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# Informational Strategy and the Will of the American People

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**Frank Welter**  
U.S. Army

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# INFORMATIONAL STRATEGY AND THE WILL OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

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## ABSTRACT

This paper is about the moral character of the American people. It is about the source of national power that political scientists call national morale, or national will. Specifically, I examine the informational strategies employed by American presidents in their attempt to mobilize the national will. My ultimate aim is to better define the informational role of the Executive Branch, identifying a structure and a process which may be used in mobilizing the will of the American people in support of its national security strategy.

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# INFORMATIONAL STRATEGY

## AND THE WILL OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

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This paper is about the moral character of the American people. It is about the source of national power that political scientists call national morale, or national will. Specifically, I examine the informational strategies employed by American presidents in their attempt to mobilize the national will. My ultimate aim is to better define the informational role of the Executive Branch, identifying a structure and a process which may be used in mobilizing the will of the American people in support of its national security strategy.

In pursuit of this aim, I will:

- o define national character and national will,
- o examine the nature and importance of American national will,
- o discuss the role of the Executive Branch in mobilizing the will of the American people,
- o define informational strategy,

- o review the informational strategy-making efforts of selected American presidents, and
- o draw conclusions relevant to the provision of strategic advice to the President regarding war and military operations short of war.

**THE CHARACTER, THE WILL, AND THE POWER OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE**

**"...the national power available determines the limits of foreign policy."<sup>1</sup>**

It is imperative that the President and his strategic advisors understand that the character and the will of the American people are critical sources of national power, and that they play a decisive role in successful foreign policy and in the successful conduct of warfare.

## National Character

**"The passions that are to be kindled in war must  
already be inherent in the people;..."<sup>2</sup>**

In *Politics Among Nations*, Hans J. Morgenthau and Kenneth W. Thompson discuss the importance of national character.

Of the three factors of a qualitative nature which have a bearing on national power, national character and national morale stand out both for their elusiveness from the point of view of rational prognosis and for their permanent and often decisive influence upon the weight a nation is able to put into the scales of international politics.<sup>3</sup>

National power is influenced directly by national character, and the character of nations is critical to their relations. Morgenthau argues that among the permanent traits of the American national character are antimilitarism, aversion to standing armies and to compulsory military service. In contrast, he characterizes the Russians as having been forceful and persistent, and argues that Russian allegiance to the authority of the government and their traditional fear of the foreigner made large permanent military establishments acceptable to the population.<sup>4</sup>

The importance of national character in the balance of power

equation is further defined by Morgenthau:

Thus the national character has given...Russia an initial advantage in the struggle for power, since they could transform in peacetime a greater portion of their natural resources into instruments of war. On the other hand, the reluctance of the American...peoples to consider such a transformation, especially on a large scale and with respect to manpower, except in an obvious national emergency, has imposed a severe handicap upon American...foreign policy. Governments of militaristic nations are able to plan, prepare, and wage war at the moment of their choosing. They can, more particularly, start a preventive war whenever it seems to be more propitious for their cause. Governments of pacifist nations, of which the United States was an outstanding example until the end of the Second World War, are in this respect in a much more difficult situation and have much less freedom of action. Restrained as they are by the innate antimilitarism of their peoples, they must pursue a more cautious course in foreign affairs.<sup>5</sup>

Among the many predictable American characteristics is its spirited response to direct external attack. The Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor did more to crystalize American willingness to wage war than anything President Roosevelt was able to do. Barbary pirate attacks on American shipping, the sinking of the USS Maine, and the Tonkin Gulf incident demonstrate the point, a point that has not been lost on the nations of the world. American national character, however, tends to be much more predictable than its

national will.

### National Will and National Power

The degree to which the character of a nation is applied to its foreign policy is defined by Morgenthau as its national morale, or what many call its national will.

More elusive and less stable, but no less important than all the other factors in its bearing upon national power, is what we propose to call national morale. National morale is the degree of determination with which a nation supports the foreign policies of its government in peace or war. It permeates all activities of a nation, its agricultural and industrial production as well as its military establishment and diplomatic service. In the form of public opinion, it provides an intangible factor without whose support no government, democratic or autocratic, is able to pursue its policies with full effectiveness, if it is able to pursue them at all. Its presence or absence and its qualities reveal themselves particularly in times of national crisis, when either the existence of the nation is at stake or else a decision of fundamental importance must be taken upon which the survival of the nation might well depend.\*

In his discussion on the nature of warfare, Carl von Clausewitz also explores the elusive and subjective nature of national will. He too is convinced of its importance in the

successful execution of warfare.

"If you want to overcome your enemy you must match your effort against his power of resistance, which can be expressed as the product of two inseparable factors, viz. *the total means at his disposal* and *the strength of his will*. The extent of the means at his disposal is a matter--though not exclusively--of figures, and should be measurable. But the strength of his will is much less easy to determine and can only be gauged approximately by the strength of the motive animating it."<sup>7</sup>

The motive animating the nation's will must be clearly articulated by the leadership, must be founded in the moral values, the character and the vital security interests of the people. Clausewitz addresses national will in this argument as a factor that must be overcome in defeating an enemy. It is clear that national will is also a factor that must be possessed by the protagonist in armed conflict.

National will is influenced dramatically by many factors, such as perceptions of direct interest (national defense of families and homes), perceptions of national values ("just" war and punishment of "evil"), and perceptions shaped by media coverage (Hearst press encouragement of war against Spain for example). National will, nurtured and shaped by national leadership, influenced by the national character, and coupled with the measurable means of national power, is an essential ingredient of

successful warfare, whether offensive or defensive. History provides numerous examples of national will being decisively influenced by government. Great Britain's use of propaganda in World War I, Germany's use of propaganda in the 1930's and 1940's, Stalin's use of the communist party network in World War II, and the U.S. "Home Front Campaign" in World War II are all examples.

In their book WAR, Ends & Means, Paul Seabury and Angelo Codevilla argue that a nation's survival does not depend solely on the military capacity inherent in the size, health, wealth and technical skill of its population. "Wars are won or lost, nations live and die, primarily by the people's willingness to fight, their ability to impose discipline on themselves, and their readiness to subordinate themselves to the chiefs who know what they are doing, thereby turning potential into actual force at the right place at the right time."

In discussing the fundamental concepts of national security, Joint Pub 0-1, *Basic National Defense Doctrine* (the final draft of which was published on 7 May, 1991), defines national will as one of several sources of national power. From these sources, including the national will, are derived the instruments of national power, and the national security strategy that directs their use. These instruments are economic, diplomatic, military, and informational. Their critical relationship to national character, national will and national power is shown in FIGURE 1.

