REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

1. Report Security Classification: UNCLASSIFIED

2. Security Classification Authority:

3. Declassification/Downgrading Schedule:

4. Distribution/Availability of Report: DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT A: APPROVED FOR PUBLIC RELEASE; DISTRIBUTION IS UNLIMITED.

5. Name of Performing Organization:
JOINT MILITARY OPERATIONS DEPARTMENT

6. Office Symbol:
C

7. Address: NAVAL WAR COLLEGE
686 CUSHING ROAD
NEWPORT, RI 02841-1207

8. Title (Include Security Classification):
KEEPING AMERICA ON TOP: PREVENTING CULMINATION IN THE WAR ON TERRORISM

9. Personal Authors: LCDR Howard M. Watson, USN

10.Type of Report: FINAL

11. Date of Report: 4 February 2002

12.Page Count: 31 **12A Paper Advisor (if any):** Col. Patrick C. Sweeney,

13.Supplementary Notation: A paper submitted to the Faculty of the NWC in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the JMO Department. The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the NWC or the Department of the Navy.

14. Ten key words that relate to your paper:

Culminating Point; Terrorism; National Will; Support; Time; Media

15.Abstract:

The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, marked the dawn of a new war for America, the War on Terrorism. To ensure that America reaches its stated objectives, senior leaders must recognize some of the factors that could cause premature culmination and apply controls to manage those factors

16.Distribution / Availability of Abstract:	**Unclassified**	**Same As Rpt**	**DTIC Users**
	X		

17.Abstract Security Classification: UNCLASSIFIED

18.Name of Responsible Individual: CHAIRMAN, JOINT MILITARY OPERATIONS DEPARTMENT

19.Telephone: 841-6461

20.Office Symbol: **C**

Security Classification of This Page Unclassified

NAVAL WAR COLLEGE
Newport, R. I.

KEEPING AMERICA ON TOP: PREVENTING CULMINATION IN THE WAR ON TERRORISM

by

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Lieutenant Commander, USN

A paper submitted to the faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

Signature_____

4 February 2002

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Col. Patrick C. Sweeney, Military Professor

Report Documentation Page

Report Date	Report Type	Dates Covered (from... to)
04 Feb 2002	N/A	-

Title and Subtitle Keeping America on Top: Preventing Culmination in the War of Terrorism	**Contract Number**
	Grant Number
	Program Element Number
Author(s)	**Project Number**
	Task Number
	Work Unit Number
Performing Organization Name(s) and Address(es) Joint Military Operations Department Naval War College 686 Cushing Road Newport, RI 02841-1207	**Performing Organization Report Number**
Sponsoring/Monitoring Agency Name(s) and Address(es)	**Sponsor/Monitor's Acronym(s)**
	Sponsor/Monitor's Report Number(s)
Distribution/Availability Statement Approved for public release, distribution unlimited	
Supplementary Notes	
Abstract The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, marked the dawn of a new war for America, the War on Terrorism. To ensure that America reaches its stated objectives, senior leaders must recognize some of the factors that could cause premature culmination and apply controls to manage those factors.	
Subject Terms	
Report Classification unclassified	**Classification of this page** unclassified
Classification of Abstract unclassified	**Limitation of Abstract** UU
Number of Pages 31	

ABSTRACT

KEEPING AMERICA ON TOP: PREVENTING CULMINATION

IN THE WAR ON TERRORISM

The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, marked the dawn of a new war for America, the War on Terrorism. To ensure that America reaches its stated objectives, senior leaders must recognize some of the factors that could cause premature culmination and apply controls to manage those factors.

INTRODUCTION

> *Leaving scenes of chaos and mass panic behind them, Americans fled the embattled and collapsing city of Saigon Tuesday in an armada of helicopters guarded by U. S. Marines, fighter-bombers and gunships.*
>
> The Washington Post[1]

April 30, 1975. Those words described the demoralizing final chapter of America's two-decade involvement in Indochina. American military forces were not conducting a victorious withdrawal from the battlefields of South Vietnam. Instead, it was the final phase of a political withdrawal brought about by a failed national will, and "accompanied by danger, difficulty and delay,"[2] as helicopters swooped in to extricate American military and civilian personnel from the rooftop of the U. S. Embassy, while bitter South Vietnamese soldiers turned their weapons against their former allies.

A Creeping Horror

> *It kept getting worse. The horror arrived in episodic bursts of chilling disbelief, signified first by trembling floors, sharp eruptions, cracked windows. There was the actual unfathomable realization of a gaping, flaming hole in first one of the tall towers, and then the same thing all over again in its twin. There was the merciless sight of bodies helplessly tumbling out, some of them in flames.*
>
> The New York Times[3]

September 11, 2001. Four hijacked airliners struck New York's World Trade Center and the Pentagon. How could the heart of America's financial power and the seat of its military power have been so successfully attacked in broad daylight? The destruction caused on that sunny Tuesday morning initiated America's newest war: the War on Terrorism.[4]

Two wars; different objectives. Why had America culminated in Vietnam before achieving its objectives? To shed some facts on when and where culmination could occur in

the current conflict, the late Michael Handel, in *Masters of War*, says that, "The culminating point of victory is not a theoretically *fixed* point, but a dynamically *fluctuating* point…(emphasis in the original)."[5] Military officers familiar with the culminating point concept may think of it in strictly military terms (i.e., in terms of defeat on the battlefield). The War on Terrorism, however, will be unlike others in the past. The battle space will lack clearly defined lines, and defeating terrorism will take all the elements of America's national power. The steadfastness of America's national will may be just as important as her ability to project the elements of national power, both military and nonmilitary, in preventing culmination. What factors could cause culmination in the War on Terrorism? This paper seeks to answer that question, and demonstrate what steps America's senior leadership must take to manage these factors.

