

## The Technologies of Peace

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Slavery was once called "the peculiar institution", but a better candidate for this title may be the Peace Corps. Current geopolitics make this a good time to probe the Corps' peculiarity, as prelude to a long overdue reconceptualization of what is **arguably the most underused federal entity**. An imaginatively reinvented Peace Corps could powerfully promote US interests in a period when perceptions of American motives are increasingly relevant to global realignment. It could also capitalize on an unprecedented opportunity to avail US soft power of a resource historically associated with initiatives of war rather than peace: high technology.

This article draws on three significant bodies of government experience: those of former US President **Jimmy Carter**; of a former Vice Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral (Ret.) **William A. Owens**; and of Ambassador **JR Bullington**, Director of the US Peace Corps in Niger since 2000. All three generously discussed their thoughts on the role and future of the Peace Corps with me and thanks are due to all three for their cooperation.

### "THE PEACE CORPS IS IN THE FOREFRONT OF OPPORTUNITY."

In a **personal interview filmed at the Carter Center in Atlanta** in September I asked the former president how much could be reasonably expected from the Peace Corps by way of altering the world's perception of the US, especially in Islamic areas. He told me **America's image "certainly can be affected in areas of the world that now look upon the US unfavorably."** Just two days before our interview, **Carter** said, he had returned from visits to Mali, Nigeria and Ethiopia (90%, 50% and 45%-50% Muslim respectively), and there were some regions of those countries "where the US had a very unfavorable image". The Peace Corps had volunteers in all three countries, he said, "and I think they could be a good avenue towards putting forward the best possible image of America". **This image would associate the US with justice, peace, humility, service and compassion.** "To me those are the characteristics that historically have made our nation a great one. But in recent years we have seen that that list of characteristics, at least among some people, has become very doubtful. I think that the **Peace Corps can correct** that misconception of the basic **misconception of the basic motivations of most citizens of my country.**"

Carter noted that he may be the only person in the world whose mother and grandson had both served in the Corps: "The Peace Corps means an awful lot to me personally." He is in favor of expanding the Corps because he and former First Lady Rosalynn Carter "go to some countries that are desperately in need, and the **leaders of those countries appeal to me as a former president.**" He would like to see "a greater allocation of funds for the Peace Corps" because **in national security terms** -- "that is, reducing the animosity of poverty-stricken people around the world toward America" -- the **Corps is "in the forefront** of that opportunity".

Carter's perspective on the Corps is arguably unique because of the extent to which the agency's work complements that of the Atlanta-based **Carter Center**, a non-profit founded in 1982 by the former president and his wife. In partnership with **Emory University** the center promotes human rights and projects that combat poverty, disease and "unnecessary human suffering" around the world. One of the ways he would like to see the Corps expanded is via increased cooperation with the center. "We really would like to have fifty Peace Corps volunteers here to help us with programs. The **Carter Center has active programs in sixty-five nations on earth.** Thirty-five of them are in Africa. They are the poorest, most forgotten, destitute people in the world. And we work side by side with Peace Corps volunteers. Sometimes they are our direct representative in some of the most remote areas ... and we depend on them to represent the Carter Center."

Carter sees several ways to beef up the Corps, starting with a greater effort to **recruit senior citizens.** "I have, maybe, a biased point of view because my **mother didn't go into the Peace Corps until she was about 70 years old and it transformed her life.** And there are many people who have retired from very successful careers who I think could be specifically recruited to the Peace Corps." He'd also like to see the Corps given greater freedom to aid countries whose leaders don't happen to be popular with the White House. It "troubles" him, he explains, that "sometimes there are nations whose leaders might be alienated from the White House or from Washington who are deprived of the services of the Peace Corps." **Carter would like to see a policy of greater inclusiveness** whereby the Corps does not have to "judge a country by whether we like their leaders, who quite often are subject to change", but "only on **how much their people need Peace Corps services.**"