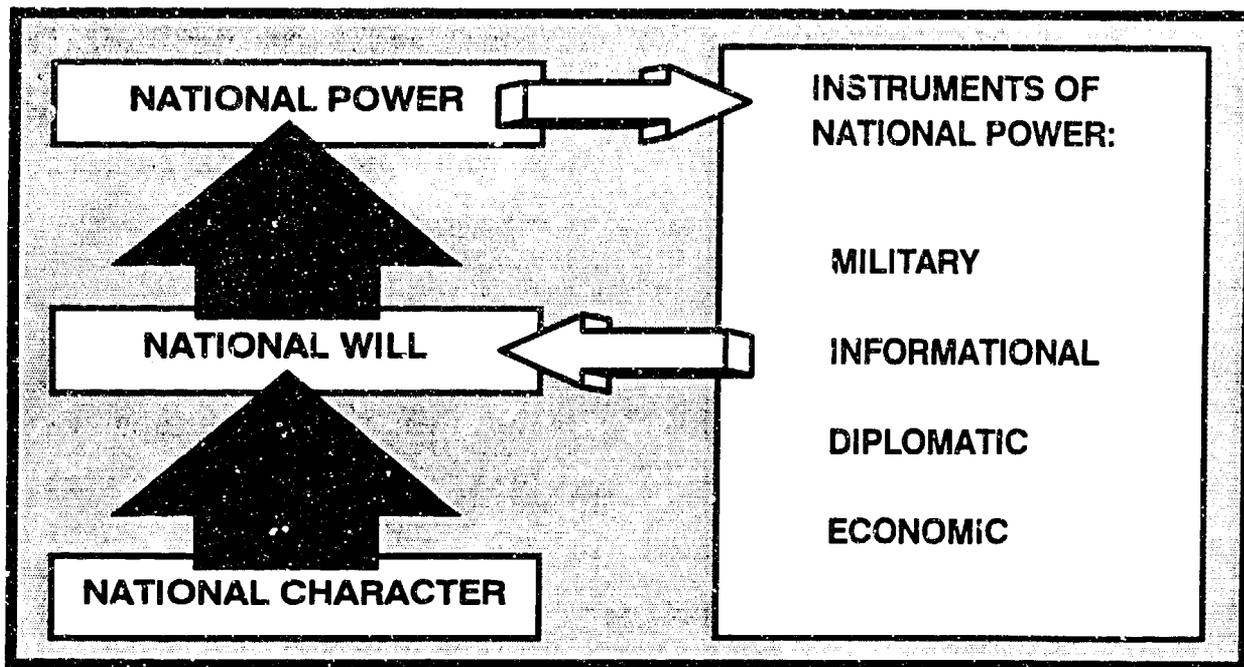


FIGURE 1

A strategy is developed for the execution of each of the instruments of national power. While the diplomatic and military strategies primarily address relationships with foreign nations, the economic and informational strategies focus on both domestic and international affairs. It is the domestic element of American informational strategy that must be designed to mobilize the national will.

Although Joint Pub 0-1 further defines national will as a limitation to military action, it makes sense that national will,

to some extent, limits economic, diplomatic, and informational efforts as well.

National will is the ultimate strength and limitation underpinning military action or inaction. National will is the collective acceptance or rejection, by the people of a nation, of the objectives of a national policy and the corresponding sacrifices to carry it through. The responsibility to inform the people of the situation and its possibilities and consequences rests with the national government. In nations that have freedom of speech, that responsibility is shared with the national news media. The ability of a nation to pay the price of military action and the willingness to do so are two separate issues.'

The informational instrument of national security strategy, or informational strategy, therefore, is not only derived in part from the national will, it is critical to its mobilization. It follows then, that without the will of the people, a national security strategy, including its component informational strategy, may very well fail. With the national will as a source of its strength, it is imperative that informational strategy have as its objective the mobilization of the will of the people in support of the national security strategy.

## THE ROLE OF THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH

The formulation and execution of an effective informational strategy requires quality leadership, leadership that is guided by the American public, and implemented by an organization and process sufficiently flexible to adapt to the vagaries of war.

### A Leadership Challenge

**"Grand strategy should both calculate and develop the economic resources and man-power of nations in order to sustain the fighting services. Also the moral resources--for to foster the people's willing spirit is often as important as to possess the more concrete forms of power."<sup>10</sup>**

Morgenthau applies his definition of national will to the political reality of the day by arguing that "the power of a nation, in view of its national morale, resides in the quality of its government. A government that is truly representative, not only in the sense of parliamentary majorities, but above all in a sense of being able to translate the inarticulate convictions and

aspirations of the people into international objectives and policies, has the best chance to marshal the national energies in support of those objectives and policies."<sup>11</sup> Governments, whether totalitarian or democratic, that do not represent the people in the formulation of their foreign policies, will not gain the support of the people in the execution of those policies.

This leadership challenge is severely compounded by the unpredictability of the national will. "...no conclusion can be drawn from the character of a nation as to what the morale of that nation might be under certain contingencies."<sup>12</sup> "However unpredictable the quality of national morale, especially at a moment of great crisis, there are obvious situations where national morale is likely to be high, while under certain different conditions the odds are in favor of a low state of national morale. One can say, in general, that the more closely identified a people are with the actions and objectives of their government -- especially, of course, in foreign affairs -- the better are the chances for national morale to be high, and vice versa."<sup>13</sup>

The President's ability to lead is severely challenged not only by the unpredictability of the national will but by the varying degree of unpredictability that it exhibits. A President who is successful in leading public opinion is one who possesses a clear understanding of the more predictable national character. Based on the character of his nation, a successful President knows

when conditions exist that are suitable for the invocation of the national will, and just as important, when they don't.

The national morale of any people will obviously break at a certain point. Some peoples will be brought close to the breaking point by tremendous and useless losses in war....One great defeat will suffice to undermine the national morale of others....The morale of others will break under the impact of a combination of tremendous war losses in men and territory and the mismanagement of an autocratic government. The morale of others will only slowly decline and, as it were, corrode at the edges -- not break at all in one sudden collapse, even when exposed to a rare combination of governmental mismanagement, devastation, invasion, and a hopeless war situation.<sup>14</sup>

The President's success in estimating and evaluating the nation's will must be matched by a similar success in balancing his reaction to public opinion with his need to mobilize and form it.

Morgenthau argues that "The statesman...is allowed to neither surrender to popular passions nor disregard them. He must strike a prudent balance between adapting himself to them and marshaling them to the support of his policies. In one word, he must lead".<sup>15</sup>

The successful President is also effective in matching the conditions under which national will can be successfully energized with the conditions that must exist for the successful conduct of

foreign policy, and warfare if necessary. Morgenthau argues that a government... "must secure the approval of its own people for its foreign policies and the domestic ones designed to mobilize the elements of national power in support of them. That task is difficult because the conditions under which popular support can be obtained for a foreign policy are not necessarily identical with the conditions under which a foreign policy can be successfully pursued."<sup>16</sup>

This tremendous leadership challenge can be met by a President and his political and military strategic advisors with an effective informational strategy.

