

Your Defense

“Today, more than ever, America’s fate is inextricably linked to events beyond our shores. We confront a global pandemic, a crushing economic downturn, a crisis of racial justice, and a deepening climate emergency. We face a world of rising nationalism, receding democracy, growing rivalry with China, Russia, and other authoritarian states, and a technological revolution that is reshaping every aspect of our lives. Ours is a time of unprecedented challenges, but also unmatched opportunity.” – President Joseph Biden¹

This preamble to the Interim National Security Strategy of 2021 highlights some of the direct challenges facing America and its allies today. Current events are full of global crises that have impacts for the Brown University community: energy security; mass migration; climate change; conflict between sovereign nations like Ukraine and Russia; tensions between nation-state borders and traditional ethnic groups; and authoritarian regimes challenging the current rules-based international order. Although the complete National Security Strategy should be released within weeks, the current administration has already signaled priorities of protecting the security of the American people, expanding economic prosperity and opportunity, and defending the democratic values at the heart of the American way of life.² A foundational concept throughout the interim strategy requires working with and investing in allies and partnerships. There is a clear focus on open and stable international systems, democratic alliances, and multi-lateral partnerships extending across foreign and domestic security. It may seem like the stuff of policy committees, United Nations council meetings, and back-room deal brokers, but history is replete with examples of how the perspectives found in academic institutions such as Brown University are critical to national defense.

¹ Joseph R. Biden, Interim National Security Strategic Guidance, March 2021, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/NSC-1v2.pdf>.

² Ibid

General Henry “Hap” Arnold, five-star General and the first Air Force Chief of Staff, recognized that civilian scientists, not the military, were the chief innovators during the Second World War. He told then Lt Col Bernard Schriever that the First World War was won by brawn, the Second by logistics, and a future Third would be won by brains.³ Bernard Schriever’s mandate was to preserve relationships with universities and laboratories while establishing a network of research centers to foster development of innovative solutions to national challenges.⁴ While connections between academia and defense have existed long before the 20th century, they were in sharp relief during the Cold War. The Air Research and Development Council and its partner the National Science Foundation were created in 1950. Along with the Office of Scientific Research and Development, they engendered an environment of collaboration, cooperation, and dedication among defense, academic, and industry professionals.⁵ Constant communication and rotation of operational personnel to academia and industry kept everyone abreast of current requirements. Although President Eisenhower warned against unwarranted influence of a military-industrial complex in his 1961 farewell address, he also recognized the necessity of their relationships in deterring conflict against the United States and her allies. He concluded his speech with a charge for balance, stating, “We must learn how to compose differences not with arms, but with intellect and decent purpose.”⁶ Only through engagement are we able to shape an organization for good.

³ Sheehan, Neil. *A Fiery Peace in a Cold War : Bernard Schriever and the Ultimate Weapon*. 1st ed. New York: Random House, 2009.

⁴ Johnson, Stephen B. “Bernard Schriever and the Scientific Vision.” *Air Power History* 49, no. 1 (2002): 30–45. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26274286>.

⁵ *Origins of the Military-Industrial Complex*. 2017. Video. <https://www.loc.gov/item/webcast-8278/>.

⁶ Farewell address by President Dwight D. Eisenhower, January 17, 1961; Final TV Talk 1/17/61 (1), Box 38, Speech Series, Papers of Dwight D. Eisenhower as President, 1953–61, Eisenhower Library; National Archives and Records Administration, <https://www.eisenhowerlibrary.gov/sites/default/files/all-about-ike/speeches/wav-files/farewell-address.mp3>

In addition to a growing community of veterans, the Watson Institute of International and Public Affairs supports an annual cohort of National Defense Fellows. This year, United States Marine Corps Majors Jake Lundsford and Trevor Tingle, Republic of Korea Army Major Heeshik Yang, and I look forward to engaging with our Brown community. We are here as ambassadors of our respective defense organizations, but more importantly, here to develop a shared understanding. As we agree on a number of challenges facing our world today, we seek a mutual education about ways to address them. The world-class community surrounding you provides a perfect opportunity to learn, discuss, and better prepare for a future that needs support. Paraphrasing *The Economist*: academic, military, technological, and financial elements of a nation are more intertwined than ever.⁷ We cannot assume that we have the right answers, nor all the tools needed to address the myriad problems that we face.

This essay could have been titled, “You’re Defense.” You *are* part of it – but you should be engaged. Just like the Cold War, today’s challenges require a variety of perspectives and cross-disciplinary partnerships to solve. Similarly, many of you will be involved in policy-making, support, or changing the circumstances of national security. Peace and safety take work. Collective security is too important to be left to the practitioners of military operational art and science alone. The challenges facing the United States and its allies needs your engagement. Together, all of us are smarter than any of us.

⁷ “Are Sanctions Working? Geo-Economics.” *The Economist* (London) (2022): 7.