On the subject of the position that the Peace Corps occupies in America's top-of-the-mind awareness, I asked Carter whether it would be helpful to appoint a high-profile director. "Well, I think so," he replied, qualifying this by pointing to the example of **UNICEF** (United Nations Children's Fund), which has a long record of appointing movie stars and other celebrities as public spokespeople and ambassadors. "The Director may be a tough, hard-nosed, very competent, proven manager of large and complex organizations and big budgets," Carter commented, "and quite often the recipient countries have no idea who the Director is, but, but we could **adopt the policy of UNICEF to have a representative, for public relations, for raising funds, for raising awareness, someone who's well-known, maybe a famous sports figure or famous actor or actress or famous musician.** I think that's something that could be done." He added: "If that request was made to someone who is famous I think they would respond favorably."

I asked Carter if he believed the Peace Corps could be improved by being made more technologically sophisticated. His reply: "I think the **utilization of modern technology, particularly in the communication field, is something that ought to be introduced into the Peace Corps very aggressively.** My grandson, who returned recently from the Peace Corps after two and a half years, took with him his computer and he had to ride about 20 miles before he could find a place that had electric power and a telephone circuit into which he could connect." With modern generators, solar cells, small, very efficient computers and satellite networks, Carter said, "I don't see why, within the bounds of reason, every single Peace Corps person ... shouldn't have **instantaneous communication with the outside world.** I think that would enhance not only their own spirit and self-respect and security, but it would also let them have a more effective way to deal with the people around them, if the Peace Corps volunteer, instead of being isolated for three or four weeks or months at a time, had a daily awareness of world events, and what could be happening that reflected the particular nation in which they serve, or the US." He added: "I think that technology is available and with a minimum contribution to each Peace Corps volunteer those standardized mechanisms could be utilized."

Carter's comments, especially the idea of transforming the Peace Corps through technology, converge interestingly with Owens' interpretation of the Revolution in Military Affairs: the former Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs advises intensive conversion of the military into an information technology apparatus integrated into the world's most advanced telecommunications society, which he has urged the US rapidly to become. Without these changes, Owens has argued, the US cannot sustain competitive edge in national security, intelligence or economic performance in the next twenty years. He supports the re-envisioning of the Peace Corps in five linked areas: (1) reinventing America's international profile via a new use of soft power; (2) moving from a war-defined, non-technological, reactive theory of peace to a proactive theory of peace as a normal component of technologically advanced democracy; (3) reappraising the Corps as a national strategic asset whose value remains largely untapped; (4) the Corps as a model for the technological reinvention of government agencies for the 21st century; and (5) redefining civil society as information technology society.

### REINVENTING THE US'S INTERNATIONAL PROFILE.

In re-evaluating the role of the Peace Corps along the lines explored in my discussion with President Carter, two facts must be confronted: (a) America's global image is in crisis; and (b) receding US prestige involves cultural as much as military factors. A 2004 report of the **Pew Global Attitudes Project** (chair: former Secretary of State **Madeleine K. Albright**) found anti-Americanism "deeper and broader" than in any modern period, with negative perceptions widespread in European and Muslim nations. Publics in surveyed countries expressed considerable skepticism of US motives. Majorities in France, Germany, Pakistan, Jordan, Morocco and Turkey believed the war on terror reflected US desires to control Mideast oil and the world.

Two recent books bring these attitudes into focus. In *Beyond the Age of Innocence: Rebuilding Trust Between America and the World*, **Kishore Mahbubani**, Singapore's former ambassador to the **United Nations**, sees ebbing US prestige as not merely due to Bush Administration policies but as a "tectonic shift" in world opinion. Even when US commerce and culture are embraced, Mahbubani notes, their perceived one-sidedness causes suspicion and resentment. America's soft power is seen as extended hard power, an "increasingly frayed velvet glove that covers a mailed fist." The US needs to invite participation in its culture instead of heavy-handedly imposing it.