**Informational Strategy.** Informational Strategy is best defined in Joint Pub 0-1, *Basic National Defense Doctrine*, as a separate and distinct element, or instrument of American national power and national security strategy.

In any war or military action short of war, coordination of the wide variety of informational efforts is essential. It is also very difficult because so many government and private agencies (e.g., the media), both domestic and international, have legitimate roles in obtaining and providing national security-related information. The Executive Offices of the President will normally devise and coordinate the informational strategy. The components of an informational strategy may include the broad objectives to be

pursued, coordination of declarations of national security policy and domestic public affairs, responsibilities and relationships for coordination of government and media information efforts, international information programs aimed at bolstering international support and defusing enemy disinformation efforts, and psychological operations aimed at disintegrating enemy strength and will. Factors to be considered include:

- (1) Deliberate information programs.
- (2) General guidelines for coping with international opportunities and difficulties as they occur.
- (3) Coordination with operational security requirements.
- (4) Coordination with deception requirements.

The Department of Defense has a supporting role in most of these informational efforts and a leading role in the planning and conduct of military psychological operations. Military psychological operations should support national and theater military strategy and be coordinated with overall national informational strategy.<sup>17</sup>

It is interesting to note that the Department of Defense, in Joint Pub O-1, defines informational strategy as a responsibility of the Executive Offices of the President. As will be seen, only President Ronald Reagan has come close to formally defining the role of the Executive Office in devising and coordinating informational strategy, or in assigning that responsibility to cabinet secretaries.

Leading Public Opinion. Although the national morale, or national will of the American people is not solely defined by public opinion, it is public opinion, particularly as represented in the media, that can dramatically influence the nation's will. Morgenthau argues that "the government must realize that it is the leader and not the slave of public opinion; that public opinion is not a static thing that is to be discovered and classified by public-opinion polls as plants are by botanists, but that it is a dynamic, ever changing entity to be continuously created and recreated by informed and responsible leadership; that it is the historic mission of the government to assert that leadership lest it be the demagogue who asserts it".<sup>18</sup>

If Morgenthau is correct on this point, it follows that the responsibility of the leadership to "continuously create and recreate" public opinion in support of the government's foreign policy is central to the role of the Executive Branch in the formulation and execution of an informational strategy.

The domestic goal of an informational strategy must be a supportive public. To be supportive, the public must view the government as effective and efficient in managing the elements of national power in pursuit of its foreign policy, especially when engaged in military action as an extension of foreign policy.

Good government, viewed as an independent requirement of national power, means three things: balance between, on the one hand, the material and human resources that go into the making of national power and, on the other, the foreign policy to be pursued; balance among those resources; and popular support for the foreign policies to be pursued.<sup>19</sup>

A much more pessimistic view of the President's ability to lead public opinion is expressed by George C. Edwards in his article, *Can the President Lead?* His view accentuates the leadership challenge faced by the President in the execution of an informational strategy.

Leading the public is perhaps the ultimate tool of the political leader in a democracy. It is difficult for other authorities such as members of Congress to deny the legitimate demands of a President with popular support. As a result, the President is constantly engaged in substantial endeavors to obtain the public's support for himself and his policies in order to influence Congress. Yet trying to lead and succeeding at it are quite different. To what extent is the President able to lead the public on national security policy in order to convince Congress to support him?<sup>20</sup>

Americans traditionally display little interest in politics that do not affect their standard of living in some way. Typically, they view domestic politics as being much more interesting than foreign policy or national security strategy. Therefore, a President's effort to sell his national security

strategy may be more difficult. It may be misunderstood, or even ignored. "Following his nationwide televised speech on the invasion of Granada, only 59 percent of the people could even identify the part of the world in which the island nation was located. As late as 1986, 62 percent of Americans did not know which side the United States supported in Nicaragua, despite extensive, sustained coverage of the President's policy in virtually all components of the media."<sup>21</sup> Even so, the initial reaction of the American people to the use of force by the President (e.g. Panama and Granada) is generally supportive. As Henry Kissinger once assessed, national will is an important component of a state's power, but initiative creates its own consensus. Or, I might add, at least until the casualty count begins to mount.

When Americans are threatened physically by forces outside their sovereign boundaries, they cry for leadership from their President. However..."In the absence of a national crisis, most people are not open to political appeals."<sup>22</sup> When no threat is apparent they tend to defer more to the President on national security issues. They see national security issues as too complex and difficult to understand. Domestic issues touch their every-day lives, are easier to understand and associate with. Presidents find it much easier to arouse the national will when it comes to domestic matters.

"As President, Ronald Reagan was certainly interested in policy change and went to unprecedented lengths to influence public opinion. Nevertheless, numerous national surveys since 1982 found that public support for increased defense expenditures, one of his highest priorities, was decidedly lower than when he took office."<sup>23</sup>

With the people's political focus traditionally on domestic issues, it is difficult for a President to get elected in the first place if he campaigns on foreign policy and national security issues. The principal focus of the successful President's campaign is domestic. Once elected, he maintains his popular support by keeping the people focused on domestic issues, doing good domestic politics publicly, and by doing good foreign policy in the background. The higher the President's public approval level, the more success he will have in mobilizing the national will in support of foreign policy and national security. To be effective, he is prepared to invoke the national will in support of foreign policy in a national security crisis, and he is ready to sell it as a universal threat to national security. "One innovative study found that despite the mythology of the "bully pulpit", a President's ability to influence the policy preferences of the public is dependent upon his standing with it. Presidents low in the polls have little success in opinion leadership. The ability to influence public opinion, in other words, simply cannot be assumed to be a given of the Presidential role."<sup>24</sup>

The successful President balances carefully his need to maintain his popularity with his need to maintain the security of his nation through successful foreign policy. Morgenthau states that in the United States "...the temptation is overwhelming for an administration to seek to gain electoral advantage by catering to the preferences of public opinion, regardless of foreign policy."<sup>25</sup>

Popular support is the precondition of the President's stewardship of foreign policy. The creation of a public opinion supporting him, even at the sacrifice of some elements of foreign policy, is a task which a President can only shun at the risk of losing office and, with it, his ability to pursue any foreign policy at all.<sup>26</sup>

