

PEERING OVER THE CLIFF:
GUIDELINES FOR STATESMEN CONTEMPLATING WAR

BY
MICHAEL W. CARRELL

A THESIS PRESENTED TO THE FACULTY OF
THE SCHOOL OF ADVANCED AIRPOWER STUDIES
FOR COMPLETION OF GRADUATE REQUIREMENTS

SCHOOL OF ADVANCED AIRPOWER STUDIES
AIR UNIVERSITY
MAXWELL AIR FORCE BASE, ALABAMA

JUNE 2001

Distribution A: Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited

Report Documentation Page

Report Date 01JUN2001	Report Type N/A	Dates Covered (from... to) -
Title and Subtitle Peering Over the Cliff: Guidelines for Statesmen Contemplating War	Contract Number	
	Grant Number	
	Program Element Number	
Author(s) Carrell, Michael W.	Project Number	
	Task Number	
	Work Unit Number	
Performing Organization Name(s) and Address(es) School of Advanced Airpower Studies Air University Maxwell AFB, AL	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		
Subject Terms		
Report Classification unclassified	Classification of this page unclassified	
Classification of Abstract unclassified	Limitation of Abstract UU	
Number of Pages 64		

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About the Author

Major Michael Carrell is a recent graduate of the School of Advanced Airpower Studies at Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama. He is currently assigned in the Republic of Korea. Major Carrell is a senior Air Battle Manager (ABM), with assignments in Air Defense, Command & Control (C2), and at Unified and Combined command operations centers. He has also served a tour at the ABM undergraduate training school teaching Air Force and C2 doctrine and theory, joint air operations, and air battle management. Major Carrell holds a bachelors degree in Organizational Behavior, and several masters degrees in the fields of National Security Studies, Air Power Art and Science, and Education. He has completed Squadron Officers School and the Naval Command and Staff College.

Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge several people who helped complete this work. First I want to thank Ed Beohmerle, a leader and scholar, and one of the greatest minds in this country. His penetrating insights into the political connections of strategy, the military, and the interagency process are deeply appreciated. His willingness to listen and discuss endless drafts of this work, as well as the central issue it addresses, were profoundly helpful. His hours of support to me throughout this process, and years of my career, make him like a brother to me. Likewise, Major John Sellers at the School of Advanced Airpower Studies willingly gave his time to thought provoking discussion on this topic and others. His beliefs in questioning every concept and thinking “beyond the simple” paralleled my own and were welcome. I was lucky to have a kindred thinker in John as a classmate, and not always be the lone dissenter in every SAAS class and discussion.

I would also like to thank my advisor, Colonel Steve Chiabotti for his time and effort guiding me through this thesis. I have been through the thesis process many times, and it can get tiresome. He kept me straight on the path throughout. Colonel Wray Johnson, who reviewed my work, was also a tremendous help. He continually offered good insights and devoted much of his time to help me. Thank you both.

Most importantly, I want to thank my family. My wife Ruth, as always, supported me through this endeavor. Her patience this year, especially when deadlines were tight, was a godsend. My two boys, Alex and Brian, are a source of endless joy and provided fun and needed perspective throughout the process. I can never thank the three of them enough for what they give me.

Abstract

This study attempts to determine if there are adequate existing guidelines for today's statesmen to use when they contemplate war. The author first develops a theoretical foundation for understanding the character of an approaching war. The character of a war includes a nation's motives for war as well as their connection to national interests. After establishing the foundation, the study surveys the existing guidelines, from the Weinberger Doctrine of 1984 to the present. Common themes and major differences are highlighted. The guidelines, as a whole, are evaluated for strengths and weaknesses and then compared to the theoretical foundations previously formed. Certain requirements are culled from the examination and applied to a proposed new set of guidelines. These are designed to add the theoretical foundation missing from today's guidance for statesmen considering war. The new set uses questions designed to help statesmen find an answer, rather than prescribe one to them. Finally, potential criticisms to the guidance are addressed.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

I wish every American could hear the discussion of what I think is the most important action this Government can ever take, and that is the question of committing young Americans in harm's way.

Senator Max Cleland, 25 May 2000

Strategists, theorists, and historians from Thucydides, Sun Tzu, and Clausewitz to present-day thinkers have all espoused the fundamental need for a leader to understand the character of a war *before* embarking on it.¹ History is littered with examples of nations that have waged war with a mismatch in strategy and policy. In many cases they have lost. As in the past, it is as vital today for statesmen to understand the character of the war they contemplate. Former President George Bush called his role as commander in chief and its attendant responsibilities for war decisions the most important function of the President.² With the dissolution of the Cold War, America appears more willing to use its military without thinking through the consequences. This can be a dangerous proposition, as Somalia, Haiti, and Kosovo demonstrate.

Statesmen contemplating war have long relied on advice from trusted advisors, intelligence about the adversary, and their own political abilities and instincts. Over time war

¹ To avoid semantic arguments the author will use the term “character of war” rather than “nature of war.” The author subscribes to Colin Gray’s notion that the nature of war is eternal and unchanging and only the character is different. For a good discussion of this see Colin Gray, *Modern Strategy*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), Ch. 1; also see Colin Gray and John Sheldon, “Spacepower and the Revolution in Military Affairs,” in *Spacepower for a New Millennium: Space and U.S. National Security*, ed. Peter Hays, James Smith, Alan Van Tassel, and Guy Walsh, (New York: The McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc., 2000), 240.

² George Bush, “The Use of Military Force: The President’s Difficult Choice,” *Defense Issues*, Vol 8, No.1, 1993, 1.

has become a much more complex endeavor but its importance has not waned. In modern times there have been attempts to assist a national leader in making the ultimate decision for war. These attempts take the form of checklists, guidelines, and so-called doctrines. Guidance has been proffered by everyone from academics to cabinet secretaries, members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, National Security Advisors, and even Presidents. With the rise of U.S. military intervention after the Cold War, there has been a concurrent proliferation of guidelines for leaders. This study will review the current literature in order to determine if useful guidance exists for today's statesman.

The following study focuses on the attempts of statesmen to understand the character of the war they contemplate. This necessarily includes information on the decision to intervene militarily or not and the form of that intervention. Most modern scholars focus on the question of intervention. This study, however, is not limited to the intervention decision. It will also review, as key elements of a statesman's decision, what form the war may take and subsequent implications. In that regard, this thesis will treat the decision to intervene as the critical sub-element of the overall question concerning the character of a particular war. This assumption is in line with the literature that will be reviewed in the study.

There are other assumptions in this study. One assumption is that understanding the nature of war is critical to a statesman's chances for success. While blind luck might prevail in any instance, leaders that can discern a war's character have a better probability of success. A related assumption is that guidelines can help a leader ascertain that character. If nothing else, when followed, these guidelines ensure that the statesman has contemplated relevant information. By avoiding a headlong rush into conflict, a statesman may gain a slight edge over his adversary. That edge may be the difference between success and failure. Another assumption is that, all things being equal, simpler is better. Guidelines that are too cumbersome will soon be discarded. Guidelines too simple will be dismissed out of hand. They should help answer the basic questions of why war is contemplated and what war will accomplish. Further delineation can certainly be helpful, but if the guidance does not answer the fundamental questions, it is useless.

Perhaps most importantly, the guidance ultimately recommended in this study remains only guidance. It is not to be construed as a simple checklist for victory. Former President Bush commented on this issue: "Anyone looking for scientific certitude is in for a disappointment. In

the complex new world we are entering, there can be no single or simple set of fixed rules for using force.”³ Guidelines can never replace judgement. Blindly following a checklist ensures nothing. On the other hand, ignoring guidance may lead to great peril. In that sense, a statesman’s guidance should be like doctrine. Air Force Doctrine Document 1 aptly states, “In application, doctrine must be treated with judgement but must never be dismissed out of hand or through ignorance of its principles.”⁴ The guidance this study offers will not guarantee success, but it underscores issues that *must be considered before* deciding on war. How those issues are considered, and how the questions are answered, is in the milieu of statesmanship and beyond the scope of this study.

There are, of course, some other limitations to this study. This treatise will not focus on the many different types of intervention, but rather will treat all armed intervention generically as war. This convenience allows the study to concentrate on the statesman’s decision rather than the definitional distinctions of armed conflict. This is not to imply that those distinctions are not important, but simply focuses the research and subsequent exposition. Similarly, this study will focus on the United States’ decisions for war. This is due to the author’s familiarity with and the literature’s focus on the American decision-making process. This study will focus on the civilian statesman rather than the military leader for two reasons. First, the American system puts civilians in control of the military and places the responsibility for decisions on war with them. Second, as Carl Von Clausewitz wrote, “We see, therefore, that war is not merely an act of policy but a true political instrument, a continuation of political intercourse, carried on with other means.”⁵ A decision for war is rightly a political decision. Military leaders certainly play a major role and have important decisions to make, but only *after* civilians render their political decision.

The purpose of this study is to identify useful guidance for the statesman contemplating war. Chapter 2 will focus on the importance of understanding the character of the war a leader is considering. Past and present theorists, strategists, and historians will be reviewed for an appraisal of the importance they place on grasping the character of war. This chapter will also

³ Ibid., 2.

⁴ United States Air Force, *Air Force Doctrine Document 1*, (Maxwell Air Force Base: Air Force Doctrine Center, 1997), 1.

⁵ Carl Von Clausewitz, *On War*, trans. and ed. Michael Howard and Peter Paret, rev. ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 87.

examine the reasons why nations go to war and their relation to a nation's interests. The subsequent relevance of these interests, or lack thereof, will be explored. Chapter 3 will survey existing guidelines for statesmen, and highlight major points and themes. It will also critically review the strengths and weaknesses of the existing guidelines. These will be compared to the theoretical foundations formed in Chapter 2 for compatibility. Chapter 4 will summarize appropriate guidelines for a statesman to use based upon the evidence presented. A critique of these new guidelines will follow. Finally, Chapter 5 will sum up, list implications, and address areas for further research.

Chapter 2

Theoretical Foundations

Yet anyone who analyzes the origins of particular wars must also be struck by a sense that many of them were unnecessary.

Donald Kagan

The Importance of Understanding the Nature of a War

The statement, “understand the character of the war you are entering,” sounds very simple. Both the scholar and the lay person would admit common sense in contemplating motives prior to embarking on society’s most dangerous enterprise. In theory the process is not that hard. One should simply give serious thought to the situation at hand and try to answer several questions concerning the character of impending war. Yet, history shows these potentialities are often only superficially considered prior to the beginning of hostilities, if at all. Philosophers, theorists, strategists, and leaders through the ages have all advised nations to attempt this understanding. Machiavelli commented on the subject:

Everyone may begin a war at his pleasure, but cannot so finish it. A prince, therefore, before engaging in any enterprise should well measure his strength and govern himself accordingly; and he must be very careful not to deceive himself in the estimate of his strength.⁶

Machiavelli was especially concerned with understanding war prior to its start. Comparing Clausewitz to Machiavelli, historian Felix Gilbert writes, “Like Machiavelli he was convinced that the validity of any special analysis of military problems depended on a general perception, on a correct concept of the nature of war.”⁷ Historian Donald Kagan adds, “If the goal is to preserve peace, the worst mistake we can make is to take inadequate measures to that

⁶Harvey C. Mansfield, Jr., *Machiavelli’s New Modes and Orders: A Study of The Discourses on Livey*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979), 216; quoted in Michael Handel, *Who is Afraid of Carl Von Clausewitz? A Guide to the Perplexed*, (Newport: U.S. Naval War College, 1999), 20.

end because we do not *comprehend the nature of the problem*” (my emphasis)⁸. Clausewitz and Sun Tzu advised soldiers and princes to consider the character of a war before entering it. Thucydides, an Athenian historian who chronicled the Peloponnesian War, foreshadowed the two famous theorists’ views in his book, The Peloponnesian War.

All three writers emphasize the importance of understanding the possibilities and potentialities of war. Failure to properly understand these can lead to defeat, and the end of a nation’s existence. For both Sun Tzu and Clausewitz, understanding the character of the war entails the intertwined ideas of the primacy of politics and a well-reasoned net assessment.⁹ Net assessment is a rational calculation, and comparison, of each potential adversary’s capabilities and motivation for war. While the two theorists differ, due to their context, on the importance of reassessment amid changing conditions, they both agree on the importance of the two ideas taken together: the imperative of policy to drive the net assessment. Thucydides’ account of the Spartans and Athenians during the Peloponnesian war presages both theorists’ exhortations. Clausewitz however, is perhaps the most forceful of the three.