In *Weapons of Mass Distraction: Soft Power and American Empire*, Canadian journalist **Matthew Fraser** describes how movies, television, pop music and the fast food industry make US culture ubiquitous. But while these industries are economically potent, they fail to transmit the most culturally valuable contents of US society. More overtly, they reveal America's talent for shooting itself in the foot vis a vis global public relations. Hollywood blockbusters and fast food franchising machineries are genuine accomplishments, but it is unrealistic to expect them to represent high philosophical values. Foreigners seeking national values in these artifacts can be forgiven for perceiving the US as materialistic and shallow. With astonishing irony, the society preeminent in modern advertising has abysmally failed to market its greatest cultural goods.

The US's core national values differ markedly from those which its detractors identify with it. Its positive values include reverence for human rights, liberty, opportunity conferred without prejudice, moral responsibility, the free play and optimal development of intelligence, individual dignity, the desire to learn from all traditions and incorporate their wisdom into the complex multicultural fabric that is America. The values, in short, of the Peace Corps since its inception in 1961. Yet in Niger, which is unlikely to be unique in this regard, many Europeans see the Corps as an intelligence organization. French and German volunteers do not associate with Peace Corps volunteers, even in the same small, remote town, according to the Peace Corps Country Director for Niger, **Jim Bullington**. At a 2004 reception the anti-Americanism of DED (a German volunteer organization) personnel was palpable, says Bullington, who has served as a former US ambassador, a career **US State Department** diplomat for 27 years, Director of the **Center for Global Business at Old Dominion University** and Senior Fellow at the **US Armed Forces Staff College**. "In decades of diplomatic work with Europeans in Asia and Africa, I had never felt

such hostility," he recalls. Clearly, US soft power, though immense, projects an inadequate message; this message **handicaps even the Peace Corps, arguably the purest institutional expression of American idealism**. To project its values more effectively may be impossible without reconceptualizing and strengthening the Corps.

### PEACE AS WAR-DEFINED AND NON-TECHNOLOGICAL ...OR AS A NORMAL COMPONENT OF TECHNOLOGICALLY ADVANCED DEMOCRACY?

According to novelist-essayist **Gore Vidal**, he suggested the idea of the Peace Corps to **John F. Kennedy** during the latter's presidential candidacy. Whether or not any such communication triggered the Corps' origin, Vidal's account usefully indicates **two sensibilities on which the agency was founded**. This history, and the paradigms that underlie it, must be taken into account in any attempt to appraise or re-imagine the Corps. Kennedy embodied American imperial presence, Caesar as global benefactor. Vidal represented an ambivalent intelligentsia captivated by the political establishment's mystique, yet suspicious of it, and deeply respectful of the idea that writers should serve a counterculture. **The Peace Corps thus reflected a 1960s climate of conflict: geopolitically, the Cold War, and culturally, the anguished national divisions ranging from civil rights and race to Vietnam and sexual customs, awkwardly intruding social idealism into a government enmeshed in Vietnam**. Congressman **James A. Leach** (R-Iowa) has observed: "President **Nixon** was clearly embarrassed by inheritance of this Kennedy/Shriver treasure and frankly apprehensive that America's best youth would come home committed to a non-realpolitik internationalism that might not suit his party's banner. But he **didn't have the political capital to bury the institution, so he chose to hide it, by reducing its size and institutionally downgrading its status** and putting it under a newly created umbrella agency called ACTION." (It was President **Carter** who declared the Corps a fully autonomous agency in a 1979 executive order.)

This conflictual origin underlying the Peace Corps' peculiarity within government is not unique. It continues a tradition of pacifist enterprises defined by war. For centuries, peace initiatives expressed deliberative aftermaths of war, climates of fear or moral concern preceding possible war, or dissent during war. Peace has been seen as the absence of violence or as the mitigation of legitimate or illegitimate force. So pervasive is this paradigm that we call police officers, who labor amid actual and / or potential violence, peace officers. **Peace initiatives are encumbered with the political baggage and vocabulary of violence**. This often conspicuously impedes stated objectives, as with the **League of Nations**. A feature of this custom of talking peace in the language of war has been the **conceptualization of peace pursuits as non-technological**. Military pursuits, it is assumed, demand budgets for sophisticated technologies; peace pursuits, if supported by well-equipped militaries, require only the non-technological arts of power brokers --the world of **Machiavelli's** 16-century treatise *The Prince*.