Confronted with this dilemma between good foreign policy and a bad one that public opinion demands, a government must avoid two pitfalls. It must resist the temptation to sacrifice what it considers to be good policy upon the altar of public opinion, abdicating leadership and exchanging short-lived political advantage for the permanent interests of the country. It must also avoid widening the unavoidable gap between the requirements of good foreign policy and the preferences of public opinion.<sup>27</sup>

American national morale, in particular has been in recent years the object of searching speculation at home and abroad; for American foreign policy and, through it, the weight of American power in international affairs is to a particular degree dependent upon the moods of

American public opinion, as they express themselves in the votes of Congress, election results, polls and the like.<sup>28</sup>

Edwards summarizes his position as follows:

Leading the public is leading at the margins of the basic configurations of American politics. Most of the time the White House can do no more than move a small portion of the public from opposition or neutrality to support for the President or from passive agreement to active support. Sometimes this may be enough to influence a few wavering Senators or Representatives to back the President, and occasionally this may have a critical impact. More typically, however, the consequences of attempting to lead the public will be of modest significance.<sup>29</sup>

Edwards characterizes the American people as traditionally uninterested and ignorant when it comes to foreign policy and national security. Although he may accurately describe the American character, he discounts the ability of a great leader. An effective President will approach the character of the American people as a challenge. He will invoke in the American people the will to overcome disinterest and ignorance when it is necessary to do so.

## A Historical Perspective

Our nation's achievement in the last half of the twentieth century will be characterized by many historians in terms of our Presidents' success in confronting the challenge to lead public opinion. Let us turn now to recent history.

President Dwight D. Eisenhower and the New Look. Many of America's great leaders have relied heavily on the media in selling their national security policies and strategies to the people. Few, however, developed a specific marketing strategy. This has frequently resulted in misunderstood or conflicting policy statements.

President Eisenhower used the media in advertising his New Look strategy. "Throughout the late fall and winter of 1953-1954, high level administration spokesmen were engaged in the task of selling the New Look to the public....Not all members of the administration were speaking the same way, however."<sup>30</sup> Secretary of Defense Charles Wilson was quoted in the *New York Times* on 10 November, 1953 stating that the New Look strategy could reduce emphasis on balanced forces and place greater emphasis on air power. The same issue of the *New York Times* reported Army Chief of Staff Matthew B. Ridgeway as claiming the foot soldier as the

dominant factor in war and that "any weakening of U.S. ground forces now could be a grievous blow to freedom."<sup>31</sup>

### President Lyndon B. Johnson and the Vietnam Conflict

Before the United States commits combat forces abroad, there must be some reasonable assurance we will have the support of the American people and their elected representatives in Congress. This support cannot be achieved unless we are candid in making clear the threats we face; the support cannot be sustained without continuing and close consultation. We cannot fight a battle with the Congress at home while asking our troops to win a war overseas or, as in the case of Vietnam, in effect asking our troops not to win, but just to be there.<sup>32</sup>

Successful resolution of the Vietnam conflict, from a purely military perspective, required a declaration of war, a military effort of adequate size and strength to defeat North Vietnamese intervention quickly, and a nation-building effort that would

restore democracy to South Vietnam. This was an effort that the American people were not willing to undertake in light of the threat that they perceived. Did the potential fall of South Vietnam to the North Vietnamese Communists really foreshadow the fall of all of South East Asia to communist domination? Not in the American mind, and President Johnson never made a concerted effort to sell that threat to the American people.

The opportunity to acquire popular support for a declaration of war presented itself to President Johnson in August of 1964 when two American destroyers were attacked by North Vietnamese patrol boats in the Gulf of Tonkin. Had the President responded to the public's immediate outrage over the Tonkin Gulf incident with a media assault on the North Vietnamese, a declaration of war from Congress was quite attainable. In lieu of a declaration of war, however, President Johnson asked Congress to pass the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution that would allow him to "take all necessary measures to repel an armed attack against the forces of the United States and to prevent further aggression." The Resolution passed in the House and the Senate with only two dissenting votes.<sup>33</sup>

Had our military response to the Tonkin Gulf incident been immediate and conclusive, such that further North Vietnamese aggression was arrested, the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution may have been all that was needed to ensure the support of the American people. Our response was not immediate and conclusive, however,

and the President failed to win American support for the 10-year war that it was about to endure. Why did he fail? He didn't try.

When U.S. ground forces were committed to the conflict in 1965, President Johnson let the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution ride, rather than returning to Congress for a declaration of war. The lack of a declaration of war led to a failure to mobilize reserves, a failure of the military to pursue an aggressive strategy against the North Vietnamese, and it led to the disintegration of American national will.

It follows that our strategic failure in Vietnam was caused, in part, by the disintegration of our national will. But were the American people at fault? Harry G. Summers Jr., Colonel, U.S. Army (Retired) in his book "ON STRATEGY: The Vietnam War In Context," states that "...President Lyndon Baines Johnson made a conscious decision not to mobilize the American people -- to invoke the national will -- for the Vietnam War."<sup>34</sup> Summers argues that President Johnson's decision not to mobilize the will of the American people was based on his suspicion of the motives of his military leaders, as well as his fear that his "Great Society" program would be jeopardized. President Johnson stated in his memoirs, "History provided too many cases where the sound of the bugle put an immediate end to the hopes and dreams of the best reformers: The Spanish-American War drowned the populist spirit;

World War I ended Woodrow Wilson's New Freedom; World War II brought the New Deal to a close. Once the (Vietnam) War began, then all those conservatives in Congress would use it as a weapon against the Great Society....

....And the Generals. Oh, they'd love the war too. It's hard to be a military hero without a war. Heroes need battles and bombs and bullets in order to be heroic. That's why I am suspicious of the military. They're always so narrow in their appraisal of everything. They see everything in military terms."<sup>35</sup>

President Johnson's failure to lead his country into war by leading public opinion is reflected upon by former Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs Phil G. Goulding, stating that "In my four-year tour (July, 1965 - January, 1969) there was not once a significant organized effort by the Executive Branch of the federal government to put across its side of a major policy issue or a major controversy to the American people. Not once was there a 'public affairs program'... worthy of the name."<sup>36</sup>

**President Ronald Reagan, "The Great Communicator"**. In 1983, President Reagan recognized a need to improve the coordination of the "public diplomacy" of the U.S. Government relative to national security. He attempted to bring an organization together, within his national security structure, to do just that. He defined

"public diplomacy" in his National Security Decision Directive (NSDD) Number 77, Management of Public Diplomacy Relative to National Security, dated 14 January, 1983, as being "comprised of those actions of the U.S. Government designed to generate support for our national security objectives."<sup>37</sup> In NSDD #77, he directed the formation of a Special Planning Group (SPG) under the National Security Council to be chaired by the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs. He required all public diplomacy activities involving himself or the White House to be coordinated with the Office of the White House Chief of Staff.