To begin, one must first identify where classical definitions of the culmination point fall short in modern application. Then, a "War on Terrorism" definition must be constructed that allows one to identify when culmination may be nearing.[6] From that definition will emerge the importance of elements of power and national will as they apply to specific objectives. Examining the role of each element of power as it affects culmination is beyond the scope of this paper. Instead, the Vietnam War will be used as a case study to see what factors could affect the other two pieces of that definition—attainment of our objectives and erosion of our national will.

BACKGROUND

THE THEORY OF THE CULMINATING POINT

Clausewitz's theory of the *culminating point of victory*[7] was developed in the context of the late 18th and early 19th century European land wars with which he was most familiar as

a member of the Prussian military.[8] In his treatise, *On War*, Clausewitz asks, "What usually happens in a major battle today? The troops move calmly into position in great masses deployed in line and depth."[9] Though he later acknowledges that this description is oversimplified, it exemplifies the types of land engagements he was discussing. In his chapter on "The Culminating Point of the Attack," he defines the culmination point as "the point where their [strategic attacks] remaining strength is just enough to maintain a defense and wait for peace. Beyond that point the scale turns and the reaction follows with a force that is much stronger than that of the original attack."[10] Land campaigns, where "destruction of the enemy's forces, conquest of a locality, or conquest of an object"[11] were the reasons for attack. If these were the objectives, then the attacker's overall strength could be depleted by factors related to armies fighting on land, such as "sieges and the investment of forces, the invading armies' need to occupy the area in their rear, and the distance from the source of replacements."[12] Moreover, any superiority gained by the attacker on the battlefield, he adds, is only the means and not the end; this superiority must be risked for the sake of bringing the enemy to his knees (i.e., ultimate victory). But, if one were to go beyond the point where the offensive becomes defensive, "it would not merely be a *useless* effort which could not add to success. It would in fact be a *damaging* one…(emphasis in the original)."[13]

In Clausewitz's era, the battle space encompassed the sovereign states of Europe, their standing armies, and the enormous land campaigns fought by these armies.[14] Prior to the French Revolution, wars were the "exclusive concern of governments," and "little interest in their conduct or outcome was given by the people."[15] The declaration of the *levee en masse*, the "nation in arms," in 1793 changed that, because it called for the mobilization of all able-bodied citizens.[16] Thus, as Clausewitz says, "the people became a participant in

war…[and] the full weight of the nation was thrown into the balance."[17] War became the people's business, and all the resources of the state were available for use. Furthermore, Handel affirms that Clausewitz considered the role of people in the conduct of war as the most important change in the nature of war that had occurred in his lifetime.[18]

Before Clausewitz's theories are applied to the War on Terrorism, however, one must view warily his emphasis on the political mobilization of the people due to his "diffuse treatment" of the subject throughout *On War*.[19] Handel cautions us that modern democracies do not accept Clausewitz's view that "the political aims are the business of the government alone."[20] In a free society the people contribute through elections and the mass media to the national debate on a war's costs, its bearing on national interest, and its desired objectives.[21] In summarizing their role in warfare, Handel asserts that Clausewitz understood that the people's support was important, but took for granted their support no matter what the government did.[22] Therefore, his land war application of the culmination point must be updated to account for today's battle space and the influential role of the people.

Modern manuals update Clausewitz's theory for 21st century applications. Army Field Manual FM 3-0, *Operations*, defines the culminating point in the offense as "that point in time and space where the attacker's effective combat power no longer exceeds the defender's…."[23] In *Operational Warfare*, Professor Milan Vego gives two definitions that help clarify the issue. First, he says that a generic *culmination* is "a point in time and space reached by the attacker…after which [his] respective stated objectives cannot be accomplished and continued effort to reach them would significantly heighten the chances of failure…."[24] Second, he defines a *strategic culminating point of victory* as "a point in terms of space and time at which the ratio of military and nonmilitary sources of power has

drastically diminished so that the chances of winning a war are foreclosed and the attacker must go on the defensive or risk ultimate defeat."[25]

None of these definitions, taken singularly, meets the mark. As Paul Pillar points out in his book, *Terrorism and U.S. Foreign Policy*, there is not "one" foe in this war, no "terrorist international,"[26] to mass our combat power against and thereby avoid culmination,[27] as in the Army's definition. Vego's first definition captures the importance of accomplishing objectives before culminating. His second definition addresses nonmilitary sources of power, but thinking strictly in terms of force ratios does not account for the role of public support that was also lacking in Clausewitz's definition.