"**Many of the diplomatic techniques on which we rely are archaic**," Kennedy's US Ambassador to India **J.K. Galbraith** wrote in his 1969 essay "The American Ambassador". After 35 years this remains so, engendering **budgets that favor soldiers over diplomats**. The identification of peace pursuits with ancient, non-technological skills is reinforced by anti-technological philosophies associating advanced technology with war and such undesirable effects as environmental despoliation. This bias underpins the concept of the military-industrial complex and the **undervaluation of links between peaceful socio-economic structures and technological development** (see economic historian **John U. Nef's** 1950 study "War and Human Progress").

In a high-technology world, then, the Peace Corps operates anomalously in a climate in which peace is seen in terms of war and of a history of ideas associating advanced technology with war. However, far from advanced technology being a military preserve, Admiral **Owens**, the former Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, believes the US military is dangerously underserved in advanced technologies (which **for practical purposes means information technologies**). And not only the military, but government generally.

This view is given added credence by the fact that the **Department of Homeland Security (DHS)** has **arisen expressly because of intelligence-processing agency failures**, due partly to internal politics but significantly to inadequate technology. Clearly, **high technology is not just the business of war. It is very**

**much the business of peace:** of building information-processing structures for a peaceful, secure, efficient, competitive America able to maintain global leadership, effectively export a peace that is not only an absence of war but **a positive global model of economic growth**, and share information infrastructure and knowledge with other nations. In this context a **rebudgeted Peace Corps with state-of-the-art technologies is a peace-exporting instrument of incalculably great advantage to US interests.**

### **A NATIONAL STRATEGIC ASSET WHOSE VALUE REMAINS LARGELY UNTAPPED.**

In discussion for this article Owens told me: **"Technology means the end of the era of the lonely Peace Corps worker cut off from his support base.** A Peace Corps volunteer can now be set down in a desert or on a remote plain without any modern amenity, and have with him or her a compact computer or array of computers, powered by solar cells, making available to local residents a library of hundreds of volumes under Corps supervision. Via satellite, Corps officers and their beneficiaries can connect virtually constantly with Washington and a Corps telecommunity worldwide." Unknowingly echoing President Carter's words, he added: **"The technology is available now."** For Peace Corps personnel used to missions in areas without electricity, let alone resources even distantly approaching those Owens describes, technological empowerment offers an extraordinarily exciting prospect, as is the Peace Corps expansion scenario that this implies. But does the political will exist to mobilize a Corps using the most sophisticated technology available to **share America's skills, values and knowledge with other nations via electronic access to US libraries, teachers and knowledge pools**, and staffing consistent with international peace promotion? This question exposes **how we define the pursuit of peace.**

If we see the pursuit of peace as primarily a function of military and consular actions, it would not be inappropriate to see the Corps as at best a benign but essentially peripheral function whose federal purpose is analogous to that of a marginal public relations outpost of a large corporation. This role matches the **Corps' current resources: a fiscus of \$319.5 million, 7700 volunteers.** The hope is for 11 250 personnel by 2008 "at a rate consistent with funding levels and infrastructure support", Peace Corps Director **Gaddi H. Vasquez** has stated. But **President Bush's 2001 inaugural support of Peace Corps growth has not translated into appropriations.** A telling example is a 2004 Peace Corps request for USAID funds for use in poverty-stricken Niger. This request was to assign Corps volunteers to **help fledgling democratically elected local governments in Niger** to engage their unaccustomed economic and social development responsibilities.

