

By Gary Schmitt

In his foreign policy speech of Dec. 1, Sen. John McCain explained that the United States is experiencing a unique "unipolar moment" in world affairs, and that our purpose should be to extend this moment for as long as we possibly can. Why? Because "our pre-eminent is the best means to protect our interests and advance our values [and] create a more peaceful and prosperous world." Mr. McCain reiterated this theme in a major defense speech last Tuesday. Unfortunately, his failure to call for a considerable increase in defense spending tends to undercut the force of his prescription for American global leadership.

Mr. McCain does say, in his speech, that "we should never ask how much defense we can afford. . . . We must honestly answer how much defense we need and have the courage to find the money to pay for it." He also says "we must spend whatever it takes," that we must give our armed services what they need to do their job.

But Mr. McCain also strongly implies that "whatever it takes" will not be much more than what we are spending today. (After the speech, his aides told the press that the alleged savings "would come close to offsetting Mr. McCain's military spending proposals.") Indeed, Mr. McCain at one point

In McCain's army

Getting defense spending right

says that "we won't really know how much we need to spend until we rid the defense budgets of wasteful spending."

could succeed in removing it, which is doubtful, this would barely put a dent in the \$150 billion in unfunded requirements identified by the Joint



This simply isn't the case. Every study based on any serious understanding of America's global responsibilities shows that we will need a real and substantial increase in total defense spending. Even if Mr. McCain could find the \$20 billion in unnecessary spending he claims to see in the defense budget, and then

Chiefs of Staff. It would not pay for the layered system of missile defenses proposed by Mr. McCain. It would not come close to paying for the improvements in readiness and the modernization that Mr. McCain rightly insists are necessary. Furthermore, despite his admirable exhortation that "our

defense budget must be driven by our security needs, not vice versa," Mr. McCain seems to distort our security needs for the implicit sake of curbing defense spending. His advocacy of a military posture of "tiered readiness," whereby only deployed forces and those immediately needed for crises are maintained at high states of readiness, is at odds with America's true responsibilities as the keeper of peace in the critical regions of the world.

Given the uncertainties in much Republican discussion of foreign policy in recent years, one has to be heartened by the recent speeches of the two Republican presidential front-runners. Both George W. Bush and Mr. McCain have essentially adopted a neo-Reaganite vision of American world leadership and global responsibilities. But it's important to be straightforward with the American people. It's important to tell them that we need to spend more on defense, and that all the pork-removal and Pentagon head-knocking in the world can't relieve us of this responsibility.

Even after eight years of a McCain presidency, there would still be waste at the Pentagon. Ronald Reagan increased defense spending in the early 1980s. He didn't require that, first, every ounce of pork and each redundant program be rooted out. The fact is, today's much-reduced and far-too-lean Pentagon budget needs to be increased. A presidential candidate concerned about maintaining American global leadership should say so.

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