FM 3-0 provides the missing piece when it states that culmination "may result from the erosion of national will [or] decline of popular support…."[28] Although FM 3-0 uses these words in an operational context, the concepts meet the need for a strategic definition. Putting together Clausewitz's theory, modern manuals, and a clear view of the battle space, yields this definition: In the War on Terrorism, strategic culmination will be that point in terms of time or space at which the effectiveness of our national elements of power and our national will have so drastically diminished that our stated objectives cannot be attained, and continued efforts to reach those objectives would heighten the chances of defeat.

Clausewitz declares that a great many conditions may determine when the culmination point has come.[29] The search for a definition demonstrated that there are three forces that could cause strategic culmination: Diminished effectiveness of the national elements of power, erosion of national will, and non-attainment of the nation's objectives. It was stated earlier that examining each element of national power is beyond the scope of this paper. But what factors could influence these last two forces? To understand national will,

its two parts—popular support and political support—will be examined, and the role each played in Vietnam will be compared with how it might influence the War on Terrorism. Finally, focus will be placed on two critical factors that could collectively erode national will: time and the media. Since "the art of the attack at all levels is to secure the objective before reaching culmination,"[30] the journey begins with an examination of U.S. objectives in the Vietnam War, juxtaposed with today's objectives in the War on Terrorism.[31]

THE OBJECTIVE

"No one starts a war—or rather, no one in his senses ought to do so—without first being clear in his mind what he intends to achieve by that war."[32] Determining what America's stated objectives were in the Vietnam War remains a topic of discussion. In his article *Vietnam in Retrospect: Could We Have Won*, Jeffrey Record states, "The most immediate and enduring [objective] was the preservation of a noncommunist South Vietnam. Satisfaction of this objective…would not only save yet another people from…communism, but also serve such broader and more abstract war aims as demonstrating resolve and the credibility of US commitments, [and] thwarting the fall of other Asian dominoes…."[33] These somewhat ambiguous ends would not seem to translate well into militarily-attainable objectives.

In his analysis, *On Strategy*, Harry Summers goes further in describing the lack of a clear objective for the Vietnam War. Whereas the North Vietnamese had one objective,[34] in his article on Vietnam, Professor Hugh Arnold examined the "*official* justifications most cited for America's involvement in Indochina from 1949 through 1967" (italics in Summers). Arnold found 22 separate reasons during the period, grouped into three categories based on

date.[35] That the objectives of the Vietnam War changed over time was not so unusual, for as Clausewitz says, "The original political objects can greatly alter during the course of the war…."[36] Recognizing when these objectives changed and then applying a new strategy is something our senior leadership did not do.[37] But most noteworthy among the different objectives Summers discusses is this: "the one thing we did not intend to achieve was victory."[38] Jeffrey Record agrees: "The Johnson and Nixon administrations sought…to avoid defeat and its perceived attendant humiliation, loss of prestige, and orgy of domestic political recrimination."[39] Then, with Nixon in power in 1969, and his program of providing "maximum assistance" to the South Vietnamese in effect, our military objective became withdrawal.[40] As Record says, "In the end, the U.S. failed either to avert a communist takeover of South Vietnam, or to avoid humiliation, loss of prestige, and domestic recrimination."[41] In other words, the U.S. did not win.

In the mid-1980s, then-Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger formulated his "Weinberger Doctrine" as a policy to "…prevent the United States from involvement in another Vietnam War…."[42] Of the six tests Weinberger outlined, test three warned that "before…we do decide to commit forces to combat overseas, we should have clearly defined political and military objectives."[43] President George W. Bush, in his speech to the nation before a joint session of Congress on 20 September 2001, delineated for the American people, America's military, and America's enemies the objectives we will pursue. He averred that America's goal is the "destruction and defeat of the global terror network" known as "Al Qaeda," and that although the war begins with Al Qaeda, "…it will not end until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped, and defeated."[44] He also included state sponsors of terrorism, declaring that the U.S. will regard "any nation that

continues to harbor or support terrorism…as a hostile regime."[45] If the enemy's task is to force our culmination before reaching these objectives,[46] will the President's broad objectives be sufficient to drive our national strategy to victory and avoid culmination?

Maintaining clear objectives will be very important. Vego cautions that, "The expansion of the initially assigned…objective could…be a significant cause of offensive culmination."[47] One study shows that overextending these objectives could find the U.S. "abandoned by coalition partners" and result in the decay of international support.[48] Using the national elements of power against foreign countries that engage in state-sponsored terrorism could destroy America's international coalitions, reputation and influence.

Mao Tse-Tung states that if one's original plans no longer "correspond with reality…it becomes necessary to form new judgments, make new decisions, and change the original plan so as to meet the new situation."[49] That new strategy must then be pursued with all elements of national power. Although the destruction of the World Trade Center, damage to the Pentagon, and loss of thousands of American lives make the reason for offensive action clear now, America's objectives must be continually reevaluated to avoid overshooting her culmination point. Finally, in pursuing objectives, America must follow Weinberger's mandate, and do so "*wholeheartedly*(my emphasis)…with the clear intention of winning."[50]

In comparing the Vietnam War with the War on Terrorism, the importance of the objective in culmination is made clear. It is important to understand that, taken singularly, the failure to attain an objective does not signify culmination. The U.S. did not fail to preserve South Vietnam as a noncommunist nation because of failures on the battlefield. Instead, it is the *pursuit* of such objectives, being fixated on a goal beyond the nation's

capability, which could cause culmination. As Vego says, the pursuit of multiple objectives without due regard to space, force or time, or as we will see, sufficient political will, could cause culmination.[51] Such a scenario could be pursuing a terrorist network abroad while attacking another nation simultaneously. In such a scenario, the pursuit of these multiple objectives could overextend resources, exhaust military forces or destroy international coalitions.