The **new mayors and council members have no experience at all in local government. Many are illiterate.** They very much want Peace Corps help, reports Director Bullington. Such a project offers the US an opportunity to implement a conspicuous, innovative expression of American idealism and commitment to **promote democracy**, accomplishments which have special geopolitical importance in an Islamic country (which Niger is). **But the request was declined.** The annual **amount that could not be found for it: about \$200,000.** It is thought-provoking to consider this alongside the 2005 profiles of the **Department of Defense** (2.3 million military personnel; almost 700,000 civilian personnel; discretionary budget authority of **\$401.7 billion**) and **State Department** (30 266 personnel; discretionary budget authority of **\$10.3 billion**).

In 1996, **Peace Corps** Director **Loret Miller Ruppe** reported: "This agency's budget has less in purchasing power than when Sargent (**Shriver**) left it in the '60s. In 1981 it was listed in the 150 Account under 'miscellaneous' ... Its **budget was less than the military marching band.**" For an agency exporting peace, signaling the US's highest values to the world, and disseminating US democracy, literacy, health practices and other desired national characteristics, **these circumstances are egregious.** Much consular, ambassadorial and attaché work is not **proactive peace promotion** in the same sense that Peace Corps work is. It is, indeed, **unfair to expect conventional diplomats to provide the services that idealistically motivated Corps volunteers are uniquely positioned to supply.** Budgets should reflect this fact, and the growing significance to US interests of the Corps' mission.

Director Ruppe said in 1996: **"The Peace Corps is needed now more than ever. It is our nation's greatest peace-building machine."** She asked: "Is peace simply the absence of war? Or is it the absence of the conditions that bring on war, the conditions of hunger, disease, poverty, illiteracy and despair?" It would be unrealistic to expect the Corps to solve such problems. But it is surely among the most effective tools

available to export the values, motivations and knowledge without which they cannot be solved. The power of example and passionately impelled personal instruction by idealistic young civilians can scarcely be equaled as a global communication medium for the US.

These are the assets the Corps offers America in its urgent quest for foreign remediation. They are potent for any policy that is seriously predicated on President **Bush's second inaugural address**. "There is only one force of history that can break the reign of hatred and resentment, and expose the pretensions of tyrants, and reward the hopes of the decent and tolerant, and that is the force of human freedom," the President said, adding: "The best hope for peace in our world is the expansion of freedom in all the world." This exporting-freedom doctrine continued President **Reagan's** 1982 call, in Britain's **House of Commons**, for "a crusade for freedom that will engage the faith and fortitude of the next generation". But as Iraq shows, democratic culture is less exportable than consumer goods.

Waging peace is unlike waging war. Pursuing peace through healthy societies is analogous to a hygiene policy focused primarily not on curing or preventing illness but on realizing wellness potential. Such a hygiene policy incidentally discourages illness. A similar foreign policy discourages violent conflict. But chiefly each aims to unlock energies of optimal development. President Bush's second inaugural address ostensibly recognizes this.

Bullington concurs: "As an American credo, it is as significant as President **Kennedy's** 1961 call to 'bear any burden' and **Martin Luther King's** 'I have a dream' speech". Indeed, careful study of the president's address shows that it articulates a new foreign policy paradigm. But paradigms must be applied to be translated into leadership that affects history. For this one to be felt, the Peace Corps must be expanded.

There are several routes by which such an expansion could be meaningfully initiated:

- \* A formal presidential policy statement recognizing the Corps as a key example and instrument of the second inaugural's message, and as an under-used engine of peace promotion that should be reinvigorated and expanded.
- \* The appointment of a new and imaginatively selected Corps director to implement this vision, drawn from the ranks of individuals with sufficient public stature to signify a fresh beginning (someone with the profile of former Secretary of State **Colin Powell** or Governor **Jeb Bush**, whose son served as a Corps volunteer).
- \* Budget support necessary for growth at the rate of at least 1000 Volunteers per year over the next decade (this is probably the most the organization could currently digest without system overload).
- \* Diversion of USAID funds to the Corps, in the amount of, at the very least, \$100 000 to \$500 000 per year for each post (depending on volunteer numbers), to be used as a flexible and easily accessible source of funding for smaller Corps projects (something similar existed in the past but was terminated).
- \* Creative experiments with new approaches to Corps service, such as a one-year term designed to re-enlist Corps veterans from the 1960s and 1970s who are now facing retirement and have added a lifetime of experience to their youthful idealism.