Standing members of the SPG were the Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense, Director of the United States Information Agency, the Director of the Agency for International Development, and the Assistant to the President for Communications. Other White House officials and senior representatives from other agencies attended at the invitation of the chairman. The President charged the SPG with the responsibility "for the overall planning, direction, coordination and monitoring of implementation of public diplomacy activities....To ensure that a wide-ranging program of effective initiatives is developed and implemented to support national security policy, objectives and decisions."<sup>38</sup> NSDD #77 also directed that four interagency standing committees be established, guided and reviewed by the SPG:

Public Affairs Committee

International Information Committee  
International Political Committee  
International Broadcasting Committee

The three "International" committees were empowered with the responsibility for planning, coordinating and implementing international information, political and broadcasting activities. The Public Affairs Committee, in contrast, was tasked to target the domestic audience. "This group will be responsible for the planning and coordination on a regular basis of U.S. Government public affairs activities relative to national security. Specifically, it will be responsible for the planning and coordination of major speeches on national security subjects and other public appearances by senior officials, and for planning and coordination with respect to public affairs matters concerning national security and foreign policy events in issues with foreign and domestic dimensions. This committee will coordinate public affairs efforts to explain and support major U.S. foreign policy initiatives."<sup>39</sup> The Public Affairs Committee was co-chaired by the Assistant to the President for Communications and the Deputy Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs.

In October, 1983 President Reagan exercised his Special Planning Group in support of OPERATION URGENT FURY in Granada. For reasons of operational security, and his concern for the lives of American citizens on the island, President Reagan did not formally

call the Special Planning Group together until the morning of 25 October, after the invasion had taken place and success was assured. The Group's members had all been involved in the NSC Crisis Pre-Planning Group and Special Situation Group deliberations since 19 October, and both of these groups had recommended the high level of secrecy. On the Special Planning Group's recommendation on the morning of 25 October, President Reagan briefed the press corps in the White House Briefing Room at 9.07 a.m., disclosing OPERATION URGENT FURY. It was this early Presidential disclosure, coupled with the overwhelming, rapid military success, that solidified the will of the American people in support of the operation.

In March of 1984, President Reagan again saw the need to document his desire to further expand the role of the Executive Branch in the execution of Public Diplomacy. This time his direction focused on the international element of informational strategy. In National Security Decision Directive Number 130 (Unclassified), US International Information Policy (U), dated 6 March, 1984, President Reagan stated that "While improvements have been made in US international information programs and activities over the last several years, there is a need for sustained commitment over time to improving the quality and effectiveness of US international information efforts, the level of resources devoted to them, and their coordination with other elements of US national security policy and strategy. The role of international

information considerations in policy formulation needs to be enhanced...."<sup>40</sup> Although the target of President Reagan's direction was the international element of informational strategy, it is interesting to note his concern that the Congress and the American people have a vested interest in, and an understanding of his strategy. "...wider understanding of the role of international information should be sought within the Executive Branch as well as with the Congress and the public."<sup>41</sup> President Reagan displayed in this directive his understanding of the importance of securing American national will in support of national security strategy.

...the habits, interests, expectations and level of understanding of foreign audiences may differ significantly from those of the domestic American audience, and require different approaches and emphases in the selection and presentation of information,<sup>42</sup>

While US international information activities must be sensitive to the concerns of foreign governments, our information programs should be understood to be a strategic instrument of US national policy, not a tactical instrument of US diplomacy.<sup>43</sup>

Research on public opinion, media reaction, and cultural factors needs to be substantially improved and more fully coordinated and applied to US informational activities.<sup>44</sup>

NSDD 130 includes a number of measures to improve the

proficiency of the Executive Branch in the execution of international informational strategy. All could be applied to a domestic strategy.

**President George Bush and the War in the Gulf.** During the 1990-1991 Persian Gulf crisis, President Bush needed to mobilize not only international but also domestic support for a stand against Iraqi aggression -- a stand which would potentially cost lives as well as dollars. He needed to manipulate the conditions under which popular support was energized, ensuring that the objectives for successful diplomatic and military ventures matched those conditions for popular support. The process by which the government achieved this -- first a U.N. consensus for political and diplomatic action, next a coalition consensus for the military defense of Saudi Arabia, then tacit approval by Congress for the military defense, then after the U.S. Congressional elections, attainment of U.N., coalition, and Congressional approval for offensive military action, the latter based on the growing popular demand for decisive military action.

President Bush and his strategic advisors recognized that the reasoning that motivates good foreign policy does not always resound favorably in the popular mind. The strategic advisor must think in terms of vital national security interests. The public tends to focus on the absolute distinction between good and evil.

The strategic advisor's challenge is to recommend to the President an informational strategy that ensures that the public does not settle for the benefit of today's apparent advantage at the expense of tomorrow's real benefit.<sup>45</sup>

President Bush carefully avoided addressing American "no blood for oil" cries, never referring in public to the heavy reliance of the developed world on Kuwaiti and Saudi Arabian oil. On August 8, 1990 he told the American people in a speech that their country's political objectives in the Persian Gulf were;

- 1) the "immediate, unconditional, complete withdrawal of all Iraqi forces from Kuwait,"
- 2) the "restoration of Kuwait's legitimate government,"
- 3) the "security and stability of the Persian Gulf," and
- 4) to "protect U.S. citizens abroad."

American national will was maintained throughout the Gulf War by what appeared to be a concerted effort on the part of President Bush, the National Security Council and the Department of Defense to continually balance those conditions necessary for popular support with those required for successful military action.

President Bush's 8 August, 1990 "National Objectives" in the Persian Gulf were consistent with the National Security Interests and Objectives published in his *NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY*. His proclamation of those Gulf crisis "National Objectives" enhanced the willingness of both the people and Congress to support the military effort. However, President Bush's public denunciation of Saddam Hussein as an "evil villain" was not consistent with his objectives in the Gulf, or those published in his *NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY*. Unfortunately, the American people focused more on Saddam Hussein, and less on his military forces as the threat.

A Los Angeles Times poll has found that a solid majority of Americans favor U.S. military action to remove Saddam Hussein from power in Iraq. "When asked whether they would back an all-out effort in Iraq to topple Hussein - even "at the risk of losing some American lives" - 60% of those questioned said yes, only 30% said no."<sup>46</sup>

The result of this Los Angeles Times poll is consistent with a number of other polls reported in the past two years that have found that many Americans feel that President Bush ended the Persian Gulf War too soon and should have pursued Hussein, even though the ouster of the Iraqi leader was not a stated political or military objective.<sup>47</sup>

Even though his Gulf objectives were successfully

accomplished, President Bush is still criticized by the American people for failing to eliminate Saddam Hussein. But the elimination of Saddam Hussein was never President Bush's objective.