NATIONAL WILL: THE SUPPORT OF THE PEOPLE

As stated earlier, Clausewitz underestimated the role of the people in war. The definition of strategic culmination, therefore, necessarily included erosion of national will as a potential cause for reaching culmination. In their book, *War and the Media*, Miles Hudson and John Stanier emphasize the point: "If you plan to undertake military operations outside your own borders, there are three aspects of support which you ignore at your peril…above all you require the support of your own people at home."[52] Former Secretary of State George Schulz agrees: "There is no such thing as guaranteed public support in advance."[53] In his retrospective of Vietnam, Jeffrey Record makes the case that Hanoi understood better than Washington that defeating America did not mean conquering us on the battlefield: "The real domino in the Vietnam War was American public opinion."[54]

Summers' analysis of the role of public opinion is that one of the more simplistic explanations for America's failure in Vietnam was the collapse of her national will. But then he counters this statement by arguing that the *collapse* of popular support was not what brought about failure, but rather that America never *had* popular support behind the war. Indeed, President Johnson made "a conscious decision *not* to mobilize the American

people—to invoke the national will…(my italics)." Dean Rusk, then-Secretary of State, claimed that the Johnson Administration "…deliberately refrained from creating a war psychology…Neither did we send actors across the country whipping up enthusiasm for the war" because of fears that it would jeopardize his "Great Society" social programs.[55] Summers goes on to say that "the failure to invoke the national will…produced a strategic vulnerability that our enemy was able to exploit."[56]

Out of these failures to mobilize popular support came test five of Weinberger's doctrine, which warns that before we commit troops abroad, there must be "some reasonable assurance" that we will have support from the American people.[57] As already stated, attacks against our homeland and associated loss of American lives should be enough to evoke the popular support of every American citizen. In his State of the Union address, President Bush sought to mobilize the support of the American people for the long haul when he said, "I will not forget this wound to our country and those who inflicted it. I will not yield; I will not rest; I will not relent in waging this struggle…."[58] The attacks of September 11th were the spark that ignited public opinion, and the president's words added momentum. How the national leadership succeeds in maintaining that momentum of public support remains to be seen. According to Handel, in the end it will be "the duty of our leaders to lead, not be led, by public opinion…these leaders must do their best to mobilize public opinion, educate and lead it – but, if necessary, also take action even without a clear consensus." Furthermore, he warns that public opinion "can be swayed by the last…failure on the battlefield, and lack the perseverance necessary to fight a prolonged war."[59] With the unconventional nature of this war in mind, our leadership must ensure that the people's support endures.

National Security Analyst C. L. Stratten asserts that terrorists will use propaganda and an amplification of their acts through "friendly media sources" to undercut public opinion.[60] In discussing national will during Vietnam, Admiral U. S. G. Sharp, then-Commander of the U. S. Pacific Command, claims that it was destroyed by a "skillfully waged subversive propaganda campaign…."[61] In that war, a propaganda campaign was part of the North Vietnamese government's strategy to win, as Record showed us earlier. But Admiral Sharp's words are as germane now as they were then, for our terrorist foes will employ a similar strategy against public support. Indeed, in defining terrorism, the U.S. government cites actions "intended to influence an audience" as one key element.[62] To counter this threat, our national leaders must take continued steps to neutralize the role of terrorist propaganda, lest the erosion of America's public will hasten culmination.

NATIONAL WILL: THE SUPPORT OF CONGRESS

In addition to public support, Weinberger's fifth test also illustrates that lack of political will was a contributing factor to America's culmination in Vietnam. "We cannot fight a battle with Congress at home while asking our troops to win a war overseas…as in the case of Vietnam…."[63] Therefore, a look at several reasons why political will failed in Vietnam is warranted.

In Vietnam, President Johnson had concerns that escalating attention towards the war would steal political attention from his "Great Society" agenda in Congress. Whipping up public support, "the surest way to insure continued congressional support," was exactly what he did not want to do.[64] Richard Nixon was sympathetic towards Congress when he stated that Congress was in part a prisoner to the machinations of the Johnson Administration. He

nonetheless insisted that "peace with honor" in Vietnam was denied because Congress prohibited military actions and drastically reduced funding for South Vietnam.[65] These opinions by Nixon epitomize the contentious relationship between the executive and legislative branches. Later in the war, the Watergate scandal would hamper Nixon's efforts.[66] Additionally, as Summers asserts, arguments continue over whether or not a formal declaration of war would have changed the outcome.[67] The legal complexities of war declarations are too convoluted for this discussion, but some issues are worth noting if the U.S. is to avoid repeating the same mistakes.