To these modifications of existing Corps structures a new technological dimension should be added, not only to empower the agency in a fitting way for its 21st-century mission but to enable it to serve as a prototype for other federal agencies in need of similar technological transformation. Indeed, this may be among the most fertile benefits of an aggressive technological transformation of the Corps.

## THE PEACE CORPS AS A MODEL FOR REINVENTING GOVERNMENT AGENCIES FOR THE 21ST CENTURY.

Critics may paint the Corps as a federal tributary too remote from mainstream national priorities to warrant

greater funding. This characterization is strongly counterable. The Corps is at least as crucial as many other agencies. Geopolitical relations cannot progress effectively until other nations better appreciate US purposes, a desideratum the Corps can uniquely promote. Additionally, strong domestic reasons support the Corps' development as a prototypical 21st-century government structure indicated by efficiency, global competitiveness and technological opportunity: the federal telecommunity. This benefit will surprise those who see the Corps as isolated from mundane federal machineries, as well as federal managers who remain aloof from the fact that unless agency telecommunications sophistication is revolutionized, the US risks major strategic vulnerabilities. These include information management failures of the kind that prompted the crisis establishment of DHS; government inability to mesh productively with private entities to develop national infrastructures competitive with other advanced nations; archaic federal human resource deployment; exposure to terrorist disruption.

Federal obliviousness to telework opportunities is serious. Under 3% of eligible DHS staff telework, reports **Chuck Wilsker**, president of the **Telework Coalition**, a Washington, DC-based research group. Figures published in February showed that almost two thirds of federal employees are not allowed to telecommute, despite Congressional penalties for agencies not allowing telework options. A CDW Government Inc. survey found 87% of employees would telecommute if permitted to.

Government Reform Committee Chairman **Tom Davis** (R-VA), has told the House's oversight hearing on federal telework: "The war on terror makes the ability to work at off-site locations more than an attractive option for employees and employers; it's now an imperative."

In 1996 House Democratic Whip Rep. **Steny Hoyer** (MD) briefed then Vice President **Gore** on the research of technology trend analyst **Jay John Hellman**, who forecasts an era of technologically induced "virtual adjacency" government. Hoyer recommended Hellman's "economically and environmentally efficient ways to reinvent government".

Hellman believes traditional government structures are obsolete and that national interest requires switching to federal telecommunities: teams of dispersed workers linked around the clock by secure, state-of-the-art fiberoptic telecommunications, including videoconferencing and information managed for maximum immunity to disruption. DHS is currently considering Hellman's ideas for its National Capital Region headquarters.

This confluence of strategic, commercial infrastructure and technological transitions recalls President **Eisenhower's** 1956 initiation of the US interstate highway network (the "National Defense Highway System") to facilitate commercial traffic, nuclear-attack evacuations and rapid military transport. **William M. Mularie**, a former national defense intelligence administrator now heading the Virginia-based **Telework Consortium**, a government-funded research entity, comments: "In teletechnology the US is a third-world country, around 13th or lower globally. New technology must be integrated into all government agencies. All processes of government must change to use that technology properly. Not just military and intelligence processes."

Owens, Hellman and Mularie agree that the Peace Corps' strategic significance, soft-power global dispersal and high potential for public visibility offer an excellent federal telecommunity model. Hellman adds: "It's hard to think of a better choice to demonstrate how a federal team distributed over the widest possible geographical area can use the most advanced telecommunications technology as a benign social tool -- sharing American strengths and knowledge with other peoples, building peace, showing the world America's best face. The face of efficiency. Of technology and government at their most humane. Of freedom."