### A Contemporary Perspective

The challenge now faced by the Clinton administration is to ensure that the principles of good foreign policy, characterized by continued diplomatic, economic and military pressure on Saddam Hussein, are not sacrificed to the unsound preferences of public opinion, which calls for the use of military force to overthrow Hussein.

The Executive Branch must develop and execute an informational strategy designed to quell the "unsound preferences of public opinion" expressed in the Los Angeles Times poll. The American people must understand the cost of a U.S. led military overthrow of Saddam Hussein, a cost to be figured not only in terms of the loss of American lives but in terms of the effort required to maintain stability in Iraq subsequent to the overthrow. The uncertainty of Arab coalition support for the action and for the nation-building effort required after the overthrow incur additional costs to the American people.

Potential decisions by the Bush and Clinton administrations to

intervene militarily in the Bosnian civil war have also been challenged by a sense that the conditions required for a successful military outcome may not be consistent with the conditions necessary for the mobilization of the national will. Americans have expressed their abhorrence for the Serbian humanitarian atrocities that are amplified by the news media and thrust into their living rooms daily. Along with their abhorrence comes an appeal for action to wipe away those television images of starving, freezing, imprisoned Bosnians. But Americans have come to learn, in places like Beirut, Lebanon, the dreadful cost of military intervention in circumstances which do not lend themselves to sound military objectives. It is clear that the conditions for mobilizing the national will are present. Just crank up the media hype over human atrocities (the Hearst and Pulitzer coverage of the Spanish in Cuba in 1895 comes to mind), throw in an official White House or Pentagon statement or two denouncing Serbian action in Bosnia, and there you have it, a nation ready to take military action when conditions for political or military success are not clear.

American military action in Somalia, as well, may be viewed with skepticism when this balance is considered. American national will was mobilized in support of the effort, characterized by an overwhelming public outcry -- once again, as a result of media attention -- over the death and devastation brought about by anarchy and famine in Somalia. Do the conditions for political or

military success exist that will balance the conditions under which the national will was mobilized? Only time will tell. But I think not.

The successful President places himself at the fulcrum of this critical balance, ready to apply pressure either way to ensure that the conditions necessary for the mobilization of the national will do not mask those necessary for the successful accomplishment of foreign policy, and to ensure that even the most successful foreign policy venture is not masked by an insufficient national will.

### A STRUCTURE AND A PROCESS

The requirement for the President to keep the people informed of the national security strategy of the United States is institutionalized by Congress in 50 USC 404a. The Code requires the President to publish annually a report that details his national security strategy to "...include a comprehensive description and discussion of...; --The worldwide interests, goals and objectives of the United States...; --The foreign policy, worldwide commitments, and national defense capabilities of the United States...; --The proposed short-term and long-term uses of the political, economic, military, and other instruments of the national power of the United States to protect and promote the interests and achieve the goals and objectives referred to

above...; --The adequacy of the capabilities of the United States to carry out the national security strategy...; and --Such other information as may be necessary...."<sup>48</sup> Although this requirement is met in the publication of the President's *NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY OF THE UNITED STATES*, available from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, it is read by relatively few Americans. Therefore, American national security strategy must be marketed in other ways. A structure must be developed and a process formalized, designed with the mobilization of the national will as their goal.

### A Structure

According to Joint Pub O-1, the national security structure of the United States is in part based on "A National Security Council (NSC) responsible for advising the President on national security strategy and policy, to include its diplomatic, military, economic and informational components,"<sup>49</sup> and "The need for an informed and supportive national population."<sup>50</sup>

Depending on the subject matter, national security issues are addressed by the NSC staff or by interagency groups chaired by either a NSC staff member or by the department designated as lead agency,<sup>51</sup>

"If the government is considering the significant use of force the effort requires...Development of an informational strategy that coordinates with the military, diplomatic, economic and mobilization strategies to foster national and international support."<sup>52</sup> It would follow, logically, that a forum mustered to develop and execute an informational strategy would be composed of representatives of the agencies responsible for the development of the military, diplomatic, economic and mobilization strategies.

The use of military force, as a major U.S. foreign policy initiative, requires the full mobilization of the will of the American people. This effort can succeed only through the coordinated effort of the President and Executive Branch departments and agencies brought together as directed in President Reagan's NSDD #77.

Using the model implemented in NSDD # 77, a planning group would be mustered, chaired by the National Security Advisor to the President, and consisting of the following officials:

- o Secretary of State
- o Secretary of Defense
- o Director, United States Information Agency
- o Director, Agency of International Development
- o Director, Federal Emergency Management Agency
- o White House Communications Director

- o White House Chief of Staff

Other White House officials, or senior representatives from other agencies would attend at the invitation of the chairman. In support of a multilateral, or coalition military effort, the planning group would include appropriate representatives from alliance or coalition partners.

Again using President Reagan's NSDD #77 as a guide, a public affairs committee would be established to operate under the staff supervision and control of the planning group. The committee would be co-chaired by the White House Communications Director and the Deputy Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs. Its membership would mirror that of the planning group, but at the assistant or deputy level. The explicit responsibility of the public affairs committee would be to coordinate the execution of the domestic informational strategy formulated by the planning group. It would exercise staff supervision over the public affairs offices within each of the Executive Branch departments and agencies, ensuring that the informational strategy was adequately coordinated among them.

The public affairs committee would coordinate major speeches and policy releases by senior government officials on national security subjects, ensuring that statements on national security were consistent and in accordance with national security objectives.

and the informational strategy.

The President would direct the execution of the domestic informational strategy. This direction would be issued to the chiefs of the Executive Branch departments and agencies represented on the planning group for their execution and coordination, using their own public affairs offices.

This structure formalizes the leadership role of senior Executive Branch officials and strategic advisors, and it allows the President to take charge in the execution of a domestic informational strategy. It also solidifies the staff responsibilities of the planning group, the public affairs committee, and the public affairs offices within the Executive Branch departments and agencies -- to plan and coordinate the strategy. The President's principal challenge, and that of his informational organization, is to achieve successful coordination with, and management of the media.

### A Process

With an organization in place that is dedicated to mobilizing public support, a process can be exercised to ensure support of, and throughout the duration of, military conflict.

Relationship With the Media. The media possesses unique characteristics that not only challenge Presidential leadership, but can be utilized to the benefit of a successful informational strategy. There is no doubt that the media not only shapes reaction to policy, it shapes policy.

The character of the media is reflective of, and reactive to the character of the American people. In a crisis, people flock to the media for information, particularly to their television sets. They revel in the thrill of a new crisis or threat. And they demand to see their leadership involved in its resolution.