One reason the Vietnam conflict was fought without a formal declaration, asserts Summers, was that some believed a written declaration of war was "a useless piece of paper."[68] Instead, the initial use of force authorization was the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, passed by Congress in August 1964. This allowed the president to take necessary steps to prevent further aggression and repel armed attacks against American forces.[69] But, he says, *formal* declarations of war do have meaning because, like marriage certificates, they legitimize relationships to the world and make war prosecution a shared responsibility between the people and the government.[70]

In the aftermath of Vietnam, Congress passed the War Powers Resolution, which, among other things, limits the president's authority to conduct foreign policy with armed forces to 60 days.[71] This requires that the president seek further authorizations from Congress after expiration of the initial period, somewhat limiting his duties as commander-in-chief. Summers argues that although the War Powers Resolution would have been a step in the right direction in Vietnam, it would not have been a panacea. Notable among his exceptions to the War Powers Resolution, one that will have applications in the current war,

is the lack of "full public sanctions that a declaration of war provides against treason, giving aid and comfort to our foes…and all of the other rules that are—as history proves and the Vietnam War emphasized—essential to guarantee a united front…."[72] Summers' arguments illustrate the sources of potential conflict between the President and Congress. Should the two parties disagree over national interests, necessity for direct involvement, objectives, or other factors, the limitations of the War Powers Resolution could again erode that united front of which Summers speaks—a collective national will.

Looking at Vietnam, one sees how these same factors could affect political will and potentially cause culmination today. Every administration has a domestic agenda that could divert attention from the war's prosecution. What is important to the current administration might not be important to future ones. Unlike Johnson, President Bush mobilized popular and political support from the outset in his State of the Union address, praising the Congress for its leadership and swift passage of emergency funding for disaster relief efforts and the military.[73] Like previous administrations, political scandals such as that which embroiled Richard Nixon could divert efforts elsewhere,[74] so our leaders must guard against allowing partisan infighting to supplant prosecution of the war as the prime focus.

On 18 September 2001, the President signed Senate Joint Resolution 23, authorizing him to use force to "deter and prevent acts of terrorism against the United States."[75] In other words, this war began the same way Vietnam did. The growing controversy over treatment of personnel detained[76] during operations illustrates where this type of resolution again misses the mark and could divide political will, much like the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution did in Vietnam.[77] Unlike Vietnam, however, there can be little doubt that America's vital

interests are at stake today. Therefore, our leadership must keep sight of potentially divisive issues to maintain a strong political will.

The discussions above emphasize the importance of maintaining the support of Congress and "John Q. Public." America's national will may be strong today, but, as Handel says, "In prolonged wars, the problem lies not so much in obtaining the initial public and political support as it does in sustaining it for the duration."[78] In discussing the factors that could affect culmination, each may impact the parts of national will in different ways. For simplicity, however, the distinctions will be removed to examine national will as a whole.

TIME AND CULMINATION

Time is a factor that must be managed to prevent culmination. Clausewitz states that in any war, both belligerents need time, but only the defender will derive "special advantages" from a prolonged conflict. In his view, offensive action requires a rapid decision, and the longer a conflict lasts, the greater the advantage becomes for the defender.[79] Hudson and Stanier agree: "Whatever the situation, if it persists for long the feeling that 'something must be done' will surface…."[80] In Vietnam, Summers asserts that one of our strategic failures was that we were not fighting for space, but rather for time: "The longer the war progressed the more obvious it became that time was *not* on our side." (emphasis in original)[81] How long will this war last? What impact will a prolonged conflict have?

The former question has no clear answer. In his speech to the Nation, President Bush asked for America's patience "in what will be a long struggle."[82] Pentagon officials are planning for a conflict that will last at least six years.[83] Pillar warns that this war will require "long, patient, persistent effort…yet…it will not conclude with the internal collapse of an

opponent."[84] As he says, counterterrorism is not a war against only one foe, so employing the full spectrum of national power to individual groups and the states that sponsor them will take time.

In answering what impact a prolonged conflict could have, several considerations emerge that could erode national will. It is an obvious fact that the longer the war, the greater the cost. Pillar asserts that the direct physical costs, like deaths and property damage, are the most obvious and the most measurable.[85] One can count the dead and assess the property damage. But he also says that there are indirect costs, too, like the fear instilled in citizens and what that fear causes them to do. In his definition of terrorism, the threat of a terrorist attack is, itself, terrorism.[86] Over time, what psychological cost will threats of terrorism have on Americans? Terrorism also erodes the government's willingness and determination to do certain things, the governmental equivalent of fear among the people. The longer the conflict, the less trust citizens place in the government to protect them.[87]

Time is related to costs and national will in another way: the cost to international support. This discussion chose an idealistic approach in examining erosion of our national will in isolation from the role of world opinion. At the outset, United Nations resolutions supported the War on Terrorism, but a prolonged conflict could erode that support.[88] Handel's earlier warning that initially obtaining public and political support in prolonged wars is easier than sustaining that support is as equally relevant to the international arena as it was to the domestic arena. Further examination on the role of international will is beyond the scope of this paper, but it should be clear that over time, the effects could be far reaching.

THE MEDIA AND CULMINATION

Throughout this discussion, one sees the role that national will plays as a potential cause of culmination. In examining how the media could erode national will and hasten culmination, a brief look at how the media influenced decision makers in Vietnam may point the way for guarding against such influences in the War on Terrorism. But first, the media's role vis-a-vis public opinion must be clarified.