Carl Von Clausewitz

Clausewitz writes in Book One, Chapter One, of On War:

The first, the supreme, the most far-reaching act of judgment that the statesman and commander have to make is to establish by that test the kind of war on which they are embarking; neither mistaking it for, nor trying to turn it into, something that is alien to its nature.¹⁰

⁷ Felix Gilbert, “Machiavelli: The Renaissance of the Art of War,” in *Makers of Modern Strategy from Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age*, ed. Peter Paret, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 31.

⁸ Donald Kagan, *On the Origins of War and the Preservation of Peace*, (New York: Doubleday, 1995), 566.

⁹ I owe an intellectual debt to Michael Handel for the genesis of this comparison of Clausewitz and Sun Tzu. In his book, *Masters of War, Classical Strategic Thought*, (London: Cass, 2nd Ed, 1996) Handel includes two short chapters on the Primacy of Politics and the Rational Calculus of War. In covering these topics he expands the first into Civil-Military tension in war and the second into questions of limits on the rational conduct of war and the rationality of policy itself. I do not purport to delve in these expansions, I take these main concepts and tie them to my overall classification of understanding the character of war. I also use some of the same citations from both Clausewitz and Sun Tzu, but strictly in an attempt to expand our understanding of both important authors. All links to Thucydides are my own.

¹⁰ Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, trans. and ed. Michael Howard and Peter Paret, rev. ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 88.

Here he establishes the utmost importance of understanding the nature of the war one may enter. To this he also adds the *why*: “War is no pastime...It is a serious means to a serious end.”¹¹ Very quickly one understands this is an issue of grave importance and needs to be studied as such. Clausewitz builds a theory of war, not a checklist to be followed to certain success. In fact he cautions, “...it is not possible to construct a model for the art of war that can serve as a scaffolding on which the commander can rely for support at any time.”¹² He claims that war is ever changing and is “more than a true chameleon.”¹³ If war is this complex, how might a leader study it in order to glean its true nature? Clausewitz does give the student some guideposts.

Clausewitz notes, “...the importance of another point that must be made absolutely clear, namely that *war is nothing but the continuation of policy with other means.*”¹⁴ He makes this proposition, the primacy of politics, supremely clear as he reiterates it throughout his book.¹⁵ Michael Howard calls it one of the “two great themes” of Clausewitz’s book.¹⁶ This is an extremely important concept that not all-military and civilian leaders are quick to grasp. The implication that military plans and operations will not be left to their own devices is often frustrating to military leaders, but also quite necessary. Without a coherent policy objective, one cannot answer the fundamental question of what one is trying to achieve by an operation and runs the risk of the military functioning onto itself and not supporting its parent state. Clausewitz adds that war’s “grammar, indeed, may be its own, but not its logic.”¹⁷ Politics has the supreme role to play in the conduct of war. Why is it dangerous to subordinate policy to military objectives? Because every war is *different* and each requires the statesman to determine the level of effort, resources, and commitment needed.

Each situation that leads to a contemplation of war is different. Clausewitz writes, “...wars must vary with the nature of their motives and of the situations which give rise to

¹¹ Ibid., 86.

¹² Ibid., 140.

¹³ Ibid., 89.

¹⁴ Clausewitz, *On War*, 69.

¹⁵ Ibid., Clausewitz makes *numerous* references to this concept, such as “war is always an instrument of policy” (p. 88); “war is a true political instrument” (87); “war, therefore is an act of policy” (87); “Politics, moreover is the womb in which war develops” (149); “...strong proof of their (war and politics) indissoluble connection.” (610); and others.

¹⁶ Clausewitz, *On War*, Michael Howard, Introductory essay, 28.

¹⁷ Ibid., 605.

them.”¹⁸ Logical and contextual, this emphasis points to the fallacy of preparing for the last war. Different wars embrace different policy objectives, which govern military plans. Clausewitz adds a corollary to the primacy of politics. He notes, “...the *political object*, which was the *original motive*, must be an essential factor in the equation.”¹⁹ This equation is a net assessment. This assessment can only be made in light of policy aims. Clausewitz mentions this explicitly in Book Eight, “...*the probable character and general shape of any war should mainly be assessed in the light of political factors and conditions.*”²⁰

Clausewitz devotes a considerable amount of Book Eight, War Plans, to net assessment, its importance, and its relationship to the primacy of politics. Early on, in one of his most famous passages, he admonishes those who might think net assessment unimportant, “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 and how he intends to conduct it.”²¹ This same sentiment is strongly argued by Sun Tzu and Thucydides. Clausewitz next stresses the assessment’s importance to both a student and a practitioner of war: “If he does [scrutinize all of the information], he will draw the outline of its salient features in such a way that it can accommodate both the dictates of the age, and those of the immediate situation.”²² Clausewitz also mentions a good net assessment concerning an often overlooked aspect of conflict--war termination: “Once the expenditure of effort exceeds the value of the political object, the object must be renounced and peace must follow.”²³ Clausewitz is careful to not to offer any guarantees and purports to offer only guidelines and outlines for net assessments. The reason is that he believes in the interactive, reciprocal nature of war which will drive a need for reassessment. Due to friction, fog and three cases of interaction, war is continually changing.²⁴ In order to participate effectively one must continually evaluate, or re-assess his position and objectives. Here Clausewitz’s chameleon analogy, previously mentioned, is apropos, and suggests a changing strategy depending on one’s surroundings.

¹⁸ Ibid., 88.

¹⁹ Ibid., 80-1.

²⁰ Ibid., 607.

²¹ Ibid., 579.

²² Ibid., 594.

²³ Ibid., 92.

²⁴ The maximum use of force, aim to disarm the enemy, and the maximum use of strength are the three interactions that he claims drive war to the *extreme*. Ibid., 75-7.

Clausewitz also differs significantly from Sun Tzu in a need for reassessment. Clausewitz states, in opposition to Sun Tzu, “In war the result is never final” because “a remedy may still be found in political conditions at some later date.”²⁵ This analytically squares the circle for Clausewitz as it is again tied back to the primacy of politics. Mao Tse Tung later capitalized on this portion of Clausewitzian theory and adapted it *to his own situation*, which is exactly as Clausewitz intended. While Sun Tzu generally writes about a higher level of war (strategic vice operational) than Clausewitz, he acknowledges the same basic idea with a few twists.

Sun Tzu

Sun Tzu, unlike Clausewitz, wrote a book about war *and* statecraft. While Clausewitz acknowledges the imperative of politics over the military in war, Sun Tzu both acknowledges it and offers advice on how to carry it out. Much like Clausewitz, Sun Tzu opens his book by asserting the importance of understanding war. He states, “War is a matter of vital importance to the State; the province of life or death; the road to survival or ruin. It is mandatory that it be thoroughly studied.”²⁶ Thus, in the first sentence, Sun Tzu shows the seriousness of war and the responsibility the statesman and military leader have prior to choosing it as a course of action. The consequences of war in Sun Tzu’s time were enormous. During the Warring States period (403-221 B.C.), if a Chinese state were defeated, it ceased to exist. Once defeated, its culture was destroyed and its people were assimilated or killed. Sun Tzu warns, “...a state that has perished cannot be restored, nor can the dead be brought back to life.”²⁷ Sun Tzu uses a metaphor to describe the ever-changing nature of war: “And as water has no constant form, there are in war no constant conditions.”²⁸ This is remarkably similar to Clausewitz’s use of a chameleon metaphor and has the same implications. War is complex and must be evaluated *each and every* time it is contemplated. There is no single checklist that applies to every war. The one constant is the need for evaluation. If dissecting the true nature of a war seems daunting, Sun Tzu does offer help.

²⁵ Ibid., 80.

²⁶ Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, trans. and ed. Samuel Griffith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), 63.

²⁷ Ibid., 143.

²⁸ Ibid., 101.

While not as explicit as Clausewitz in stating the primacy of politics, Sun Tzu emphasizes policy just the same. Statements are dispersed throughout his book, but the key theme is quite evident. He writes in one of his strongest statements, “If not in the interests of the state, do not act.”²⁹ Leaving no doubt as to where policy sits in the pecking order with military strategy, Sun Tzu adds: “therefore it is said that enlightened rulers deliberate upon the plans, and good generals execute them,”³⁰ and “...the general first receives his commands from the sovereign.”³¹ Sun Tzu further emphasizes this point in Chapter 3, Offensive Strategy: “Thus, the highest realization of warfare is to attack the enemy’s plans.”³² By plans, he means policy and strategy. By defeating him politically you may be able to subdue him without a military fight, what Sun Tzu calls “the acme of skill.”³³ By inference, Sun Tzu, like Clausewitz, subscribes to the primacy of politics. Where they differ is in Sun Tzu’s explicit advice on how to win a war politically before fighting--what Ralph Sawyer calls “victory...through diplomatic coercion.”³⁴ Sun Tzu also implies the need for a good net assessment.

He devotes his entire first chapter, *Estimates*, to the issue of net assessment. After stating the importance of understanding the nature of war, he immediately offers advice on how to do it through the assessment: “Therefore, appraise it in terms of the five fundamental factors and make comparisons of the seven elements later named. So you may assess its essentials.”³⁵ He ascribes success in war to a good assessment: “Quantities derive from measurement, figures from quantities, comparisons from figures, and *victory from comparisons*” (my emphasis).³⁶ This point is further accentuated: “For this reason, the victorious army first realizes the conditions for victory, and then seeks to engage in battle,”³⁷ and “with many calculations, one can win; with

²⁹ Ibid., 142.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid., 102.

³² Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, trans. and ed. Ralph Sawyer (Boulder: Westview, 1994), 177.

³³ Sun Tzu, Griffith translation, 77.

³⁴ Sun Tzu, Sawyer translation, 129.

³⁵ Sun Tzu, Griffith translation, 63. Sun Tzu lists the five factors as moral influence, weather, terrain, command, and doctrine. Though he claims seven elements he only names five. They are measurement of space, estimation of quantities, calculations, comparisons, and chances of victory.

³⁶ Ibid., 88.

³⁷ Sun Tzu, Sawyer translation, 184.

few one cannot.”³⁸ Even when writing on other topics, Sun Tzu does not stray from the importance of the assessment. When speaking of deception and maneuver he adds, “I am able to determine the enemy’s dispositions while at the same time I conceal my own,” and “Weigh the situation, then move.”³⁹ Assessment, guided by policy, holds a special place for Sun Tzu. The place is so special that if one follows this guide, he predicts success: “If a general who heeds my strategy is employed he is certain to win. Retain him!”⁴⁰ While Clausewitz emphasizes the interactive nature of war and reassessment, Sun Tzu seems to place more value in the original assessment. This occurs for three reasons. First is the previously mentioned ability to win through diplomacy. The next two both relate to the context of war in Sun Tzu’s time. Sun Tzu sees no advantage to a drawn-out war that would require a reassessment. He writes, “For there has never been a protracted war from which a country has benefited.”⁴¹ The last reason is unlike Clausewitz’s dictum, “in war the result is never final,” for Sun Tzu, in war the result is *always* final.

Clausewitz admonishes those who do not believe net assessment is important; and Sun Tzu does the same. Sun Tzu even adds the enticement of certain victory to make his point: “Know thy enemy, know yourself; your victory will never be endangered.”⁴² Both authors’ stress a good net assessment tied to the political object of the war as a basis for understanding the true character of an imminent war. Thucydides saw these same ideas played out on the stage of the Peloponnesian War that he so ably recorded.

Thucydides

“Thucydides, an Athenian, wrote the history of the war between the Peloponnesians and the Athenians.”⁴³ So begins Thucydides’ gripping account of an ancient war, a war relevant to theorists and strategists today. Thucydides’ report of this war also anticipates the principles of both Clausewitz and Sun Tzu. The parallels are remarkable. Prior to the paramount decision to start the war, the Athenians caution the Spartans on the importance of a decision to go to war, the

³⁸ Sun Tzu, Griffith translation, 71.

³⁹ Ibid., 98, 106.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 66.

⁴¹ Ibid., 73.

⁴² Ibid., 129.