The media, in a competitive effort to win the audience of the people, seeks out new and exciting crises. The public is further aroused through the media once a new crisis is reported. In addition to reporting the gravity of the crisis, the media reports the results of polls that substantiate and elaborate on the heightened interest of the public. The media feeds the public. The public in turn feeds the media through the polls.

Does a President allow the media to capitalize on the character of the American people, and to shape the national will? Does he let the media influence him through the will of the people, and the will of Congress? Or does he influence the media? Clearly, both occur. The American people want to see and hear their political leadership when a crisis erupts in the media.

Inserting political leadership into the information loop created by the media, the public, and the polls is central to a successful informational strategy (Figure 2).

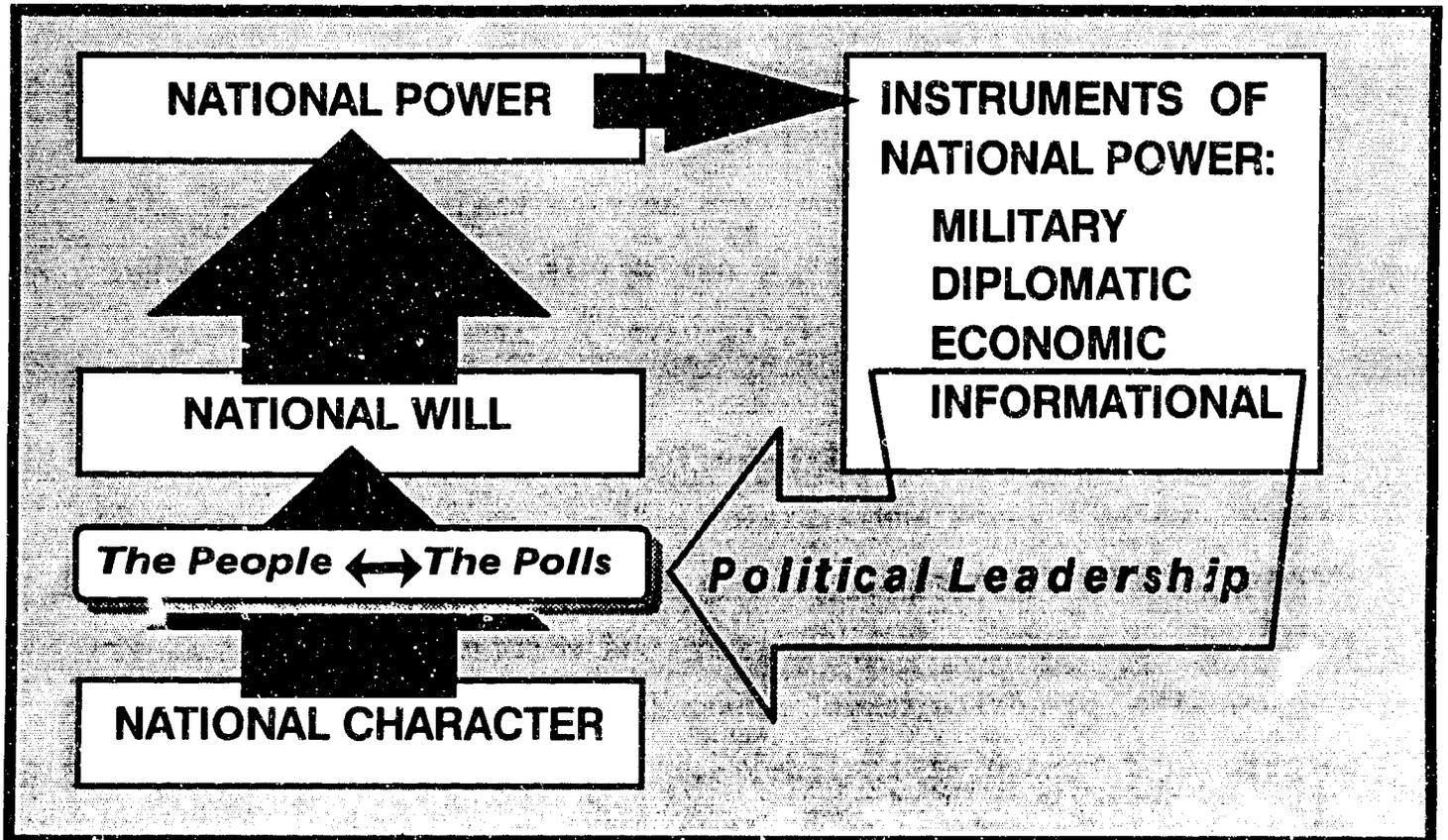


FIGURE 2

FIGURE 2 inserts political leadership, and its informational strategy, into the key relationship between national character, national will, and national power.

A successful President uses his informational structure to place himself and his Executive Branch leaders in the news, expressing consistent national security strategy. He maintains the constant pulse of public opinion, and accurately judges the strength of national will.

In the marketing of his National Security Strategy, particularly when military force is proposed, the President must also strike a delicate balance between his obligation to protect the 1st amendment freedom of the press and his obligation to tell the government's story to the people. The people demand both.

Military and diplomatic operations often demand secrecy; security and surprise often maximize the effectiveness of both. The requirement to keep the public informed must be balanced against the need for operational security. But it is not eliminated, and must remain of prime importance to the President if he wants to maintain the will of the people in support of his strategy.

As a subset of the challenge to effective Executive action, the key to the military's future successes in this area lies in its approach. The military should view the requirement to allow the media access to military operations not as a challenge to operational security, but as a tool to keep the people -- their ultimate foundation -- informed and supportive. The military will

have to educate the media to the operational security requirements of military operations. It then can entrust the media with appropriate operational information. The media is thereby entrusted with the lives of American soldiers when it passes to the American people their accounting of those operations.

This media tactic was exercised successfully by General Eisenhower in preparation for the Allied invasion of Sicily in July, 1943. In June of that year, in North Africa, General Eisenhower briefed war correspondents in detail on the Sicily campaign. He briefed the full operational concept, including the deception plan, and stressed operational security requirements.

I felt I had to stop speculation by war reporters as to the future intentions of the Allied Force. I knew the Germans were watching us intently and it is astonishing how expert a trained Intelligence staff becomes in piecing together odd scraps of seemingly unimportant information to construct a picture of enemy plans.....It seemed certain that if reporters seeking items of interest for their papers and radio networks should continue to report on activities throughout the theater, the enemy would soon be able to make rather accurate deductions as to the strength and timing of our attack, even if we should be successful in concealing its location.

During periods of combat inactivity reporters have a habit of filling up their stories with speculation, and after some months of experience in a war theater any newsman acquires considerable skill in interpreting coming

events, the danger was increased that soon the enemy would have our plans almost in detail.....Because of an inborn hatred of unexplained censorship and, more than this, because of the confidence I had acquired in the integrity of newsmen in my theater, I decided to take them into my confidence.