American Columnist Walter Lippman states, "If the country is to be governed with the consent of the governed, then the governed must arrive at opinions about what their governors want them to consent to."[89] To arrive at an opinion, one must have information. Hudson and Stanier assert that, by and large, the public learns what it knows about issues abroad from the media.[90] The media, by their access to where wars are fought, should be the brokers of unbiased information. But Hudson and Stanier argue that objectivity is not possible: "…in a confused situation like…Vietnam, it is too much to expect the media, and particularly the television, to produce balanced, sane and sensible reports on which sensible objective judgments can be made by the public."[91] Their inability to strike a balance between objective reporting, sensationalism, and editorializing means they become the arbiter of public opinion. Indeed, Hudson and Stanier state, "…editors will continue to influence public opinion in the direction they choose….We cannot, and will never, have instant universal truth from our media."[92] It is this last thought that brings ultimate understanding to the issue: "Surely it is…the media itself which determines what the public thinks since there is no other public mirror available. …the media makes a statement…and then itself decides that the statement represents public opinion…."[93]

From the discussion above, it should be clear that the media has significant influence over public opinion. In their analysis of Vietnam, Hudson and Stanier echo the words of Summers: "Of all the many reasons adduced for the failure, the most convincing – with which the media was much involved – was the failure of support for the campaign by the American people."[94] Their analysis, however, puts more emphasis on the role of the media in our failure. These authors make the case that up until mid-1967, there was no standard media line on the war. As the Johnson administration continued to mislead the press and the public about the war's progress, the media became more and more against it. In February 1968, North Vietnam launched the Tet offensive, and although an American success on the battlefields, at home the result was reported as a defeat. "Before Tet editorial comments ran nearly four to one in favor…after Tet two to one against."[95] In the post-Tet years, media opposition would continue to grow. By 1973, when victory may have been achieved but Congress refused additional funding, the anti-war media line, growing costs of casualties for no perceptible national interests, and the past demagoguery of the Johnson administration ensured Saigon would fall.[96]

To prevent an influential media from eroding national will, one must understand that its influence is indirect. As Hudson and Stanier assert, "It is the perception that politicians have of its effect that can have considerable repercussions on the onset, course and ending of war."[97] Handel makes clear that America's political leaders must mobilize, educate and lead public opinion through this war, but if necessary, take action even without a clear consensus.[98] They must do the same to manage the media's influence. In the words of ABC newsman Peter Jennings, "Political leadership trumps good television every time. As influential as television can be, it is most influential in the absence of decisive political

leadership."[99] America's military and civilian leadership must not be swayed if the media, like they did after the "victory" of Tet, becomes critical of actions following a battlefield setback. In summing up, America's leaders must be the kind that, "after obtaining as much information as possible, make up their own minds about a policy and then try to get the media to support them…."[100] Only then can national will be maintained.

CONCLUSION

This study began by asking the questions, "What factors could cause culmination in the War on Terrorism?" Examination of Clausewitz's theory of the culminating point demonstrated that his definition did not adequately address the role of public opinion in the outcome of war. Therefore, it was necessary to construct a definition that accounted for the important role that national will plays in the conduct of wars. The definition for strategic culmination also emphasized the importance of maintaining an attainable set of objectives.

The examination of national will showed the emphasis the nation's leadership must place on maintaining both popular and political support for the war's prosecution. Studying the failures of the Vietnam War, one saw that it was defeat of public opinion that caused culmination. Time and the media were both factors in Vietnam, and they could be corrosive to the cohesiveness of our national will in the War on Terrorism. Both factors must be managed by America's senior leadership to prevent culmination. A lengthy conflict will erode national will, so our leadership must remind Americans frequently about the cost of security. To combat the role of the media, strong leadership and a cohesive strategy in pursuit of realistic objectives will sustain the media's support. In the end, we will know that we have attained our objectives and prevented culmination, that we have won, when we can all sleep without fear of terrorism.

NOTES

[1] John Saar, "Panic in City," *The Washington Post*, 30 April 1975, A:1

[2] Ibid.

[3] N. R. Kleinfeld , "A Creeping Horror," *The New York Times*, 12 September 2001, 1.

[4] This discussion will use the U. S. government's official definition used for statistical analysis: the "premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience." (*U.S Code, Title 22*, sec 2656f (d), quoted in Paul R. Pillar, *Terrorism and U.S. Foreign Policy* (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 2001), 13. Joint Pub 1-02 defines terrorism as "the calculated use of unlawful violence or threat of unlawful violence to inculcate fear; intended to coerce or to intimidate governments or societies in the pursuit of goals that are generally political, religious, or ideological." Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Pub 1-02, Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, (Washington, DC: 12 April 2001), 428.

[5] Michael I. Handel, *Masters of War*, 3rd ed. (London: Frank Cass, 2001), 184

[6] Joint Pub 1-02 defines *counterterrorism* as "offensive operations taken to prevent, deter, and respond to terrorism." *Antiterrorism* is defined as "defensive measures used to reduce the vulnerability of individuals and property to terrorist attacks." JP 1-02, 104 and 31. The use of the term "war on terrorism" will be used in the context of counterterrorist operations.