⁴³ Thucydides, *The Landmark Thucydides*, trans. and ed. Robert Strassler (New York: Free Press, 1996), 3.

need to contemplate the character of that war, and the need to avoid making a decision in haste. One can almost hear Clausewitz and Sun Tzu in “We came forward...to prevent your taking the wrong course on matters of great importance by yielding too readily to the persuasions of your allies,”⁴⁴ and “It is a common mistake in going to war to begin at the wrong end, to act first, and wait for disaster to discuss the matter.”⁴⁵ Clausewitz and Sun Tzu argue that their theories describing the character of war are not checklists to be blindly followed, but that each decision for war must be contemplated individually on its own merits. Thucydides emphasizes the same point in the Corinthians’ speech applauding the Spartan decision for war:

We have also other ways of carrying on the war, such as...various operations which cannot be foreseen at present. For war of all things proceeds least upon definite rules, but draws principally upon itself for contrivances to meet an emergency.⁴⁶

Like our two theorists faced with the daunting problem of how to ascertain the nature of a war, Thucydides leads us down the road with a few examples. Interestingly, his narrative offers both positive and negative examples of the primacy of politics and of net assessments.

In Thucydides’ day a political leader and military leader were often the same person. In studying the speeches of these soldier/statesmen, one can gain an appreciation for the importance of policy. In one of the more famous passages, Thucydides illustrates the Athenian debate over the decision concerning whether or not to execute the Mytilenians in 427 B.C. This debate has provided enough information for scholars to debate morality and the benevolence of leaders for many centuries. It also illustrates the importance of subordinating all military action in time of war to policy. Responding to Cleon’s plea for execution, Diodotus states, “The question before us as sensible men is not their guilt, but our interests.”⁴⁷ He further adds, “Nor...shall I recommend it, unless it be clearly for the good of the country,” and “...the question is not justice, but how to make the Mytilenians useful to Athens.”⁴⁸ The tone of his speech implies that the policy of the state should win out over the expediency of military or personal motives. The fact that the Athenians voted to spare the Mytileneians also demonstrates their understanding of this. Thucydides shows this was not, however, always the case for the Athenians.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 41.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 44.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 67.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 180.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 180-1.

Much later in the war (415B.C.), the Athenians debate whether to expand the war to Sicily. Nicias, the lone voice of caution, tries unsuccessfully to convince the Athenians that an expedition to subdue Sicily is not in their interests at this time. He argues other pressing matters for the state: “A man ought therefore, to consider these points and not think...of grasping at another empire before we have secured the one we have already.”⁴⁹ Alcibiades next addresses the Athenians and argues that their navy would secure success, and that inactivity for that navy will lead to atrophy. Therefore they must act to preserve their navy, which preserves their empire and in turn their greatness.⁵⁰ This line of reasoning represents the primacy of politics stood on its head! The results are predictably disastrous. Without a clear policy for going to Sicily, the Athenians fail and thus begin their slide, ultimately losing the whole war. Thucydides’ negative example of the primacy of politics is also compelling under the examination of net assessments.

Clausewitz and Sun Tzu extoll the values of good net assessments, and Thucydides’ depiction of the Peloponnesian War has many examples to reinforce their views. In the initial decision to choose war, the Spartan and Athenian leaders, Archidamus and Pericles respectively, both make remarkably prescient net assessments of war for both countries. Archidamus accurately describes both Spartan and Athenian strengths and weaknesses. His sense that presently the Spartans could not defeat Athens was correct: “What then is to be our war? For unless we can beat them at sea, or deprive them of the revenues which feed their navy, we shall meet with little but disaster.”⁵¹ He also correctly assesses that a war would be a long, drawn-out affair from which they would not profit: “I fear rather that we may leave it as a legacy to our children...”⁵² This thought is eerily similar to Sun Tzu’s conclusion about protracted war.

Pericles also uses his net assessment to instruct. He accurately sees the strengths of the Athenians as their walled city, their navy, and their empire with its financial revenue. He foresees the Spartan’s inability to attack the Athenians in their city, their lack of funds, the war’s length, and the frustration these aspects of the war would cause. Sun Tzu instructs similarly: “When troops attack cities, their strength will be exhausted. When the army engages in

⁴⁹ Ibid., 367.

⁵⁰ Alcibiades speech, Ibid., 370-3.

⁵¹ Ibid., 45.

⁵² Ibid., 46.

protracted campaigns the resources of the state will not suffice.”⁵³ Pericles’ goal is maintenance of the status quo, and he describes what it would take to achieve that end. Both leaders practice what Clausewitz would advise centuries later, “We must first examine our own political aim and that of the enemy. We must gauge the strength and the situation of the opposing state. We must gauge the character and abilities of its government and people to do the same in regard to our own.”⁵⁴

Because the Peloponnesian War was indeed protracted, there were many opportunities for reassessment. In 431 B.C., Pericles was asked to give a funeral oration to honor the war dead of Athens.⁵⁵ He seized this opportunity to give a public reassessment of the war. In his speech he praises the Athenian people, their form of government, and the brave soldiers who fought for them. This speech is very popular and effective for good reason. Pericles positively promotes all three manifestations of Clausewitz’s famous trinity. In more troubling times (430 B.C.), during the Plague, Pericles also publicly reassesses the war. He stands fast, claiming, “The apparent error of my policy lies in the infirmity of your resolution.”⁵⁶ The Athenians also make a reassessment in their decision to go to Sicily, but as previously mentioned they do not do a good job, nor do they tie it to coherent policy. They are eventually doomed as a result.

The Spartans likewise reassess their position throughout the war. In 428 B.C., the Mytilenians come to Sparta seeking an alliance against Athens. The Mytilenian envoys prove to have one of the most accurate reassessments during the war: “It is not in Attica that the war will be decided, as some imagine, but in the countries by which Attica is supported.”⁵⁷ Unfortunately, while the Spartans decide to ally with Lesbos/Mytilene, they do not heed the Mytilenian warning and instead invade Attica to no avail. This miscalculation produces almost 25 more years of war. Again Thucydides provides a negative example of reassessment. The Spartans have better luck at reassessment concerning Sicily. Interestingly, it comes from an Athenian. They receive the Athenian exile Alcibiades who implores them to “remember...that if I did you great harm as an enemy, I could likewise do you good service as a friend, insasmuch as I

⁵³ Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, Griffith translation, 73.

⁵⁴ Clausewitz, 585-6.

⁵⁵ Thucydides, see funeral oration of Pericles, 111-8.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 124.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 165.

know the plans of the Athenians, while I only guessed yours.”⁵⁸ He convinces the Spartans to send forces to Sicily in order to tie the Athenians down on two fronts.

A Greek historian, a Chinese general, and a Prussian soldier each with quite different experiences, from different eras, and writing for different reasons, show a stunning congruence concerning a leader’s responsibility before engaging in war: the need to understand the character of that war before embarking upon it. War, unlike any other human endeavor is the most unforgiving and unrecoverable action a state can take. We should pay heed to these three writers’ words and ensure that policy *always* drives a state’s actions and that leaders perform an accurate net assessment of the proposed war. While no one can predict exactly how a war will unfold, much knowledge can be gleaned from this approach; and knowledge translates to an advantage.

Nations and War

Rational Calculations and Reasons for War

Clausewitz, Sun Tzu, and Thucydides all advocated that a statesman adopt a rational approach to war. In fact, they specifically warned of grave dangers encountered when a leader did not follow their recommendations. Modern historian Michael Howard has expressed similar thoughts about leaders contemplating war. He correctly believes that all wars are brought about by rational calculations. In The Causes of Wars and Other Essays, Howard writes that war’s “initiation is almost by definition a deliberate and carefully considered act . . . If history shows any record of ‘accidental’ wars, I have yet to find them.”⁵⁹ He also adds that these kinds of rational calculations *must* be considered by all societies contemplating war. These calculations, however, are merely probabilities of success. They should not be seen as guarantees. If leaders perform comprehensive calculations, they can increase their chances for success. This is not to say these calculations will be right. Howard cautions a leader considering war:

Certainly statesman have sometimes been surprised by the nature of the war they have unleashed, and it is reasonable to assume that in at least 50 percent of the

⁵⁸ Ibid., 415.

⁵⁹ Michael Howard, *The Causes of War and Other essays*, (Boston: HarvardUniversity Press, 1983), 12.

cases they got a result they did not expect. But that is not the same as a war begun by mistake and continued with no political purpose.⁶⁰

Statesmen must be rightly concerned, however, that they are measuring the correct indicators for the war they are pondering.

Simply performing war-fighting calculations will not help leaders understand the character of wars. They must truly understand why war is being considered. Statesmen need to ascertain the precise reason for the potential conflict. Thucydides offered eternal guidance on nations and war. He proposed that fear, honor, and interests are the strongest motives for war.⁶¹ In fact, he blames the Peloponnesian War on them: “The growth of the power of Athens, and the alarm that this inspired in Sparta, made war inevitable.”⁶² While cautioning war to the Spartans, the Athenians even boldly state, “And the nature of the case first compelled us to advance our empire to its present height; fear being our principle motive, though honor and interest afterwards came in.”⁶³ Fear, honor, and interest can be viewed today as security, ideals, and economics. These three motives cover practically every conceivable reason for war from Thucydides’ time until today. The Greek historian had a firm grasp of the obvious.

Some modern historians and political scientists have advanced the idea that the desire for power is a reason for war. Power can, however, be explained in Thucydides’ terms. Fear of losing power is a potent motivator for war. Michael Howard has convincingly suggested taking Thucydides’ passage previously mentioned, “The growth of the power of Athens, and the alarm which this inspired in Sparta, made war inevitable,” and substituting countries for the explanations of World War I and II among others.⁶⁴ Donald Kagan offers that fear and interest are easy to understand in terms of power, but honor should be recast for today’s audience. He suggests that honor be relabeled as prestige, respect, deference, or esteem.⁶⁵ Seen in this light, honor and power have a direct relationship.

Fear, honor, and interest can explain power as a reason for war. Fear or security can be viewed in terms of immediate problems and those in the future. Immediate security concerns

⁶⁰ Ibid., 12.

⁶¹ Thucydides, 43. Thucydides’ theme is also picked up and expanded by Kagan in his review of the Peloponnesian War, see especially 7-9, 56-7, and 569-70, respectively.

⁶² Ibid., 16.

⁶³ Ibid., 43.

⁶⁴ Howard, 16-20. Thucydides quotation, p. 16.

⁶⁵ Kagan, 8.

arise from an attack upon a nation's territory, citizens, or assets. Defensive war is an easy decision. Future concerns are more complicated. The fear that one must act now or in the near future to avoid a loss of security, whether relative or absolute, is also a powerful motive for war. Most wars could probably be cast in this light. The hard question to answer in these cases is "How long does a nation have?" Two related but just as complex questions are "How much security will a nation lose, and is that amount tolerable?"

Interest is usually viewed as some form of material advantage such as economic gain. Again this reason as a motive for war can be seen in simple and complex terms. A simple example would be to invade a country to increase one's wealth as Iraq did to Kuwait in 1990. More complex scenarios might include a nation that wages a preemptive war against a growing economic rival, or a nation that assists another's war in hopes of future economic gain. Fear or security could also be directly tied to a war waged for interest, as the Japanese attack on the United States in 1941 would suggest.

Honor is probably the most complex and least understood of the three motives. Honor encompasses concepts such as values, prestige, respect, fame, and ideals to name just a few. Donald Kagan rightly observes that these demands are very subjective and hard to satisfy.⁶⁶ Because of this difficulty, it is subsequently hard to ascertain whether the demands have been met. If a nation does not know when it has achieved its objectives concerning honor, it will struggle to know how and when to end a war. Even more perplexing is a nation that is defeating another that started a war, in part or wholly, for reasons of honor. The victorious nation will struggle with how far to take its victory. Should the victor demand unconditional surrender or merely acceptance of the current situation? The answer is never easy. The United States' dilemmas concerning Japan in World War II and Iraq in 1991 were partly due to a lack of understanding honor (for themselves and their standing in their regions) as enduring motives for both.

Fear, honor, and interest are not always mutually exclusive. The three are interrelated. A nation should seek a balanced understanding when contemplating war. It should also assume the same from its adversary, as rarely, if ever, will a nation wage war for one reason alone. Because of this interrelation, evaluation is never easy. But the time spent attempting to gain understanding will be a good investment. Knowing the fundamental reason for a nation's

willingness to enter a war is vital to understanding that war, and to raising one's chances of winning it.

Security, ideals, and economics comprise national interests. Many authors label these interests everything from "vital" and "survival" to "peripheral" and "humanitarian." Defining national interests at stake in a potential war is the statesman's job. The simple format suggested by Thucydides can help the statesman complete the task.