The experiment was one which I would not particularly like to repeat, because such revelation does place a burden upon the man whose first responsibility is to conceal the secret. But by making it I immediately placed upon every reporter in the theater a feeling of the same responsibility that I and my associates bore. Success was complete. From that moment onward, until after the attack was launched, nothing speculative came out of the theater and no representative of the press attempted to send out anything that could possibly be of any value to the enemy. After the operation was completed many correspondents told me of the fear they felt that they might be guilty of even inadvertent revelation of the secret. During the period of preparation they even became reluctant to discuss the subject among themselves, and invented the most elaborate code names to refer to items of equipment and to details of the projected operation.<sup>5</sup>

Military officers are charged by their oath to uphold the Constitution, including the 1st Amendment -- "to support and defend" the American people, and to keep them informed through a free press. The goal of the military is to accomplish the mission and safeguard operational security. The goal of the media is to report the activities of the military. One does not always serve

in the best interest of the other.

This challenge was met in 1984 by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in a report that addressed media concern over its inability to adequately report OPERATION URGENT FURY in Granada. "How do we conduct military operations in a manner that safeguards the lives of our military and protects the security of operations while keeping the American people informed through the media?"<sup>54</sup>

The report's recommendation: "U.S. news media should cover U.S. military operations to the maximum degree possible consistent with the security and safety of U.S. forces."<sup>55</sup>

The report states that:

It is the policy of the Department of Defense to make available timely and accurate information so that the public, Congress, and members representing the press, radio and television may assess and understand the facts about national security and defense strategy. Requests for information from organizations and private citizens will be answered responsively and as rapidly as possible.

First, the highest civilian and military officers of the government should reaffirm that historic principle that American journalists, print and broadcast, with their professional equipment, should be present at U.S. military operations, and the news media should reaffirm their recognition

of the importance of U.S. military mission security and troop safety. When essential, both groups can agree on coverage conditions which satisfy safety and security imperatives while, in keeping with the First Amendment, permitting independent reporting to the citizens of our free and open society to whom our government is ultimately accountable.

Second, the highest civilian and military officers of the U.S. government should reaffirm that military plans should include planning for press access, in keeping with past traditions....<sup>56</sup>

The report resulted in what we know of today as the DOD media pool, in existence at all times and quickly deployable with U.S. forces. With the establishment of the DOD media pool, the U.S. military has recognized the importance of an informed public, through an independent press, when media access is otherwise limited. It has, since 1984, by policy, made media access an integral part of operational planning and execution.

This operational success story, as well as that of General Eisenhower, can be capitalized upon at the strategic level, by a President with both the interests of media access and military operational security in mind.

**Managing the War.** When managing the media in support of national security strategy, particularly in an effort to secure the

national will in support of military action, it is frequently necessary to include in a grand strategy, military objectives that are designed specifically to bolster public support. In short, in order to maintain public support during the course of military conflict, leadership may seek easily won intermediate objectives, accomplish them, and ensure that they are publicized.

Joint Pub O-1 defines such objectives as "contributory political objectives." "There are often ancillary political objectives that may be required for the advancement of the war effort as a whole and the marshalling of all available national power for attainment of the political aim. Contributory political objectives generally relate to consolidating domestic or coalition/alliance support. These contributory political objectives may impel the type, location, and times of military campaigns, operations, or support."<sup>57</sup>

Seeking military success to shore up national will is not a new strategy. Prime Minister Winston Churchill used a pattern of littoral commando raids as well as the North African offensive during World War II to bolster the morale of the British people, whose cities and homes were being devastated by German bombs. The lesson to be remembered: choose easily attainable contributory political objectives and publicize their attainment.

## CONCLUSIONS

**First, I conclude that war does not merely challenge the national will, it molds it.**

**Not only is a nation's will a source of its power to conduct war, the intensity of its will is derived in part from the manner in which war is conducted. The will of a nation must be continually nurtured by those executing the war strategy to ensure the continued vitality of that will.**

**This critically important principal was lost on President Lyndon Johnson in his conduct of the Vietnam Conflict. In contrast, it was recognized and exploited by President George Bush in his execution of the 1990-1991 Persian Gulf crisis. The outcomes of those two conflicts were influenced dramatically by the willingness of the American people to wage war to a successful conclusion. That willingness, in both cases, was shaped by the President's informational strategy -- or lack of one.**

**Second, there is a direct relationship between perceived national will and the degree to which the elected representatives of the American people will underwrite the sacrifices necessary to conduct war.**

**Neither President Johnson nor President Bush pursued declarations of war against our enemies in North Vietnam or Iraq. They both acquired approval for military action through Congressional resolution. So why did we fail to retain public support in Vietnam, and succeed in Operation Desert Storm? Because our military effort in Desert Storm was so swift and successful. Our effort in Vietnam was not. Although initial public support for both conflicts was acquired by Congressional resolution, continued support for an extended conflict required not only a successful military effort, but a declaration of war, which better focuses public commitment and attention on the enemy. The public's attention on the enemy can be influenced to support a declaration of war by a successful informational strategy.**

Third, the successful American President will be supported by the political and military strategic advisors in his informational strategy-making structure who understand the character of the American people. They will recognize that the degree to which the American people apply their character to a national security crisis, or their national will, is more subjective and elusive than their character.

No President has mastered the elusiveness of the American national will. Some, however, have been more successful than others. The successful President will develop an informational strategy designed to invoke the national will, using both the government and the media. The President's strategic advisors have the capability and the opportunity to make him a master at selling to the people the purpose and the need for such sacrifices as they may be called upon to make to support the national security strategy.

The President's strategic advisors must be sensitive to this need, and must be active not only in shaping an informational

strategy, but also in executing it. They must devise and execute informational strategy objectives designed to accurately interpret the will of the people, then to influence the American people in support of the overriding political or military objective. They must:

- o identify and recommend contributory political objectives to the President,
- o recommend the level of secrecy applied to military operations relative to the need for operational security and for an informed, supportive public,
- o plan, direct, monitor, coordinate and ensure the consistency of all public diplomacy activities,
- o place the leadership in the news when required, and
- o ensure that media operations are integrated into military operational planning.

**Finally, the military leadership must be prepared to do their part , not only in offering strategic advice, but also in executing military action and information efforts which support the overall grand strategy. That suggests the emphasis of informational strategy in professional military education, both narrowly in public affairs and broadly in strategy development curricula. In this latter regard, mobilization of national will -- the ultimate element of national power -- could reasonably receive greater emphasis here at the National Defense University.**

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