[7] M. N. Vego, *Operational Warfare*, unpublished course material NWC 1004 (Naval War College, Newport, RI: 2000), 348. Vego asserts that the term *culminating point of attack* as used by Clausewitz referred to what we understand to be the tactical and operational levels of war, and *culminating point of victory* applied to a campaign or strategic level. He makes a further distinction of terms in his examples, using *culminating point of attack* (or defense) for the tactical level; *culminating point of offensive* (or defensive) for the operational level; and *culminating point of attack* (or *defeat*) for the strategic level. For this discussion, the terms *culmination, culminating point*, or *culmination point* will be used in the strategic sense.

[8] Peter Paret, 'The Genesis of *On War*,' in Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 5-25. Paret's introduction to *On War* describes the career and influences on Clausewitz, from his encounter with war in 1793 as a twelve-year-lance corporal, through his time at the War College, his time as a staff officer with several Russian commands during the War of 1812, through his last tour as Inspector General of the Silesian artillery, and finally his death.

[9] Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 226

[10] Clausewitz, 528. Milan Vego asserts that the term *culminating point of attack* as used by Clausewitz referred to what we understand to be the tactical and operational levels of war, and *culminating point of victory* applied to a campaign or strategic level. Vego makes a further distinction of terms in his examples, using *culminating point of attack* (or defense) for the tactical level; *culminating point of offensive* (or defensive) for the operational level; and *culminating point of attack* (or *defeat*) for the strategic level. (Vego, 348) For this discussion the terms *culmination, culminating point* or *culmination point* will be used interchangeably.

[11] Clausewitz, 236. These three reasons are actually listed in bullet format under the heading "offensive engagements" but are condensed here for convenience.

[12] Ibid., 527. These were also condensed from a list.

[13] Ibid., 570.

[14] Ibid., 471. He discusses Napoleon's invasion of Russia in 1812 as an example of the distances involved in land wars of the times, a distance he gives as 450 miles from Borodino to the frontier. Vego also cites this example in defining culmination point with respect to space, stating that Napoleon overshot his culmination point by about "250 miles." (Vego, 345)

[15] Clausewitz, 587-591.

[16] Handel, 129.

[17] Clausewitz, 592.

[18] Handel, 129.

[19] Ibid., 128.

[20] Clausewitz, quoted in Handel, 128.

[21] Handel, 128.

[22] Ibid., 128-9.

[23] U.S. Army. *FM 3-0 Operations.* Headquarters, Department of the Army. Washington, DC: 2001, 5-9.

[24] Vego, 341.

[25] Ibid., 351.

[26] Pillar, 50-56.

[27] Vego, 355.

[28] FM 3-0, 5-10.

[29] Clausewitz, 383.

[30] Army Department, *FM 100-5 Operations.* Headquarters, Department of the Army, (Washington, DC: 1993), 6-8. This is the predecessor to the current Army operations publication, FM 3-0. Joint Pub 3-0 uses the words, "success in the attack…" Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Pub 3-0, Doctrine for Joint Operations,* (Washington, DC: 1 February 1995), III-22.

[31] There are other examples of U. S. armed conflict, like Somalia in 1992, in which one could argue that we culminated before reaching our objectives. The discussion here is limited to Vietnam.

[32] Clausewitz, 579.

[33] Jeffrey Record, "Vietnam in Retrospect: Could We Have Won?" *Parameters,* (Winter 1996-97): 52

[34] Harry G. Summers, Jr., *On Strategy: A Critical Analysis of the Vietnam War* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1982; reprint, New York: Dell, 1984), 139 (page citation is to the reprint edition).

[35] Hugh M. Arnold, quoted in Summers, 140

[36] Clausewitz, quoted in Summers, 145

[37] Brigadier General Douglas Kinnard, quoted in Summers, 149. Summers quotes Kinnard's comments in a 1974 survey of Army generals who had commanded in Vietnam: "Almost 70 percent of the Army generals who managed the war were uncertain of its objectives… [this] mirrors a deep-seated strategic failure: the inability of policy-makers to frame tangible, obtainable goals."

[38] Ibid., 147.

[39] Record, 52

[40] Henry Kissinger, quoted in Summers, 148. U. S. military forces were out of Vietnam by January 1973 when the Paris Peace agreement was signed.

[41] Record, 52.

[42] Caspar Weinberger, quoted in Handel, 307. The Weinberger Doctrine 'codifies' the conditions that should be met before the United States becomes involved in a military conflict.

[43] Ibid., 311

[44] President, Speech, "Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the United States Response to the Terrorist Attacks of September 11th," *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents,* (21 September 2001), 1347-1351. Hereafter referred to as "President's State of the Union Address."

[45] President's State of the Union Address. For clarity, terrorists with a "global reach" will be those deemed to have the capability to conduct operations across transnational boundaries. The U. S. Department of State uses the term "international terrorism" to mean terrorism involving citizens or the territory of more than one country. Department of State, *Patterns of Global Terrorism-2000.* (Washington, DC: 2001), 3. This discussion will not deal with domestic terrorist networks/operatives, such as those that destroyed the Alfred P. Murrah building in Oklahoma City, OK.

[46] Vego, 361.

[47] Ibid., 354.