Conclusion

History is rife with war, and the future portends little change. Donald Kagan notes, "In 1968 Will and Ariel Durant calculated that there had been only 268 years free of war in the previous 3,421."⁶⁷ The last 33 years have not fared much better. Leaders must understand the character of an approaching war. Clausewitz, Sun Tzu, and Thucydides all offer classic tomes to aid understanding. Their advice is simple: a leader should never forget the primacy of politics over military strategy and should always perform a rational calculation or net assessment. Neither of these two will guarantee victory, but ignoring one or both will most likely bring peril. Calculating a balance of fear, honor, and interest is the task. Guidelines exist, and we will examine them in the next chapter.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 569.

⁶⁷ Taken from Will and Ariel Durant, *The Lessons of History*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1968), 81, quoted in Kagan, 4.

CHAPTER 3

The Evolution of Guidelines: Reagan Through Clinton

Under what circumstances and by what means does a great democracy such as ours reach the painful decision that the use of military force is necessary to protect our interests or to carry out our national policy? This is perhaps the most important question concerning the peace.

Caspar Weinberger

A fundamental issue that this nation has wrestled with ever since we became a great power with international responsibilities: How to judge when the use of our power is right and when it is wrong.

George Shultz

In today's high-technology world a company often looks to buy something they need "off-the-shelf" rather than spend the time and money to develop something new. Using this principle, there are some "off-the-shelf" guidelines available to today's statesmen. In fact, since 1984, there have been several formal and informal guidelines published. This chapter will explore the existing frameworks, from Caspar Weinberger's so-called "doctrine" to former President Clinton's U.S. National Security Strategy. The authors' main recommendations will be highlighted.

Reagan Era Policy Makers and Commentators

Caspar Weinberger

In 1984, Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger, reacting to frustration stemming from a span of events from the Vietnam War to the 1983 terrorist attack on U.S. Marines in Lebanon, attempted to create rules to guide U.S. intervention. As he saw it, there were clear mandates for

a nation to use military force in defense of its homeland, but not to use force “to invade, conquer, or subjugate other nations.”⁶⁸ The vast area in between, however, was open for much debate. Weinberger believed that many policy makers saw the use of military force as either inappropriate or as something to be used regularly and without discrimination. He decried both views and argued that there was a responsible way to consider and employ military force in support of national policy. His solution was to use vital national interests as a guiding factor. He also noted there were times when military force should not be used.

To determine if military force should be used or not, Weinberger proposed six “tests” to be applied to the situation under consideration. In a sense, these tests serve as prerequisites for U.S. intervention:

1. The U.S. should only commit forces overseas if the situation is in our vital national interest or that of our allies
2. The U.S. should only commit troops with a clear intention of winning
3. If we commit forces, we must have clearly defined political and military objectives. The objectives must be achievable militarily and we must send the appropriate sized force for the task
4. We must continually reassess the force we have sent and our objectives. If necessary, we must adjust that force as needed
5. Before committing forces overseas, we must have the support of the American people and Congress
6. The commitment of U.S. forces should be a last resort

Weinberger noted that he phrased each test negatively to act as a caution for policymakers considering military force. He wanted the employment of military force to undergo serious consideration. It is clear from these tests that Weinberger wanted to make it tougher to use military force. He particularly abhorred the haphazard use of the military by policymakers, citing this tendency as the cause for the Vietnam War and its associated fallout. He deliberately declined to define “vital” national interests. Without that definition, his tests are marginally useful at best. Weinberger, however, was not the only cabinet member in the Reagan Administration writing about the use of force.

⁶⁸ Caspar Weinberger, “The Uses of Military Power,” *Defense '85*, Jan 1985, 3. Remarks taken from Weinberger’s speech to the National Press Club, Washington, D.C., November 28, 1984. For a transcript of the speech see Richard Haass, *Intervention: The Use of American Military Force in the Post-Cold War World*, rev. ed. (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 1999), 197-205.

George Shultz

George Shultz, as Ronald Reagan's Secretary of State, also wrestled with the dilemma of using U.S. military force. The media painted him as holding opposite views from Secretary Weinberger. Shultz and Weinberger were depicted as subscribing to the traditional view that the State Department wants to use the military often and the Defense Department prefers restraint on use of the military. The Defense Department's wishes for restraint are typically ascribed to the fact that they, and only they, bear the cost of any military intervention. An analysis of what Shultz said at this time reveals the probable reason for this interpretation, and a closer linking to Weinberger than believed.

Underlying Shultz's position regarding intervention was a strong belief in the ability of the administration to make timely decisions. He did not want any administration to waste time debating all the possible issues described in something like the Weinberger Doctrine. He warns, "We cannot allow ourselves to become the Hamlet of nations, worrying endlessly over whether and how to respond."⁶⁹ He believed a prerequisite for an intervention checklist was a public understanding of an administration's need to act urgently and often without all the facts. The public should be briefed ahead of time that intervention decisions will come up and the administration will respond due to a "moral and strategic necessity of action."⁷⁰ These statements, broadly interpreted, are the basis for the popular argument that Shultz and Weinberger were in opposite camps. But, like Weinberger, Shultz also offered some guidelines for intervention, and surprisingly many are similar.

Shultz believed that just because an administration has a mandate from the public, it will not automatically use the military without careful consideration. To a prerequisite for broad public consensus, Shultz added four conditions for military intervention. Like Weinberger, he assumed self-defense against attack was legitimate in all eyes and therefore did not address it as one of his conditions.

1. The use of force must always be a last resort, when other means of influence have proven inadequate
2. American military power should be resorted to only if the stakes justify it

⁶⁹ George Shultz, "Shultz vs. Weinberger—When to Use U.S. Power," *U.S. News & World Report*, Dec 24, 1984, 21. Remarks taken from speeches to Yeshiva University in New York on December 9, 1984, Park Avenue Synagogue in New York on October 3, 1984, and the Trilateral Commission in Washington, D.C. on April 3, 1984.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 21.

3. American military power should be resorted to only if other means are not available
4. American military power should only be used in a manner appropriate to the objective.

These conditions are quite similar to Weinberger's tests. Shultz's prerequisite is similar to Weinberger's fifth test, requiring the support of the American people and congress. Shultz's first condition, force as a last resort, is identical to Weinberger's last test. Shultz's second condition is another way of stating Weinberger's first test, that we should commit force only if it is in our vital national interests. Shultz's third condition is really a restatement of his first. Shultz's final condition is consonant with Weinberger's third test, requiring achievable objectives and appropriately sized forces.

When compared this way, the two seem much more in agreement, rather than diametrically opposed as the media portrayed them. While Shultz is deliberately more vague (resort to force "only if the stakes justify it"), it is clear that he does not advocate using the military for any and all contingencies that arise. Nor does Shultz advocate a nation sticking its head in the sand when confronted. He is in that middle ground that Weinberger advocates. But Shultz's prescriptions are ultimately no more help than Weinberger's.

Bush Era Policy Makers and Commentators

Colin Powell

Former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) General Colin Powell further advanced the discussion on the use of military force. Powell's stated beliefs are somewhat different than Weinberger's. Powell writes:

To help with the complex issue of the use of "violent" force, some have turned to a set of principles or a when-to-go-to-war doctrine. "Follow these directions and you can't go wrong." There is, however, no fixed set of rules for the use of military force. To set one up is dangerous.⁷¹

Powell, though, then proceeds to offer his own prescription for how and when to use force. Interestingly, he chooses to present his guidelines as six questions to be asked. Using questions instead of a checklist presumes that the statesman will take the time to weigh evidence and logically arrive at each answer. This is a useful construct. Powell's guidance is:

⁷¹ Colin Powell, "U.S. Forces: Challenges Ahead," *Foreign Affairs*, (Winter 1992/93), 37-8.

When a “fire” starts that might require committing armed forces, we need to evaluate the circumstances. Relevant questions include: Is the political objective we seek to achieve important, clearly defined and understood? Have all other nonviolent policy means failed? Will military force achieve the objective? At what cost? Have the gains and risks been analyzed? How might the situation that we seek to alter, once it is altered by force, develop further and what might be the consequences?⁷²

A close examination of the six questions shows a remarkable similarity to Weinberger’s proposed six tests. This is not surprising, as Powell served as National Security Advisor when Weinberger published his guidelines. Powell most likely helped draft them. Over time, the two’s guidance has become known collectively as the “Weinberger-Powell Doctrine.”

Powell’s first question is much like Weinberger’s first and third test. Powell’s second question is a match for Weinberger’s last test, ensuring force is used as a last resort. The Chairman’s next four questions all deal with the same issues as Weinberger’s second and fourth tests. There is obvious concern from both writers that the use of military force be evaluated on a continuing basis. Only Weinberger’s fifth test, having congressional and public support, is missing from Powell’s list of questions. Powell does understand the importance of public support, however. He adds: “I have infinite faith in the American people’s ability to sense when and where we should draw the line.”⁷³ Like Weinberger, Powell declines to define exactly what he means by “important political objectives.” He leaves that judgement call to the elected politicians.

Powell also expresses a distinct belief in using overwhelming force *within* an operation. This does not mean using all the capabilities of the military every time they are employed. He advocates quick and decisive operations. This belief was codified as “Decisive Force” in the 1992 National Military Strategy, authored by Powell.⁷⁴ Powell notes that because of this belief, his views have been labeled as supporting “all-out” wars, rather than “limited” ones. Powell believes, rightly so, that all wars are limited by either territory, means, or objectives. The Liberian rescue and the humanitarian portion of the mission to Somalia were successful military interventions that were quite limited. Whether correct or not, Powell was forever linked to the “all-out” war school by implication and Les Aspin’s direct accusation .

⁷² Ibid., 38.

⁷³ Ibid., 41.

⁷⁴ Colin Powell, *National Military Strategy*, Joint Chiefs of Staff (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, January 1992), 8-9.

Les Aspin

In the fall of 1992, then Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, Les Aspin gave a speech on national security in the post-Cold War world. He advanced the idea that the military, more than any other group, studied the merit of checklists such as Weinberger's. Aspin claimed that military leaders conditioned their beliefs to a "high threshold for the use of force."⁷⁵ He calls this school of thought the "all-or-nothing" school and adds: "If you want a name associated with it, it would be Colin Powell."⁷⁶ Aspin ascribes four propositions to this school:

NUMBER ONE Force should only be used as a last resort. Diplomatic and economic solutions should be tried first.

NUMBER TWO Military Force should only be used when there is a clear-cut military objective. We should not send military forces to achieve vague political goals.

NUMBER THREE Military forces should be used only when we can measure that the military objective has been achieved. In other words, we need to know when we can bring the troops back home.

NUMBER FOUR Probably the most important. Military force should be used only in an overwhelming fashion. We should get it done quickly and with little loss of life, and therefore, with overwhelming force.⁷⁷

Interestingly, this incorrect summation of Powell's guidance has come to be accepted as what Powell actually said. It is also interesting that Aspin saw this checklist as a way around gaining public acceptance. This was clearly not Weinberger's, or as Powell made clear, the military's intent.

Aspin offered another group, the "limited objectives school," as the opposite of the "all-or-nothings." He writes that this group, characterized by Margaret Thatcher, believes the military needs to *do something* to achieve results. This group also believes that the process of being involved makes the military useful.⁷⁸ Aspin himself would fall into this group. Aspin correctly notes a growing disparity between these two groups in the post-Cold War world. The fierce intervention debates between Congress and the executive branch during the Clinton Administration are a clear example of this disparity.

⁷⁵ Les Aspin, speech to the Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs, Washington D.C., September 21, 1992. Quoted in Haass, 208. Complete text of the speech in Haass, 207-14.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 209.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 208-9.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 210-12.

Aspin concludes that the two camps are so diverse that a single, all-encompassing checklist is impossible to compose. He believes that the government will decide all future force issues on a case-by-case basis. This is a good thing. By deciding case-by-case, the government will be forced to evaluate each situation on its own merits. Evaluating the use of force, each and every time, is valuable, regardless of which guidelines a statesman uses.

George Bush

At the very end of his presidency, George Bush offered his own view of when and how to use military force. Like those before him, he also decries the use of a checklist to make force decisions. But again, like those before him, he inevitably served up his own guidelines. Bush actually couched them as two separate guidelines—when to use force and how to use it.

In deciding if military force should be used, Bush notes that:

Using military force makes sense as a policy where the stakes warrant, where and when force can be effective, where no other policies are likely to prove effective, where its application can be limited in scope and time, and where the potential benefits justify the potential costs and sacrifice.⁷⁹

His statement of “where the stakes warrant” is a tricky one. Obviously it is a subjective decision. Bush clouds the issue further when he argues: “The relative importance of an interest is not a guide.”⁸⁰ These statements seem rather vague, which may allow statesmen the flexibility they crave in making force decisions. Taken together, however, they do not offer the statesman much concrete guidance.

