, to use close air support if we take the decision to provide close air support. We can target -- if ISIL becomes a threat to this country, clearly, we would have the capability to deal with it. But look, those are -- that's a -- there's kind of bins (phonetic) out there, bins of possibility that we might employ if we can find a strategy with partners to execute it.

But we haven't actually come to that point. We're still very much in the development of those options. And I think that's the place we really have to be right now.

MS. STAHL: This is going to be last question I think.

GEN. DEMPSEY: I'm making believe I'm losing my voice.

(Laughter)

MS. STAHL: Oh my goodness.

MR. SHAPIRO: Thank you. Steve Shapiro (phonetic). Thank you Mr. Chairman. With respect to

delivering national power which you've alluded to several times, I wonder if you've yet had a chance to see or learn of the new report by the Atlantic Council which takes a cohesive look at projecting national power abroad and recommend some what might be called radical changes in how our combatant command are structured and incorporating our diplomatic power which they recommend making much more robust and independent abroad directly into the commands, and sort of renaming the commands as unified commands that do all of the U.S. national power things that can be done abroad.

This both brings rationality, but also a unified and a more efficient and perhaps even more effective approach, and I wonder if you could comment on the concept.

GEN. DEMPSEY: I haven't seen it. I know that -
- I know of the work, I haven't seen the outcome of it. And look, I mean, if you're asking me do I think that we're at a moment in history where we ought to better integrate the various tools of national power, absolutely. Secondly, we've just got to stop looking at the world one crisis, one group, and one country at a time. There is no -- I can't think of any security issue and I'll stay in my lane here, but I can't think of any security issue which will remain confined inside the borders of the country in which it begins. It's just not true.

Even with regard to this issue with Russia, I mean, Russia is a -- has global reach. And so in thinking about Russia and the Ukraine you have to consider the fact that it could have global implications. So I do think that -- you know, I'm normally one who tries to find opportunity, not just vulnerability, and I think that there's an opportunity here given the number and magnitude of threats we face to actually begin to develop something that might at some point be described as a grand strategy. And if we were to have something like that, you'd probably want to change your organizational design and your systems and processes to become more agile in decision making and more agile in the employment of the force.

You know, there's an interesting book out by a

guy named Doug Rushkoff called *Present Shock*, and it's -- and he talks about in the '90s we had -- remember the book -- or the phrase "future shock"? And it was the prediction that at some point in the future we would all be overwhelmed by information and it was actually spoken about though in positive terms. And this book, the Rushkoff book, actually suggests maybe it wasn't so positive, because what he posits is that so much information produces so many options that the number of options become almost paralyzing.

And I think there's some truth in that. I think that we do have occasions when not only the number of issues, but the number of options to address them are so -- almost they proliferate. The example he uses by the way is -- not that I've ever done it because my wife's sitting over there and I don't want to make that caveat right now, speed dating. He says in the book --

(Laughter)

GEN. DEMPSEY: He says in the book that, you know, if you go to someplace for a speed dating experience, if there is, you know, 20 possible dates, you're not going to -- you're just not going to pick one. If there's six, you'll probably end up with a date. And I can't speak with authority for that, but people who have done that actually suggest that there is that idea that too many options can be paralyzing. So I do think we have to -- I do think we very much need to think through how to take regional approaches and less country-specific approaches.

And I do think that when you come to that conclusion, you'll want to adapt your systems and processes to become much more agile in decision-making than currently I think we can be.

MS. STAHL: Well, I'd like to thank the General for one of the great 60 minutes ever.

(Laughter)

MS. STAHL: I think you've been terrific.

(Applause)

GEN. DEMPSEY: Thank you.

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