[48] _____, *U.S. War Objectives: How Narrow or Broad,* unpublished Newport Papers, no. 03 (Naval War College, Newport, RI, 25 October 2001), 1

[49] Mao Tse-tung, quoted in Handel, 95.

[50] Weinberger, quoted in Handel, 310.

[51] Vego, 354.

[52] Miles Hudson and John Stanier, *War and the Media* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 216. The comment was made in the context of the Gulf War, but it applies for any overseas intervention. The other two aspects were support from the country you are helping and support from the United Nations.

[53] George Schulz, quoted in Handel, 319.

[54] Record, 61.

[55] Hudson and Stanier, 108; Summers, 33-34.

[56] Summers, 43.

[57] Weinberger, as quoted in Handel, 311.

[58] President's State of the Union Address

[59] Handel, 319.

[60] C. L. Stratten, "What we Expect in the Coming 'War on Terrorism.'" *Emergency Net News Service:* 24 Sep 2001-INT/ESR Vol. 5-7, No. 273. (Emergency Response And Research Institute. http://www.emergency.com/2001/war-on-terror-2001.htm: 4 December 2001)

[61] ADM U. S. G. Sharp, as quoted in Record, 57.

[62] See U.S. government definition in note 4

[63] Weinberger, quoted in Handel, 311.

[64] Summers, 52.

[65] Richard Nixon, quoted in Hudson and Stanier, 117; Record, 62.

[66] Hudson, 116.

[67] Summers, 45.

[68] Ibid, 41.

[69] Louis Fisher, *Presidential War Power* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1995), 116. Both Johnson and later Nixon would use the authority contained in the Tonkin Gulf Resolution, but they believed first and foremost in their authority to conduct the war as commander-in-chief under the Constitution. Summers, Chapter 2.

[70] Summers, 41.

[71] *War Powers Resolution of 1973,* 87 Stat. 555 (1973), as quoted in Fisher, Appendix E. At the end of 60 days, Congress can require the removal of forces unless it declares war, specifically authorizes the President's use of force, or extends the 60-day period. Fisher makes the point that it is wrong to view the War Powers Resolution solely as a response to the Vietnam War. He states that the resolution was the product of almost 40 years of bipartisan efforts to recapture legislative authority that had migrated to the executive branch. Fisher, 128.

[72] Summers, 57.

[73] President's State of the Union Address

[74] At the time of writing, the bankruptcy of energy company ENRON has the potential to affect members of the administration, though no one has as yet been directly implicated.

[75] President, Authorization, "Statement on Signing the Authorization for Use of Military Force," *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents*, (21 September 2001), 1333-1334

[76] David E. Sanger and Katharine Q. Seelye, "Bush Reconsiders Stand on Treating Captives of War," *New York Times*, 29 January 2002, 1:1.

[77] Fisher, Appendix E. Although the War Powers Resolution was not enacted solely as a result of the Vietnam War, it did limit some of the authority that Johnson and Nixon had claimed. Specifically, it limits the situations in which the president, as commander-in-chief, may employ force. There are two situations in which he may do so that are germane to this discussion: a declaration of war by Congress, or an armed attack upon the U. S. On 9 October 2001, the President notified Congress, in accordance with the War Powers Resolution, that he had ordered the commencement of combat operations. President, Letter, "Letter to Congressional Leaders Reporting on Combat Action in Afghanistan Against Al Qaeda Terrorists and Their Taliban Supporters," *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents* (12 October 2001), 1447-1448. President Bush did acknowledge the constitutionality of the War Powers Resolution in his notification. Interestingly, though, he followed his predecessors and reasserted the "longstanding position of the executive branch regarding the President's constitutional authority to use force…."

[78] Handel, 318.

[79] Clausewitz, 597-598.

[80] Hudson and Stanier, 311.

[81] Summers, 128.

[82] President's State of the Union Address

[83] Bill Gertz and Rowan Scarborough, "Inside the Ring," *Washington Times*, 11 Jan 2002, 9.

[84] Pillar, 217.

[85] Pillar, 18-19.

[86] Ibid., 13.

[87] Ibid., 24-26.

[88] United Nations, Security Council, *Resolution 1373 (2001)*, 4385th meeting, S/RES/1373 (2001) (New York: 2001). U. N. Security Council resolution 1373 decided that, among other things, all states shall:

1. Prevent and suppress the financing of terrorist acts
2. Criminalize the willful provision or collection by member states of funds if those funds are to be used for terrorist acts.
3. Freeze funds and other financial assets or economic resources of persons who commit or abet terrorist acts.
4. Deny safe haven to those who finance, plan, support or commit terrorist acts.
5. Prevent those who finance, plan or commit terrorist acts from using their respective territories for those purposes.
6. Prevent movement of terrorists through border controls.
7. Assist other states with criminal investigations.

[89] Walter Lippman, quoted in Hudson and Stanier, 105.

[90] Hudson and Stanier, 304.

[91] Ibid., 115.

[92] Ibid., 320.

[93] Ibid., 304.

[94] Ibid., 185.

[95] Ibid., 111-112.

[96] Ibid., Chapter 5

[97] Ibid., 303

[98] Handel, 319.

[99] Peter Jennings, quoted in Hudson and Stanier, 299.

[100] Hudson and Stanier, 321.

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