Bush’s other guidelines are in concert with those of Weinberger, Shultz, and Powell. Bush also adds elsewhere in his speech that broad public and congressional support is needed to sustain military interventions. He adds that it is the President’s responsibility to elicit that support to provide “the essential domestic underpinning” necessary for success.⁸¹

Once these tests are met and the decision to use force is established, Bush offers further guidelines on how to use that force.

⁷⁹ George Bush, “The Use of Military Force: The President’s Difficult Choice,” *Defense Issues*, Vol.8 No. 1, 1993, 3. Taken from a speech to the Corps of Cadets, U.S. Military Academy, West Point, N.Y., January 5, 1993. For complete text of the speech see Haass, 223-228.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 2.

- We must act with the maximum possible support. The United States can and should lead, but we will want to act in concert where possible. A desire for international support must not become a prerequisite for acting though.
- It is essential to have:
 - * a clear and achievable mission
 - * a realistic plan for accomplishing the mission
 - * criteria no less realistic for withdrawing U.S. forces once the mission is complete⁸²

Bush's first criterion seems a contradiction initially. But when viewed in the sense he intended it, it is not. This criterion and the others are to be discussed *after* the decision to use force has been made. Bush is simply trying to point out that international support should not be a criterion for whether to intervene, but rather one for how to. His later criteria are very much in line with the previous guidelines, with one exception. Bush's last criterion concerns how to withdraw troops. This is now popularly called an "exit strategy." Only Aspin, in his critique of the military, included this exit strategy, which should not be confused with an exit date. The media and rival politicians often seize upon the lack of an exit date as "proof" that there is no exit strategy. While a date may flow from a strategy, it can not substitute for one. Also like Aspin, Bush realizes a one-size-fits-all approach is flawed. He advocates considering separately each possible use of force, noting: "Inevitably, the question of military intervention requires judgement. Each and every case is unique."⁸³ Bush believes leaders must make the tough, important decisions. And for Bush, none is as important as those made by the commander-in-chief.

Richard Haass

Perhaps the most influential and well-studied author on using military force is Richard Haass. As a former special assistant to President Bush and a senior director on the National Security Council staff, he was in a unique position to participate in the decisions to use military force. He is currently a vice president and director of Foreign Policy studies with the Brookings Institution. He has studied the area of U.S. military intervention extensively and written several

⁸² Ibid., 3.

⁸³ Ibid., 2.

books on the subject. His book, *Intervention: The Use of American Military Force in the Post-Cold War World* is a standard for military and civilian graduate studies in foreign policy.⁸⁴

Haass clearly delineates the questions of *whether* and *how* to use force. While he separates the two for academic purposes, he also realizes their complementary, practical nature. He cautions: “The question of whether to use force can never be divorced from the question of how to use it effectively. If there is no satisfactory answer to the latter question, there can be no commitment to the former.”⁸⁵ Haass lays out guidelines for a statesman to answer both questions.

As for the first question, whether to intervene, Haass offers:

1. Interests are only a guide
2. Tolerance for costs reflects the interests at stake
3. The purpose of the intervention must be clear
4. The adversary’s response must be anticipated
5. Neither victory nor an exit date should be prerequisites
6. Popular and congressional support are desirable but not necessary
7. Deterrence is not cost free and not always an option
8. The adversary is not the only audience
9. Affecting internal politics through force is difficult
10. Media should not determine policy⁸⁶

Haass enters some new territory with his list. He examines areas such as the adversary and his response, the internal and external environments, and the media. His first, third, and fifth guidelines are reminiscent of Bush’s, as can be expected. Haass wrote the previously cited Bush speech, which outlined the President’s beliefs on using military force.

After describing the tests for when to intervene, Haass turns to the connected question of how to intervene. He offers just as many guidelines here, as well as a few cautions. He insists that the discussion of how to intervene not get bogged down in tactics. Rather it should focus on the use of force in timing, scale, intensity, political setting, and the relationship of means to ends.

⁸⁴ Haass. One of the greatest values of this book may be that it brings complete texts of hard to find, important, policy speeches together in one place for the first time. These speeches span over 13 years and three administrations.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 68.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 67-86.

He also adds, like Powell, that all uses of force will be limited by means, objectives, or geography.

1. Sooner tends to be better than later
2. Too much force is better than too little
3. Relevant force matters
4. Decisive early use of force is preferable to gradualism
5. New technologies increase options but are rarely sufficient
6. Air power is useful but no panacea
7. Imposed humanitarian interventions offer a way out—and in
8. Some purposes for using force can be mutually exclusive⁸⁷

Haass is the first to add the importance of timing into intervention decisions. Haass' real value is his linkage of whether and how to intervene. He writes: "The questions of whether and how to intervene are inseparable: implementation can only succeed if the nature of the situation and the purpose of the intervention are first clearly defined."⁸⁸ Similar to Weinberger and Shultz, both Haass and another member of the Bush administration, Arnold Kanter, wrote guidelines for statesmen in their decisions to use military force.

Arnold Kanter

During the Bush administration, Arnold Kanter held several important policy positions. He served as Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs, Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, and as a senior director for defense policy and arms control on the National Security Council. Like many of the other authors, Kanter believes, especially in the post-Cold War environment, that it is almost impossible to develop a set of guidelines that the U.S. will use consistently in every situation. He does believe, however that there is real value in stating some level of guidance. Kanter sees the main advantages of setting principles as "furnishing internal guidance to the bureaucracy and providing public rationales that explain the intervention decisions taken or not taken."⁸⁹ He believes in public accountability for decision-makers, and sees stated guidelines as a tool to enable the explanations.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 87-100.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 100.

⁸⁹ Arnold Kanter, "Intervention Decision-making During the Bush Administration: Deciding Where to Go In and When to Get Out," *Special Warfare*, (April, 1995), 15.

While Kanter holds that the Bush administration did not have stated policy guidance concerning the use of military force, he does believe that informal guidance evolved.

1. Do not intervene—especially on the ground—absent high confidence that the intervention will be relatively brief and inexpensive and that it will cause minimal casualties and collateral damage.
2. Do not intervene unless there is a high probability of success.
3. Avoid congressional involvement in the decision-making process. Inform, do not involve.
4. Minimize the need for political support and the risk of negative political consequences.
5. Insist that U.S. involvement is qualitatively different in *political* terms.
6. Avoid committing U.S. ground forces.
7. Retain operational control over U.S. combat forces, particularly ground combat forces.
8. Secure authorization by the UN or another international organization.
9. Obtain multilateral participation.⁹⁰

Kanter, unlike Bush and Haass, mixes recommendations for whether to intervene with those of how to intervene in his list of principles. One can see parallels with both Bush and Haass, nevertheless. Kanter's emphasis on multilateral operations and the minimization of congressional participation is evident from the other two's guidance. This list, viewed as a whole, can be interpreted somewhat as driving intervention to something that is quick, clean, and cheap. This is understandable given the short U.S. media cycle and subsequent short public attention span.

Kanter offers another list that may be more helpful to statesmen, however. He surmises that there are characteristics of decision-making surrounding military force that “probably are generalizable, rather than being peculiar to the Bush administration.”⁹¹ He offers remarkably astute observations concerning an unstructured and confusing process.

1. The manner by which “candidates” for intervention are added to the decision agenda is relatively idiosyncratic and unpredictable.
2. Although the identity of the participants is fairly stable and predictable, the decision-making process itself is fairly ad hoc.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 19-21.

⁹¹ Ibid., 23.

3. The decision-making process with respect to intervention issues frequently begins at relatively senior levels and works up from there.
4. The process by which the military frames the issue and formulates its assessment and advice is a “black box” to most participants outside the Pentagon.
5. There are relatively stable and distinguishable “agency perspectives” on issues related to intervention.
6. Personalities matter.
7. “Slippery slopes” are a frequent source of concern, in part because they really exist.
8. Concerns about slippery slopes notwithstanding, planning, paradoxically, is often shortsighted.
9. Decision-making is probabilistic and context-dependent.⁹²

Kanter is an informed “insider.” His fifth and sixth characteristics display a view of decision-making that other authors ignore. His observations are even more important because he claims the decision-making process and the checklists or guides that statesmen use are becoming more and more standardized. His claim that policymakers are learning from experience is a welcome one, as long as the standards they are using are adequate.

Clinton Era Policy Makers and Commentators

John Collins

John Collins is a senior specialist in national defense with the Congressional Research Service of the Library of Congress. In addition, he is a retired Army Colonel and has authored several books on grand strategy. Collins believes it is possible to develop helpful guidelines for statesmen considering the use of military force. In 1995, he developed one of the most exhaustive checklists for consideration. Collins terms his guidelines “considerations” rather than tests, doctrine, or guidance. He also frames his considerations as questions under seven broad categories. In this respect he is similar to Colin Powell, thinking questions will stimulate discussion and serious thought. Collins separates his checklist from the others, stating:

The considerations . . . unlike Weinberger’s preconditions, recognize that there are no immutable and universally applicable rules for decisions about

⁹² Ibid., 16-19.

interventions. Each case is unique. The following checklists therefore pose questions rather than answers.⁹³

Collins' construct of posing questions, even if in a self-described checklist form, is useful. He does not purport to solve statesmen's problems, rather aid them in the decision. While many others offer this same message, they ultimately produce prescriptions for the use of force.

Collins frames his questions in seven categories he believes already familiar to strategists. Under each category is a series of questions designed to connect that category to the decision to use military force.

1. *National Interests*

- Which U.S. and allied interests are pertinent? Are they compatible?
- Which of them are worth spending U.S. lives for?
- What is their order of precedence?

2. *Threats to National Interests*

- Which perceived threats menace U.S. national interests most severely?
- Which of those threats are susceptible to mainly military solutions?
- How do enemy cultures, capabilities, and geography affect the ability of the U.S. and its allies or prospective coalition partners to counter threats militarily?
- What might be the long-term consequences of an opponent's success?

3. *Political Aims and Military Missions*

- Are political aims clearly expressed and militarily attainable?
- Are the aims of the U.S., the UN, and allied or coalition partners harmonious?
- Are political objectives and military missions mutually supportive and reinforcing?
- Would attainment of U.S. aims alleviate the most serious problems in the afflicted state or region?
- What political-military and economic costs would accompany failure?

4. *Strategic and Policy Guidance*

- Are policies compatible with political aims and military missions?
- Could some policy restrictions be safely relaxed?
- Should a time limit be placed on military operations?

⁹³ John M. Collins, "Military Intervention: A Checklist of Key Considerations," *Parameters*, (Winter 1995-96), 53.

- What costs are acceptable in terms of resources and casualties?

5. *Planning Options*

- How might adversaries react to any given option advanced by the U.S. and its allies or coalition partners?
- How could U.S., allied, or coalition forces best share the burdens of intervention?
- What alternatives appear most attractive if preferred options fail?
- What political and economic price may be incurred for inaction?

6. *Resources*

- Are allocated resources ample for the current contingency?
- Could remaining resources handle other likely crises?
- How many reserve component forces of what kinds would be needed?
- How could allies or coalition partners contribute? Should or would they?

7. *Congressional and Public Support*

- Has the President clearly explained the purposes of intervention?
- Did prior consultation indicate congressional approval?
- Are U.S. interests and objectives sufficiently compelling to attract and retain public support?
- Has media coverage overemphasized the crisis concerned?
- How important is public support to our likely adversaries? Are they better able to develop and sustain it than the U.S. and its allies?⁹⁴

This is quite a comprehensive list. It gives statesmen a great deal to consider. Collins does mix considerations for whether and how to intervene, but overall his checklist deals with the former question. Along with Haass, Collins is one of the first to consider the adversary's reaction. He is also the first to consider the consequences of failure for America. Collins clearly disagrees with others over the issue and importance of U.S. interests in the decision-making process. National interests are the common thread throughout Collins' framework. Collins emphasizes elsewhere a need to continually reassess the seven areas after the decision has been made. Here he may be closer to Weinberger and Powell than he would like to admit.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 54-58.

Anthony Lake

With the election of Bill Clinton, the U.S. national security landscape began to change. The shift away from national interests as a deciding factor in the use of force that was started by President Bush intensified. National values that historically underpinned national interests now became national interests in their own right. The Clinton Administration formalized the “limited objective” school advocated originally by Les Aspin. In 1996, Anthony Lake, as Clinton’s National Security Advisor, authored his own set of guidelines for the use of military force.⁹⁵ These guidelines quickly became known as the “Lake Doctrine.”

