

Unified Quest

The Framework for Strategy

U.S. Department of the Army
Training and Doctrine Command
Fort Monroe, Virginia

Unified Quest is an annual series of events sponsored by the Department of the Army bringing together military, government, and academic subject matter experts to isolate and frame issues vital to current and future American security force development to identify potential implications for the U.S. National Security Strategy and National Military Strategy. Mandated by Congress, the 2008 panels examined persistent conflict while exploring building partnership capacity and irregular warfare as ways the Army can contribute to establishing persistent security. In the culminating event held over five days in May at the Army War College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, the group developed a set of recommendations for the Army Chief of Staff, General George Casey, for his briefings to the U.S. President on the Army's goals, priorities, and needs. In this election year, the General decided to brief both major presidential candidates as well.

I was invited to participate as a panel expert in three Unified Quest events: the week-long Winter Strategy Seminar in January (60 panelists) and the week-long Persistent Security Seminar in March (80 panelists) both held at Booz Allen Hamilton headquarters in Washington, and the final, larger war game event in May at the Army War College. Each day began with a series of topical lectures given by military and civilian experts to provide foundational information for follow-on discussions when participants were organized into panels of 18-20 members and asked to consider, in detailed format, an over-arching theme, an initial set of U.S. interests, a summary of the strategic environment, a list of national priorities, and a list of initial strategic ends. The results of these explorations were routinely presented in subsequent plenary session for critique and clarification by all participants. On the concluding day of these events, each panel was required to produce a strategic guidance framework on a particular theme, incorporating ends, ways, and means.

Analysts from the Army Training and Doctrine Analysis Center, the U.S. Special Operations Command, RAND, and Booz-Allen, supported the effort. The invited participants included U.S. Ambassadors, active duty and retired high level U.S. Army officers (Colonels through four-star Generals), members of the U.S. Air Force, Navy, and Marines, military representatives from several NATO countries, Australia, and Israel, and a small number of academics.

At the Winter Strategy Seminar, three strategies were explored: Good Governance, Global Leadership and Democracy, and Selective Intervention. I was assigned to the latter panel where, after considerable discussion, we recommended a strategy of intervention that incorporated criteria for guiding decisions of when to take action, especially when choosing

among unpalatable alternatives and that regardless of the strategic approach, U.S. actions should be thoroughly considered from the perspective of others.

At the Persistent Security Seminar three panels organized around US Africa Command, US Pacific Command, and US Southern Command, considered various scenarios that might lead to major combat, peace operations, or limited intervention. Our group focused on US Southern Command, specifically around issues in Peru. Among emerging recommendations, we argued that the term “persistent security” needs an accompanying definition within a given situation to avoid misunderstandings and confusion in application, that metrics required to assess stability operations are situation-dependent, and that actions and messages at all levels should be aligned with the U.S. national narrative. I also participated in a small, five-person round table discussion on future Army leadership. The session was taped and later distributed on a CD to a number of Army officials.

At the Army War College event in May designed to explore key strategic issues, most participants were assigned to address scenarios of conflict and security within Africa, Asia, and South America in an elaborate Future Game exercise. A special Global Strategic Panel headed by the former head of US Central Command, General John Abizaid (ret.) was set up to examine issues of strategic importance to the Army. I was one of two academics assigned to this 18-member panel group that included the U.S. Army Commander in Afghanistan, the Director of Pacific Command, two former assistant Secretaries of Defense, the British General in charge of Sandhurst Military Academy, the Director of Army Intelligence, two Ambassadors and other experts.

The Global Strategic Panel was asked to develop overall policy recommendations for General Casey on the basis of a speech he delivered to the National Press Club in Washington in August, 2007. “Today we are at war and live in a world where global terrorism and extremist ideologies are realities. As we look ahead, I believe the next decades are likely to be ones of *persistent conflict*—protracted confrontation among state, non-state and individual actors that use violence to achieve their political and ideological ends.” At weeks-end, we briefed General Scott Wallace, head of Training and Doctrine, Major General David Fastabend, head of Army Strategy, and various Pentagon officials. A special message on Conflict Resolution that I crafted along with two Army officers (including a Colonel from Intelligence and a Brigadier General from Special Operations) was part of the final power point slide briefing.

The experience was informative, challenging, and invigorating. Similar to an advanced graduate seminar, we were given a substantial amount of reading to be completed in advance. Plenary presentations covered both scholarly research and policy options around particular topics. Broad-based, varied discussions on American foreign policy emerged; high level discursive argument between panelists developed over a number of academic issues, for example defining key terms such as “persistent security” or “stability” in a conceptual and operational manner, and analyzing theoretic consistency across goals, means an ends within a strategic environment. Panels were engaging—the sessions filled with probing questions and insightful ideas offered by participants; it was an atmosphere charged with high energy. I feel greatly honored and enriched for the opportunity to be part of the Unified Quest effort in shaping American security policy.