## REDEFINING CIVIL SOCIETY AS INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SOCIETY.

It is a truism that ideas are the hinges of history. The idea that will necessarily underlie any concerted technological empowerment of the Peace Corps is the idea that advanced technology is integral to effective civil society. While this broader philosophical thesis exceeds the scope of this article, its salient point is that transforming the Corps entails not simply a fiscal decision but a revised technology policy. I noted above the historical confusion of advanced technology with militarism. In Marxism, technology came to be seen as a tool of economic exploitation, demonized by philosophers like **Herbert Marcuse** as a dehumanizing force

caricatured by **Orwellian** dystopias. These stereotypes contrast starkly with **diversity-promoting, democratically empowering information technologies**. **Marx's** inspiration, the German idealist philosopher **Hegel**, was ignorant of the developmental stimuli required by science and technology. The **social Darwinism** that shaped 19th-century US society believed science unfolded spontaneously within the mythic historical processes imagined by Hegel. This supposition carried through into **John Dewey's** pragmatism, influencing historian **Thomas Kuhn's** "normal science" concept of scientific establishments passively explicating paradigms. **Francis Fukuyama's** 1992 study *The End of History and the Last Man* made this Hegelianism explicit in a doctrine of linear political progress assuming inevitable scientific advance under adroit political administrators rather than proactive technological innovators. Fukuyama's subordination of technological innovation to political administration continued in *Our Posthuman Future: Consequences of the Biotechnology Revolution* (2002), espousing technology regulation. *Military Organization in the Information Age: Lessons from the World of Business* (1999, Fukuyama and **Abram Shulsky**) elevated political-administrative over technological processes (with the **Wehrmacht** as a case study), emphasizing information control rather than dissemination. **This outlook pervades current federal failure** proactively to nurture either governmental or private telecommunications development.

A **fertile alternative politics of technology**, combining theoretical cogency with unusual empirical foundations and according with recent **knowledge-management research**, arises from the analyses of Admiral **Owens**, reflecting his post - Cold War reorganization of the US military and his experience as commander of the Sixth Fleet in 1990 and 1991. Until recently CEO of Canada-based **Nortel**, a global telecommunications firm, Owens' geopolitical, governmental and information technology perceptions benefit from a unique conflux of strategic insights evolved in publications (e.g. *America's Information Edge*, with **Joseph S. Nye, Jr.**, *Foreign Affairs*, 1996; *Lifting the Fog of War*, with **Ed Offley**, 2000) and unpublished research.

**Owens believes America's economy, quality of national life and security** can progress optimally only by concerted government-led efforts to move not just the military but all **peacetime society on to a substantively more sophisticated telecommunications level**. In discussion with me he cited **South Korea** as a nation whose competitiveness challenges America's significantly because of **superior government vision in technology**. "In intelligence management, national defense, and the effectiveness of day-to-day communication and administration, the **US Government is today a technological underperformer by a significant margin**," Owens commented. He acknowledges that technological innovation cannot depend on flashes of fortunate private genius, military stimulation or mythic historical spontaneity but **must be purposefully nurtured by peacetime institutions that facilitate and respond to development opportunities** - an observation which, in the form in which **Francis Bacon** first cast it in the 1600s, initiated the scientific era.

Bacon's statement "**Knowledge is power**" acquires new meaning for an age in which raw political or military power, however great, is constrained by the realities of peacetime knowledge-transmitting technology. These include the fact that civil society is now an information technology construct in which strategic policy cannot succeed without being well anchored in the optimal use and development of advanced information technology for peaceful purposes, since larger peacetime society originates the technological products that incidentally enable security.

"**We truly are in a new and different era**," Owens says. "New partnerships between government and private resources are necessary if we are to achieve technology's virtually limitless potential to change society for the better. We must accept the seeming paradox that new technologies can bring us national security only if we resolve to use them calculatedly, and above all other purposes, to build a just and peaceful world. "

Hellman adds: "**Transforming the structures of our government through technology is a fundamental key to making America both more secure and more efficient in the 21st century. It's not an option but a strategic imperative. It's philosophically fitting, from a number of perspectives, that the Peace Corps should be empowered to lead the way in this evolution.**"