In the guidelines, Lake offers the administration’s views on when and how to use military force. Concerning when to use force, Lake offers seven “circumstances” that “may call for the use of force or our military forces”:

1. To defend against direct attacks on the U.S., its citizens, and its allies;
2. To counter aggression;
3. To defend our key economic interests, which is where most Americans see their most immediate stake in our international engagement;
4. To preserve, promote, and defend democracy, which enhances our security and the spread of our values;
5. To prevent the spread of weapons of mass destruction, terrorism, international crime and drug trafficking;
6. To maintain our reliability, because when our partnerships are strong and confidence in our leadership is high, it is easier to get others to work with us, and to share the burdens of leadership; and;
7. For humanitarian purposes, to combat famines, natural disasters and gross abuses of human rights with, occasionally, our military forces.⁹⁶

Concerning how to use military force, Lake offers three criteria:

1. Threatening to use force can achieve the same results as actually using it—but only if you’re prepared to carry through on the threat.
2. The selective but substantial use of force is sometimes more appropriate than its massive use—provided that the force is adequate to the task, and then some.
3. Before we send our troops into a foreign country, we should know how and when we’re going to get them out.⁹⁷

⁹⁵ Anthony Lake, speech at George Washington University, Washington D.C., March 6, 1996. Complete text of the speech in Haass, 247-258.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 252.

This is a distinct change from the previous authors' views on the use of military force. Lake clearly repudiates the Weinberger-Powell doctrine, almost to the point that his "circumstances" could be viewed as the "Anti-Weinberger-Powell Doctrine." Gone are the recommendations for force as a last resort, using overwhelming force, consideration of vital national interests, need for public or congressional support, and a need to continually reassess the situation. It seems the Clinton Administration tried to reject Weinberger-Powell line-by-line.

Concerning the use of overwhelming force Lake, and others, may not understand the meaning of Powell's term. Lake acknowledges that force needs to be "adequate to the task, and then some," but in his explanation he cautions against using massive intervention and getting bogged down in "a Vietnam-like quagmire"⁹⁸ Lake misses the point that the use of overwhelming force and massive intervention are clearly two separate things. Lake also advances the exit-strategy theory to include an exit date, completely ignoring the recommendations of Bush, Haass, and Kanter. Lake and the Clinton Administration signaled the formalization of a change that had started in January 1993. This caused a great debate in the national security community inside and outside of Washington, D.C. It would not take long for critics to present responses.

John Hillen

A senior policy analyst with the conservative Heritage Foundation, John Hillen wasted no time in rebuking the Lake Doctrine. Hillen called for a return to the tradition established by Weinberger and Powell.⁹⁹ As an overriding theme, he specifically focused on Lake's rejection of vital national security interests as a determinant in the decisions to use military force. Hillen believed that in the post-Cold War world there was a greater need for guidelines to help statesmen decide when and how to intervene militarily. He saw in the failure of the Clinton administration to delineate specific criteria the reason that U.S. foreign policy had become nothing more than intervention as "social work."¹⁰⁰ Hillen dismisses Lake's attempt at

⁹⁷ Ibid., 253.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 253.

⁹⁹ John Hillen, "American Military Intervention: A User's Guide," *The Heritage Foundation*, Backgrounder No. 1079, May 2, 1996, 7.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 4. Hillen borrows the explanation from former Clinton advisor, Michael Mandelbaum, cited in endnote number 5, pg. 17.

guidelines as something that “further contributed to the atmosphere of uncertainty.”¹⁰¹ Seeking to restore order to the intervention decision-making process, Hillen advocates a few, simple criteria as guidance:

1. Military intervention should defend national security interests.
2. Military intervention should not jeopardize the ability of the U.S. to meet more important security commitments.
3. Military intervention should strive to achieve military goals that are clearly defined, decisive, attainable, and sustainable.
4. Military intervention should enjoy congressional and public support.
5. The armed forces must be allowed to create the conditions for success.¹⁰²

These five criteria are a clear return to Weinberger-Powell. They boil down to two main ideas. Criteria one, two, and four seek a statement of U.S. interests and which are worth fighting for. Hillen assumes those of more importance will garner more support. Criteria three and five beg for a match of policy and strategy, with the military primarily responsible for that strategy. Fearing his advice will fall on deaf ears in the Clinton administration, Hillen turns to Congress to implement his plan. He makes specific recommendations that Congress require an administration to include five items in their annual National Security Strategy.

1. *A prioritization* of national interests and national security interests;
2. *A listing of criteria*, such as those listed here, that will give guidelines for when, where, whether, and how the U.S. military should conduct military interventions;
3. *A set of criteria* for deciding when and in what capacity the U.S. will participate in multilateral military operations through coalitions, alliances, and other structures such as the United Nations;
4. *An unequivocal guarantee* that the president will consult Congress before launching military interventions that are not national emergencies; and
5. *A declaration* that U.S. military forces in interventions abroad will have clearly defined, decisive, and attainable military objectives that can be achieved through proven military doctrine. (Emphasis in the original)¹⁰³

These criteria would limit any administration if Congress adopted them. Interestingly, the Clinton administration had already included some of these recommendations in the 1994

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 6.

¹⁰² Ibid., 1-2.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 2-3.

National Security Strategy.¹⁰⁴ The Administration would later expand them in subsequent National Security Strategies, as discussed below. Hillen's attack on the Administration is indicative of the fierce debate that raged in the 1990s and even today. The Clinton Administration, however, was not as bereft of intervention guidance as they have been accused.

Bill Clinton

Bill Clinton entered office with a firm belief in multilateral security structures such as the United Nations. After experiencing problems in Somalia and Haiti, his Administration began to rethink its criteria for international participation. In July 1994, Clinton published his *National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement*. In it he set out three "objectives" for the nation and four principles to guide decisions on when to use military force. These objectives could be broadly interpreted as national interests.

1. Enhancing our security
2. Promoting prosperity at home
3. Promoting democracy¹⁰⁵

While these interests are very vague, he is more specific when defining whether and how to use military force. He notes:

1. First and foremost, our national interests will dictate the place and extent of our engagement.
2. As much as possible, we will seek the help of our allies or of relevant multilateral institutions. If our most important national interests are at stake, we are prepared to act alone.
3. In every case, we will consider several critical questions before committing military force.
 - Have we considered nonmilitary means that offer a reasonable chance of success?
 - What types of U.S. military capabilities should be brought to bear and is the use matched to our political objectives?
 - Do we have reasonable assurance of support from the American people and their elected representatives.?
 - Do we have timelines that will reveal the extent of success or failure, and in either case, do we have an exit strategy?

¹⁰⁴ White House, *A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement*, (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1994), 5, 10.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 5.

4. Our engagement must meet reasonable cost and feasibility thresholds.¹⁰⁶

The first two principles refer to undefined national interests. Thus, Clinton's objectives, like the others, would be hard to use as guidelines. They are also holdovers from President Bush's beliefs on intervention described earlier. The third principle acknowledges the Weinberger-Powell doctrine. The only addition is the establishment of a deadline for troop withdrawal. The first question seems to imply use of force as a last resort, a la Weinberger and Powell. Reading the detailed strategy, however, gives a different impression. Lake's speech on the Administration's plans for the use of force echo the fact that force may often be a much earlier choice.

In looking at the Clinton Administration, it is useful to note the evolution of Clinton's national security strategies, especially concerning the use of force. For instance, in 1995 the strategy adds and defines three categories of national interests that could warrant the use of the military: vital, important, and humanitarian.¹⁰⁷ It also adds two principles for whether to intervene and two for how to intervene. These four new principles are nothing more than rehashes of the four from 1994. The 1995 strategy also adds a paragraph that, while acknowledging the importance of public support for an intervention, cautions against responding to public opinion when it sours after a setback. This "chastising" of a fickle media and public remains in all subsequent national security strategies of the administration. National interests are defined only in the sub-section on military intervention. The 1996 strategy remains unchanged.

In 1997, the administration unveiled a completely new strategy, *A National Security Strategy for a New Century*. While still not defining national interests up front, it does continue the discussion in a sub-section entitled "Responding to Crises."¹⁰⁸ The strategy also mentions threats to U.S. interests without defining those interests. Most notably, the 1997 strategy removes the guidance for whether, when, or how to respond with force. By 1999, the Administration's strategy has come full circle. Here, it defines three national interests on the very first page as vital, important national, and humanitarian and other. This strategy also

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 10.

¹⁰⁷ White House, *A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement*, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, February, 1995), 12.

¹⁰⁸ White House, *A National Security Strategy For a New Century*, (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, May, 1997), 9.

expands the threats to those interests, from three in 1997, to five. A section discussing “The Decision to Employ Military Forces” is back in the strategy.¹⁰⁹ It is virtually the same section as appeared in 1995-96. The effectiveness of the Clinton Administration’s guidance for using force remains open to debate. Contrary to popular criticism, there were attempts to formulate guidance, including the national security strategies and Anthony Lake’s criteria.

Evaluation

The existing guidelines available to statesmen range from highly to moderately restrictive. Indeed, Arnold Kanter notes: “The question is less *why* the U.S. decides to intervene in any particular instance than *how* it ever manages to overcome these strong, pervasive presumptions against intervention”(emphasis in original).¹¹⁰ With the exception of John Collins, and to some extent Colin Powell, all the authors pose conditions, tests, criteria, or doctrines that should be met prior to using military force. Viewed in the aggregate, these guidelines have both strengths and weaknesses. An understanding of both is critical to statesmen employing one or several of the guidelines. The fact that several of the guidelines are advanced by statesmen themselves indicates the value they place on having practical guidance, borne out by experience, available to them.

Strengths

The existing guidelines have several strengths to recommend them. One is their comprehensive nature. Taken in their totality, they cover an enormous amount of information for statesmen to consider prior to war. They cover both the question of whether or not to use military force and how to use that force. The fact that these guidelines require that both questions be evaluated at the same time is perhaps the greatest strength. Richard Haass, writes: “Judgements of desirability cannot be made divorced from assessments of feasibility.”¹¹¹ This simultaneous evaluation can prevent a “this is a bad situation, we must do *something*” approach

¹⁰⁹ White House, *A National Security Strategy For a New Century*, (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, December, 1999), 19.

¹¹⁰ Arnold Kanter, “Intervention Decision-making During the Bush Administration: Deciding Where to Go In and When to Get Out,” *Special Warfare*, (April, 1995), 22.

¹¹¹ Richard Haass, *Intervention: The Use of American Military Force in the Post-Cold War World*, rev. ed. (Washington D.C: Brookings Institution Press, 1999), 68.

that seemed to characterize U.S. intervention in Lebanon, 1982-84, and in Bosnia from 1993-94. Having statesmen contemplate what that *something* is can only be a good thing.

Beginning a dialogue on the use of military force, prior to its employment, is extremely important. Having and using guidelines can also be helpful politically and practically. U.S. leaders are accountable for their actions to the public. Kanter points out that “decisions have to be made, explained and defended.”¹¹² A decision arrived at through the use of established guidance is easier to justify. It may also be politically expedient for the statesman, as the focus may shift to the guidelines themselves, rather than on the actual war.

Another strength is that many of the guidelines surveyed included a recommendation to look at each decision for force as a separate case. Statesmen as diverse as Bush, Aspin, Clinton, and Powell all advocate using guidelines not as a sanction to rush into action, but rather to reflect on the crisis at hand. Guidelines force each situation to be evaluated on its own merits. Again, that evaluation prior to a decision for war, can only be a good thing.

A final strength is the performance of a rational, cost-benefit analysis, or net assessment. Every guideline appraised encompassed this approach. This is a prudent step to take. The potential adversary, as well as the U.S. itself, must be thoroughly studied prior to embarking upon a path to war. Statesmen would be wise to evaluate as much information as is practical prior to their decision. John Hillen adds, “The essence of American statecraft today consists of being able to discriminate among competing national interests and then balance these interests against the willingness of the U.S. to defend them.”¹¹³ The addition of the words “and ability” immediately after the word “willingness” would make a more complete interpretation. Desire for action must always be tempered with the ability to carry out that action. Remember Clausewitz’s famous dictum, “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 and how he intends to conduct it.”¹¹⁴

¹¹² Kanter, 15.

¹¹³ John Hillen, “American Military Intervention: A User’s Guide,” *The Heritage Foundation*, Backgrounder No. 1079, May 2, 1996, 7.

¹¹⁴ Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, trans. and ed. Michael Howard and Peter Paret, rev. ed. (Princeton, 1984), 579.

Weaknesses

While the guidelines have much to recommend them, they also exhibit deficiencies. Chief among them is the argument raging in policy circles and academic journals since the appearance of the Weinberger Doctrine in 1984. The debate has long centered on the completeness or specificity of a particular checklist, or even a checklist item. This focus misses the point of the discussion. As a nation, the U.S. should be concerned, first and foremost, with ensuring there is discussion and serious thought *about* the possible war. An example of this is the criticism leveled against Anthony Lake's guidelines for being too vague. John Correll, Editor of *Air Force Magazine*, opined that the Lake Doctrine "can be interpreted to justify the use of force for almost anything."¹¹⁵ John Hillen echoes Correll: "Lake's list is not specific enough to serve as a useful guideline for military intervention. For instance, stating that the U.S. will use force to counter aggression is strategically meaningless."¹¹⁶ While the criticism may be correct, it clouds the true issue. It is unproductive to focus on the checklist, rather than the crisis it helps to explain.

A second problem is ignorance of context. Richard Haass correctly notes that every set of guidelines "was shaped in part by recent ongoing conflicts and political contexts in which policymakers sought to justify policies of intervention or non-intervention."¹¹⁷ The fact that all guidance is a product of its context needs to be accepted. Unfortunately, this is an area where the current debate is stuck. In two stinging critiques of the Weinberger Doctrine, Jeffrey Record and Karl Mueller take Weinberger to task primarily for being too rigid and not being applicable through the ages.¹¹⁸ They both go so far as to claim that if the Weinberger doctrine was in force during the 1770s, America would not have had its Revolution. Mixing policies with events from different centuries, while fun, is dangerous. It is like stating that if the French had a policy of assured destruction with nuclear weapons, the Maginot Line would have worked. The point to take from this is that *all guidelines* are products of their context and decision-making influences.

¹¹⁵ John Correll, "The Lake Doctrine," *Air Force Magazine*, (May, 1996), 3.

¹¹⁶ Hillen, 7.

¹¹⁷ Haass, 17-18.

¹¹⁸ Jeffrey Record, "Weinberger-Powell Doctrine Doesn't Cut It," *Naval Institute Proceedings*, (October, 2000), available on-line at <http://www.usni.org/Proceedings/articles00/prorecord.htm>, 1-6; Karl Mueller, "Politics, Death, and Morality in U.S. Foreign Policy," *Aerospace Power Journal*, (Summer 2000), 12-16.

The existing guidelines suffer from a third problem—they all employ a “rational actor” model. In 1971, Harvard professor Graham Allison wrote a book entitled *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*. In this book, he advanced the new concept that there were three different models for decision making. Model I is a rational actor approach.¹¹⁹ This model is characterized by value maximization in a decision. A rational actor would have clear objectives and would perform a cost-benefit analysis of the available options. The option that optimized the actors’ interests would rationally be chosen. In Allison’s Model I, nations are viewed as unitary, rational actors.

Allison’s Model II is an organizational behavior approach.¹²⁰ In this model, organizations filter and then forward information to the top for leader’s decisions. The organizations are influenced by their standard operating procedures and a desire to see the organization survive and thrive. In Model II, the government is not seen as a single actor, but rather as a collection of many organizations. This collection makes decisions that are satisfactory rather than optimal, as in Model I. Allison’s Model III is a governmental politics approach.¹²¹ Unlike the other models, decisions are made in this one through a bargaining process among key individuals. These individuals have differing stakes in the outcome. No single individual is powerful enough to “win” every issue. Key individuals’ relative power ebbs and flows over time, and so does their ability to influence decisions.

Allison proposed that all decisions are made through a complex interaction of the three models and, over time, this has been widely accepted. The U.S. Naval War College’s National Security Decision Making Department has advanced a fourth model, based on Allison’s work, that has also gained prominence.¹²² Named Model IV, this cognitive approach posits that the ultimate decision maker has values, beliefs, emotions, and cognitive mechanisms that influence all of his decisions. This model offers that “decision makers sometimes deal with their own intellectual limitations, stress, uncertainty and information overload by drawing guidance from

¹¹⁹ Graham Allison, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*, (Harper Collins Publishers, 1971), 10-38.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 67-100.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 144-184.

¹²² James Miskel, U.S. Naval War College National Security Decision Making Department, *Four Perspectives on Decision Making*, (Newport, R.I.: U.S. Naval War College Publications, January, 2000), 7-9.

shortcuts or assumptions.”¹²³ The human mind makes decisions and is susceptible to cognitive biases and limitations. Therefore, it will not perform in a purely rational way.

Each existing set of guidelines evaluated employs a Model I approach almost exclusively. Only Kanter notices that “there are relatively stable and distinguishable agency perspectives on issues related to intervention,” and that “personalities matter.”¹²⁴ Noticeably, he adds this in his separate observations on decision-making, not in his guidelines. It is clear that a nation is not a single unitary actor. There are other forces at work in making a decision. In any decision for war, factors from Model II, III, and IV play just as big a part as those under Model I. Any guidance for statesmen needs to recognize and incorporate this fact.

Another problem of the guidelines is the typical format. Whether called tests, checklists, or criteria, most guidelines take the form of a list of statements. These statements are usually very explicit, using words such as “must,” “should only,” and “should not.” The statements are usually devised in a prescriptive way—delineating what action to take if the condition is or is not met. This type of format lends itself to and, in fact, encourages the three common problems mentioned earlier. A possible solution is to put the guidance into question format, as Colin Powell and John Collins did. The type of questions asked should also be evaluated. The more qualitative the questions, the more serious the thought will go into answering them. Powell’s list of questions can mainly be answered with a “yes” or “no.” Collins’ questions, on the other hand, require much more in-depth answers, and presumably a deeper evaluation of the possible war.

A final problem is how to deal with national interests. Most authors agree that, in some form or fashion, these interests will affect the decision to use military force. The debate concerns whether those national interests exert direct or indirect pressure on statesmen. Indirect pressure can come from the linking of national interests to the support of the public and congress. The perceived level of interest is explicitly linked with public support. In fact, the two go hand-in-hand. Anthony Lake stated it best: “As President Clinton has said, we can’t be everywhere. We can’t do everything. But where those *interests* and ideals *demand it*—and where we can make a difference—we must not hesitate to lead”(emphasis added).¹²⁵ If there is any doubt that national interests are intertwined with public support and that both affect U.S.

¹²³ Ibid., 8.

¹²⁴ Kanter, 17-18.

involvement, Kanter recommends, “One need only contrast Angola and Afghanistan with Liberia and Tajikistan.”¹²⁶

Conclusion

Reviewing the existing guidelines as a whole, certain common beliefs and a few stark disagreements stand out. The authors could be loosely grouped into two camps. Aspin popularly characterized the two as “all-or-nothings” or “limited objectives” schools. Perhaps more fitting labels would be “hesitant” and “eager.” The most common belief of both is that developing a clear set of unambiguous guidelines to be consistently used is either impossible, or at best extremely difficult. The authors do believe, however, that it is vitally important to try. Despite the acknowledged difficulty, *every* one of them offered up their version of guidance for policy makers considering the use of force. As Thucydides, Sun Tzu, and Clausewitz warned, statesmen take an enormous risk by not making a rational calculation, or net assessment of a contemplated war. Having ready guidance by the statesman’s side makes the job easier.

There are several common themes in the various authors’ guidelines. One is that homeland defense is always acceptable. Some authors, like Weinberger and Haass believe it to be self-evident and do not include it in their list of conditions. Others, like Lake, put it as the first condition. Either way, there is no disagreement over using force for defense of the U.S. homeland. A second related theme is that national interests matter, although they are, as a rule, poorly defined. The homeland is usually described as some form of “vital” or “critical” interest that must be defended. Other interests are placed further down the spectrum. The important thing is that the level or intensity of that interest will aid the decision on whether and how to use military force.

A third theme concerns giving the military clear and achievable goals before employment. There is a split, however, between the schools on what this means. The hesitant school prefers qualitative and quantitative goals. The eager school, on the other hand, prefers timelines or deadlines. A fourth common theme is that the U.S. should avoid acting alone. There is a difference here also. Some, like Bush, Haass, and Hillen, believe the consideration of

¹²⁵ Anthony Lake, speech at George Washington University, Washington D.C., March 6, 1996. Quoted in Haass, 257.

¹²⁶ Kanter, 14.

allies and multinational organizations should occur in determining how to intervene. Hillen powerfully states, “As a rule, if a military intervention is worth doing, it is worth doing alone.”¹²⁷ Others, such as Lake and Clinton, believe coalitions should be addressed when answering the question of whether to intervene. Probably the most important theme is one of reassessment. Many authors mention this as a continuing requirement for the decision-making process. There are a few who do not mention it directly. No author, however, takes a stand against reassessments. From this, we can infer that all guidelines would support reassessment.

There are two notable disagreements among the authors as well. A definite split exists between the hesitant and eager camps over using overwhelming force. The hesitant school, led by Powell, is for it; and the eager school, championed by Clinton and Lake, caution against it. This may, however, be from a lack of understanding of what Powell and others mean by “overwhelming force.” Another major difference between the two groups is the use of force as a last resort. The hesitant group, especially Weinberger and Powell, are firm believers in the dictum. Lake, Clinton, and others in the eager school, are quick to point out benefits of early use of the military. This is another gulf in beliefs that is difficult to bridge.

Current guidelines for statesmen fall short in helping to determine a nation’s motivation for war and in determining what role national interests play. Existing guidelines are essentially tools to help identify situations where one might be able to use military force. These uses might bring an advantage, enable further action, or at worst, allow a leader to “just do something” that is consistent with established norms. New guidelines are needed to help statesmen focus on the motivations and reasons for war. Without this information, leaders may not be able to ascertain the proper character of the war they are contemplating. This new set of guidelines will be developed in the next chapter.

¹²⁷ Hillen, 14.

CHAPTER 4

PROPOSED GUIDELINES

The fact that America can act does not mean that it must.

George Bush

We have no eternal allies and we have no perpetual enemies. Our interests are eternal and perpetual, and those interests it is our duty to follow.

Lord Palmerston, 1848

Guideline Qualifications

Guidelines to assist statesmen contemplating war are important. Not only are they a tool to help statesmen manage a crisis; but, when properly developed, they can also help focus the ensuing discussion and thought about war. Having a statesman consider a checklist is not a guarantee of success, but ignoring the issues in it may be a prescription for disaster. From the time of Thucydides and Sun Tzu, people have written on the importance of trying to understand the character of an approaching war. Guidelines can assist in that process. Since 1984, there have been many attempts by policymakers and academics to develop proper guidance. These attempts demonstrate deficiencies that need to be addressed.

First, national interests do matter. Any guideline created needs to find a way to categorize, or at least prioritize, the national interests at stake during a crisis. Interests are directly linked to public and congressional support for any war. The American people and their elected officials will want to know *why* their sons and daughters might have to sacrifice their lives. American public support for the Vietnam War and the Somalia intervention are graphic examples of the linkage between public support and national interests. Hence, it is important to remember that perceptions may be as important as reality. Any proposed guidelines need to ensure a statesman looks at the twin issues of national interests and public support.

Leaders should focus, at least initially, on why a crisis may escalate to war. They must attempt to understand motivations of all potential belligerents. Over the years, Thucydides' construct of fear, honor, and interest has proven to be a useful and accurate barometer for measuring a nation's motives. New guidelines should incorporate these motivating factors. The U.S. should also remember to include itself in any of these evaluations. Any potential adversary will certainly be evaluating the U.S. in its calculations.

Guidelines need to avoid being overly prescriptive. When guidelines are formed as lists of statements, the ensuing discussion focuses on the rigidity of those statements, rather than on the potential war at hand. Concrete answers that produce victory seldom exist. To alleviate this problem, new guidelines should be formed as questions rather than as statements to be evaluated. Questions facilitate thought and discussion, which is the real goal of guidance for statesmen. The questions should be framed as qualitatively as possible. Thoughtful responses are much more valuable than "yes" or "no" answers.

Finally, the drafting of new guidelines is not an automatic condemnation of older ones. The existing guidelines contain much helpful information. In fact some, like John Collins' list, are quite useful. New guidelines are simply an evolution of existing ones. No author would ever claim to have definitively answered the questions of war eternal. Since each set of guidelines is a product of its context, all guidance is open to modification.

Guidance

The proposed set of guidelines is a two-tiered grouping of questions. The first tier addresses a nation's national interests and motives for war. At a minimum, tier one questions should be asked, reflected on, and answered. Only then should tier two questions be addressed. Tier two questions both enhance tier one answers and address execution. There may be a temptation for tier one to be considered the domain of the leader, and tier two the realm of the underlings. This temptation should be resisted, and statesmen should answer both tiers of questions.

Tier One

Tier one questions help get to the heart of a crisis and determine why a nation is contemplating war. Specifically, they are designed to ascertain the interests a nation is trying to serve and the motives for a possible war. Knowing a potential adversary's objectives is of paramount importance to statesmen. It may also save time and further reflection later, when and if, the military situation changes. A thorough deliberation can help prevent a swapping of objectives and aims, as happened to the U.S. in the Korean conflict of 1950-53. The support of the American public and Congress is strongly linked with the level and intensity of national interests. Therefore, tier one questions also focus on that support.

All questions listed here should be asked of *both* the potential adversaries and the United States itself.

MOTIVES and NATIONAL INTERESTS:

- What combination of Fear, Honor and Interest motivates the belligerents? Why do we think this?
- What are the possible objective(s) of this war?
- How can war redress the perceived problem?
- Are there Model II-IV considerations? What implications do they have?
- Is mirror-imaging a factor? How?
- What do winning and losing mean in the short and long term? Does victory matter?

PUBLIC SUPPORT:

- What is the level of public support? Is it sufficient?
- How can these levels be changed?
- What is the level of legislative and governmental support? What implications does this have?

QUALIFIER:

- How does the addition or subtraction of allies or coalition partners, for either us or the adversary, change these beliefs?

By working their way through this collection of questions, leaders should have a much better understanding of the belligerents' motivations. Only by having an understanding of a possible war, can statesmen properly address the execution of it. The questions are purposely designed to engender a rather difficult discussion. War is serious business, and the consequences can be deadly. Before embarking upon a war, a statesman should spend a considerable amount of his intellectual capital attempting to understand it.

Tier Two

Tier two questions are designed to refine tier one information and to help understand the execution of a possible war. Specifically, they address the match of policy and strategy, a net assessment, and war termination. Through analyzing and answering these questions, statesmen can hopefully avoid mistakes of the past. Understanding that Vietnam was a war partially, if not totally, concerned with winning the hearts and minds of the Vietnamese people was critical to any analysis of it. Possibly, U.S. leaders never understood this throughout the conflict. By matching strategy with policy, leaders can hopefully avoid the mistake that Napoleon and Hitler made of substituting operational success in place of a decisive strategy. The military and economic costs must also be weighed against the benefits. There may be times where the military cost appears high, but the political benefit is higher. The Prussian military assault at Duppel in the Danish war was costly militarily, but Bismarck knew there were greater political gains to be won from the attack. This imbalance does cause consternation with military leaders at times. In fact, it seems that the Weinberger-Powell doctrines are designed to avoid high military costs, perhaps at the expense of large political gains.

Worthy guidance places some emphasis on adversaries and their possible responses to military action. Adversaries are not "potted plants." Many a leader from Pericles in the Archidamean War to Hitler in his invasion of the USSR has been guilty of "scriptwriting" a static enemy based on past successes and flawed assumptions. These types of questions are hard to answer because they concern both quantitative and qualitative, or intangible, aspects of adversaries. It is important, however, to attempt to answer them.

Again, all questions here should be asked of *both* the potential adversaries and the United States itself. This list borrows from John Collins.¹²⁸ These ideas are marked with an asterisk.

POLICY-STRATEGY MATCH:

- What other means are available to complement or substitute for military action? Why would using the military be good or bad?
- How can military force achieve the political objective? What strategies are feasible?
- What groups are being targeted and why?
- In the event of failure, what other strategies are open?*
- What are the consequences of acting sooner versus later, or of doing nothing?*

NET ASSESSMENT:

- What are the potential costs in money and lives? Is it worth it?
- What are the capabilities, training, morale, and experience of each military? Given these answers, what does the relative balance look like?
- If analysis shows a negative balance, are we willing to forgo a war? Can we?
- Does either side have unique offensive, defensive, geographical, or technological capabilities that can negate the other's strengths?*
- What will the adversary do to counter our strategy?*

WAR TERMINATION:

- How long is this war likely to last? Why do we think this?
- What type of government will we install or leave? Will there be a vacuum of power left in the area and who might fill it? Is that acceptable?
- How will we handle negotiations? Will we cease, continue, or step up military operations during them? Why?

¹²⁸ John Collins, "Military Intervention: A Checklist of Key Considerations," *Parameters*, (Winter 1995-96) 53-58.

- If the cost-benefit analysis later changes to a negative balance, will the public allow our leader to end the war? Will sunk costs be too high to quit?

QUALIFIER:

- How does the addition or subtraction of allies or coalition partners, for either us or the adversary, change these calculations?

By working through this second tier of questions, leaders should gain a better appreciation for the details that help explain the character of a possible war. Marrying these answers with those from tier one should give statesmen much more knowledge of how a military confrontation might unfold. That is the purpose of these guidelines—to give statesmen more knowledge than they might have had without them. War is a complex, human endeavor. Any advantage, no matter how minute, a statesman can gain over his adversary is useful.

One final area, pertaining to both tiers, needs to be emphasized. There remains a critical need for continual reassessment. While the initial assessment is a tough process to undertake, the reassessment is even harder. This is because a statesman may have to go against his original policy or strategy. It is hard to swallow one's pride and admit mistakes. It is also very hard to reverse decisions where large bureaucracies exist. The wheels of change move very slowly within nations. Reassessments, however, are just as important as the initial assessment, especially when evaluating the costs versus the benefits.

Criticism

No guidelines are immune to criticism; neither are these. The most common criticisms for guidelines are addressed below. This list of criticisms is by no means exhaustive. The discussion generated by criticism and reply can only improve these guidelines and those to come in the future. Critique is a natural and necessary part of policy and academic debate.

1. These guidelines do not offer a guarantee of success. None do. War, as a human endeavor, is extremely unpredictable. Clausewitz identified enduring fog and friction in war. These guidelines are not meant to be used as a checklist for success. Just answering questions does not mean a statesman has answered them correctly. These guidelines do

not compensate for bad statesmen either. Statesmen are human and will make mistakes, no matter how much information they are given. These guidelines simply attempt to provide the statesman considerations he would perhaps otherwise omit.

2. *These guidelines do not tell you when to intervene.* This is again by design. The purpose is not to give answers, but rather to drive statesmen to find them on their own. The U.S. elects statesmen and expects them to make tough choices. In this sense, these guidelines are more akin to education than training. They are designed to help statesmen to arrive at an answer, not give them an answer, or even a pat formula to apply in every instance.

3. *These guidelines are not complete, there are areas not covered.* This is a valid criticism. These guidelines, however, are a product of their context. Over time, they will most likely be modified. One day they may even be discarded. Policymakers and scholars may find areas that need to be included. The format of using questions, however, allows more flexibility for a statesman to cover areas not envisioned in this study. This criticism also highlights the critically important issue of continual reassessment. Even using the world's best guidelines, statesmen will make mistakes and overlook certain things. Continual reassessment will hopefully minimize mistakes and oversights.

4. *These guidelines are too long. They are not practical to use for busy statesmen.* All guidelines must tread the line between being too cumbersome and being incomplete. This is why there are two tiers. If a decision is forced on a statesman, he can initially focus on Tier One. War is too important for hasty decisions. At a minimum, statesmen should attempt to understand the motivations of their adversary and their own nation. Understanding national interests and public support is also critical. Leaders should proceed to Tier Two as soon as possible, however, as it is important to understand the presumed execution of a war before deciding to use force. There simply *are not effective shortcuts* for waging war successfully.

5. *Reassessments that require change are often not practical.* Reassessments may be *difficult*, but they are extremely important. The cost of continuing down a known flawed path could be disastrous for the nation. War, and its consequences, are different than any other act a nation may undertake. Clausewitz teaches that war is interactive. Things will

change. Because of this interaction, the choice for, and subsequent waging of, war requires a diligent commitment to reassessment.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

One must begin with an assessment of whether intervention is desirable, then address its feasibility, and then return to the question of desirability. Intervening must pass muster both on its own terms and compared to the alternatives.

Richard Haass

Making policy is always about choosing; deciding whether to intervene with military force is no exception. It is only that the stakes are greater.

Richard Haass

Deciding on a course for war is the most important responsibility a statesman can shoulder. The effects may span the spectrum from total national devastation to increased security for generations. Thucydides, Sun Tzu, and Clausewitz all espoused a special need for a leader to understand war. Because of the importance of a decision for war, statesmen should attempt to gain a thorough understanding of the character of any potential war. As a potential aid for the statesman in this process, many people have authored sets of guidelines. These have taken various forms, but the purpose remained constant—provide better comprehension.

The critical area of comprehension for a statesman considering war is the motives of a nation and the national interests at stake. The statesman needs to know why he and his adversary are contemplating war, and what the nations hope to accomplish from this war. Any guidance offered needs to answer these fundamental questions. As a useful tool to help understand these basic issues, Thucydides' three motives for war (fear, honor, and interest) were offered.

A survey of the existing guidelines showed many diverse sets available to statesmen. These guidelines come in the form of checklists, tests, doctrines, criteria, and questions to be considered. Each form has advantages and disadvantages, but the formation of questions is the most useful. It forces leaders to consider tough areas

without giving them answers or conditions to be met. The question format is more flexible as it focuses, but does not dominate, the ensuing discussion. Using questions can help prevent a statesman from getting a “checklist mentality,” where he quickly moves through a list of statements that offer prescriptive actions if certain conditions are met. The real danger in this mentality is the false sense of security gained by completing a checklist.

Previous guidelines do not offer statesmen any insights into a nation’s motives for war or the interests at stake. They focus entirely on the entry and execution of a possible war, simply providing situations where the use of the military might be helpful. While the decision for intervention is important, it is not complete. Guidance must assist the statesman in both understanding *why* a war may occur and *how* that war might unfold.

Hence, a two-tier grouping of questions is the chosen format. The first tier requires the statesmen to evaluate a nation’s motives for war. It uses Thucydides’ construct of fear, honor, and interest. It also tackles the important issue of national interest. It is vital to understand what interests are at stake for each nation. As Richard Haass points out: “A justified intervention needs a genuinely deserving victim to rescue; a wise one needs a solid prospect of success and an interest of one’s own to be served in the process.”¹²⁹ Another common theme from previous guidelines is that public support is important and is tied to nation’s national interests. Because of this important link, the first tier includes questions designed to help statesmen gain an accurate reading of public support.

The second tier enhances tier one answers and addresses execution. This linkage is also something that has not been a part of previous guidance and reminds statesmen of Clausewitz’s teaching that war is a continuation of policy by other means. The second tier is organized around three areas: a policy and strategy match, a rational net assessment or military balance evaluation, and war termination. While these areas are not new when compared to existing guidelines, they are presented in a more flexible format. They also

¹²⁹ Taken from “To the Victors, the Spoils—and the Headaches,” *Economist*, Vol. 320, No. 7726 (September 28, 1991), 24, quoted in Richard Haass, *Intervention: The Use of American Military Force in the Post-Cold War World*, rev. ed. (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 1999), 68.

include questions designed to explore areas, such as the consequences of failure and the adversary's reaction that are not well developed by other guidance.

Both tiers come with an explicit warning that there are varying factors that affect decisions in the national security arena. The new guidelines are consistent with the theoretical foundations formed in Chapter Two. They also draw on the strengths and attempt to avoid the weakness of the existing guidelines surveyed and evaluated in Chapters Three. Finally, the most common criticisms to guidelines are tackled head-on. While no set of guidelines will be perfect, this new set engenders discussion and reflection in new areas. These areas are critical for statesmen to consider before choosing a path to war. The guidelines offer an easy-to-use format that is flexible. They do not attempt to steer statesmen down a certain path. Rather, they try to illuminate the possible paths hidden in the darkness. The stakes are high in war, it is not enough to just know the rules. As Sun Tzu warned: "War is a matter of vital importance to the State; the province of life or death; the road to survival or ruin. It is mandatory that it be thoroughly studied."¹³⁰

¹³⁰ Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, trans. and ed. Samuel Griffith, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), 63.

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